

Connections to Brands That Help Others versus Help the Self: The Impact of Incidental Awe and Pride on Consumer Relationships with Social-Benefit and Luxury Brands

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ABSTRACT We propose that incidental emotions have the power to impact consumer self-brand connections. Specifically, we argue that divergent views of self, triggered by incidental awe versus pride, differentially impact consumer self-brand connections (SBC) to social-benefit versus luxury brands. Feelings of awe create a diminished self and an awareness of entities bigger than oneself. Pride, in contrast, enhances one's sense of self. In two studies, we find that incidental feelings of awe heighten (lessen) SBC toward social-benefit (luxury) brands, while incidental feelings of pride heighten SBC toward luxury brands. We show that these effects of awe on social-benefit brands are mediated by perceived self-diminishment, while the effects of pride on luxury brands are mediated by self-superiority. Finally, we find that luxury brands that position themselves as offering social benefits can mitigate awe's dampening effect on SBC while maintaining their enhanced appeal to consumers experiencing pride.

When I started TOMS, people thought I was crazy. In particular, longtime veterans of the footwear industry (shoe dogs, as they're called) argued that the model was unsustainable or at least untested—that combining a for-profit company with a social mission would complicate and undermine both. What we've found is that TOMS has succeeded precisely because we have created a new model. The giving component of TOMS makes our shoes more than a product. They're part of a story, a mission, and a movement anyone can join.

—Blake Mycoskie, founder of TOMS Shoes

In the last decade, the marketplace has seen the emergence of a new type of business model: for-profit companies that make helping others an integral part of their value proposition, such as TOMS Shoes (Mycoskie 2012). Many follow the “One for One” model started by TOMS and adopted by others like Warby Parker (eyeglasses), Roma Boots (boots), and Nouri Bar (nutritional bars/meals), wherein the company donates an item to someone in need for every product sold. Others choose to support social and environmental issues through their supply chain, production, labor, or dis-

posal practices and policies. Companies increasingly seek validation to demonstrate that these practices provide benefits for society. B Corps certification is one such accreditation, providing third-party assurance of a socially conscious business model that is “purpose-driven and creates benefit for all stakeholders, not just shareholders” (B Corps website).

Responding to the proliferation of this new business model, we examine how consumers react to these social-benefit brands and what factors might make them more or less ap-

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JACR, volume 3, number 2. Published online March 12, 2018. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/697083>

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pealing. Prior research on cause-related marketing (CRM) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) has primarily focused on the fit between a company and its cause, or company motivation for and customer interest in supporting the cause (Osterhus 1997; Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006; Barone, Norman, and Miyazaki 2007; Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen 2007); we take a different approach, examining how consumers' emotional states influence their bonds with different types of brands. Consistent with prior work examining the role of incidental emotions in consumer contexts (e.g., Lerner, Small, and Loewenstein 2004; Coleman et al. 2017), we demonstrate that incidental awe versus pride can impact consumers' self-brand connections (SBC; Escalas and Bettman 2003) to brands that emphasize their social-benefits versus luxury brands.

Whereas social-benefit brands emphasize helping others and making the self relatively less important, luxury brands adopt an opposing strategy: elevating the buyer's self-importance both internally and externally. We propose that because incidental awe leads to a smaller sense of self (Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007; Piff et al. 2015), it increases consumer self-brand connections to brands offering social benefits (e.g., TOMS, Warby Parker), while decreasing connections to luxury brands (e.g., Louis Vuitton, Gucci). By augmenting one's sense of self (Tracy, Shariff, and Cheng 2010; Tangney and Tracy 2012), pride has the opposite effect, decreasing connections to social-benefit brands and increasing connections to luxury brands. We contend that these changes are due to a match (or mismatch) between the self-prominence engendered by awe versus pride, and the importance of the self in how these brands are positioned in the marketplace.

The current research contributes to the literature in several ways. First, we demonstrate that incidental emotions have the power to impact consumer self-brand connections. Building on work that has suggested a causal link between awe and prosocial behavior (Piff et al. 2015), we show that consumers experiencing incidental awe feel more connected to social-benefit brands and less connected to luxury brands. Notably, this demonstrates that feelings of awe cause a systematic shift in the type of brand with which consumers choose to affiliate, consistent with the view of brands being extensions of the self and serving as identity signals (Belk 1988; Berger and Ward 2010). These results also contribute to the literature on awe by showing that although the elicitors of awe are largely asocial (Shiota et al. 2007), experiencing awe leads to behavioral responses that foster and sup-

port prosociality, including connections to brands that do the same. In addition to replicating prior research demonstrating a causal relationship between pride and the appeal of luxury brands, we find that social-benefit brands provide no added value to consumers experiencing pride. Thus, by demonstrating the suppression of connections to brands that help others, we are able to document another detrimental effect that pride has on consumers (Tracy et al. 2009; McFerran et al. 2011; Ashton-James and Tracy 2012). Finally, we contribute to the branding literature by showing that the divergent views of the self, activated by incidental emotions, are an important antecedent to how consumers connect with brands in the marketplace.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Incidental Awe and the Diminished Self

Research on awe has been fairly limited, in part because psychologists were initially divided in viewing awe as a distinct emotion. Characterizing it as the experience of "wonder" rather than awe explicitly, Frijda (1986) associated awe/wonder with a passive state of surprise or amazement in response to something unexpected. Whereas Lazarus (1991) viewed awe as an experience that could be either positive or negative with some of the qualities of an emotion, Ekman proposed that awe may in fact be a distinct emotion (1992).

Further, earlier work in emotions focused predominantly on examining differences across negative emotions, treating all positive emotions similarly, and generally using happiness as the archetype. However, recent research has established clear differences across discrete positive emotions, and solidified awe's standing as a distinct emotional state. Awe is defined as a positively valenced emotional experience associated with feelings of wonder and amazement, distinct from enthusiasm or amusement (Keltner and Haidt 1999; Griskevicius, Shiota, and Neufeld 2010a). It arises when one encounters novel, information-rich, largely asocial stimuli that are perceptually or conceptually vast, provoking a need for accommodation in one's existing mental models (Keltner and Haidt 2003). It has a unique facial expression that features a "raised head and eyes, widened eyes, slightly raised inner eyebrows" (Shiota, Campos, and Keltner 2003, 297). Feelings of awe pull attention away from the self and direct it externally toward the environment and stimuli that need to be understood and appreciated (Shiota et al. 2007). In so doing, it results in self-transcendence, or a sense of personal diminishment in the presence of something greater than the self (Piff et al. 2015).

Recent research has identified a number of downstream consequences associated with feelings of awe, including a

sense of elongated time perception, patience, and enhanced well-being (Rudd, Vohs, and Aaker 2012), greater scrutiny of persuasive messages (Griskevicius et al. 2010a), heightened spirituality (Saroglou, Buxant, and Tilquin 2008), and, along with a sense of self-diminishment, simultaneous feelings of oneness and connection with other people and the world at large (Shiota et al. 2007). Those experiencing awe are more likely to view themselves as part of a bigger group (Shiota et al. 2007), and more likely to use universal social categories like “an inhabitant of the Earth” when writing self-descriptions (Rees and Nicholson 1994). Thus, awe not only leads to feelings of self-diminishment, it elevates the importance of other people, fostering social connections (Keltner et al. 2014). This is a particularly notable shift as most elicitors of awe are asocial. Consistent with this, Van Cappellen and Saroglou (2012) found that feelings of awe elicited by a nature video actually made individuals view other people as more integrated into their own sense of self.

Building off these links between awe, perceptions of vastness, the diminished sense of self and greater interpersonal connections, Piff et al. (2015) found that individuals experiencing awe behave more prosocially than those experiencing other emotions. Importantly, this enhanced prosociality was mediated by the smaller sense of self associated with awe. This research demonstrates that awe redirects individuals’ attention away from the self, toward other people. In this way, awe serves to make the self less focal, while magnifying the importance of others’ well-being, thereby enhancing prosocial tendencies.

We extend this work not only by showing that individuals experiencing awe become more connected to other people, but they also feel more connected to prosocially positioned brands. By decreasing the importance of the self and increasing concern for others, we propose that incidental feelings of awe lead consumers to incorporate brands that share a concern for others into their own self-concepts. Thus, awe not only fosters relationships between people, but it can build relationships between consumers and brands positioned appropriately.

Incidental Pride and the Enhanced Self

Although they share the same valence and are both characterized as positive emotions, awe and pride differ from one another on several critical dimensions. Whereas the elicitors of awe are predominantly asocial and outside the self, pride is experienced in response to personal successes or achievements. Emphasizing its focus on the self, James (1890) characterized pride as a self-relevant emotion be-

cause it is reflective of how individuals feel about themselves. Similarly, Tangney and Tracy (2012) consider pride to be one of the special class of “self-conscious emotions” that are critically defined by their high degree of self-reflection and self-evaluation. Pride arises when individuals believe they are personally responsible for causing an outcome or being the type of person that others value and view positively (Weiner 1986; Mascolo and Fischer 1995). In fact, Mascolo and Fischer (1995, 66) explicitly define pride as an emotion arising from appraisals of responsibility for “a socially valued outcome or for being a socially valued person.” Griskevicius, Shiota and Nowlis (2010b, 240) more succinctly define it as the feeling individuals experience “after a valued achievement.” Across cultures, children and adults are able to recognize the nonverbal expression of pride and its associations with higher status (Tracy, Robins, and Lagattuta 2005; Tracy and Robins 2008; Tracy et al. 2013). In this way, pride positively distinguishes an individual from the group.

Consistent with this, Griskevicius et al. (2010b) showed that consumers experiencing pride had an increased preference for products that could be conspicuously consumed in public. Even the same product category (clothing) was evaluated more favorably among those feeling pride when it was framed as being worn where other people could see it, rather than only inside the home. Focusing on consumer choices in the domains of money and health, Wilcox, Kramer, and Sen (2010) demonstrated that incidental pride leads to more indulgent, self-rewarding choices, but only when accompanied by a sense of self-achievement.

Recent work has considered the influence of pride on luxury brands (McFerran et al. 2011). Consistent with the notion that consumers experiencing (authentic) pride in response to a success or achievement might feel they deserve to be rewarded (Blaine and Crocker 1993), McFerran and colleagues demonstrate that both chronic and momentary feelings of pride lead to higher purchase intent for luxury brands. Building on these findings, the current research examines how pride, by leading to more prominent views of the self, increases the attractiveness of luxury brands and demonstrates the psychological process by which this occurs, specifically focusing on the role of self-superiority associated with the experience of pride. Thus, while we expect incidental awe to enhance SBC with social-benefit brands, we expect incidental pride to enhance SBC with luxury brands.

Literature on pride makes a critical distinction between two types of pride: authentic and hubristic (Tracy and Robins 2007). Whereas authentic pride results from a genuine

sense of achievement or accomplishment, hubristic pride is characterized by feelings of arrogance, conceit, and self-aggrandizement. Consistent with empirical manipulations that elicit pride by having participants reflect on a previous accomplishment, we focus on authentic pride and the impact it may have on SBC to both luxury and social-benefit brands as a result of an enhanced sense of self. While both authentic and hubristic pride are worthy of study, we focus on authentic pride, as it presents a more conservative test of the impact of incidental pride versus awe on SBC with luxury or social-benefits brands. One might argue that authentic pride could encourage one to “lift others up” via social-benefit brands, leading to similar effects as those proposed here for incidental awe. However, hubristic pride is so self-focused it is difficult to imagine it leading to interest in brands that emphasize helping others.

How Awe versus Pride Impacts Self-Brand Connections

We examine the impact of incidental awe and pride on consumers' self-brand connection. The crux of our argument is that incidental feelings of awe create a diminished sense of self wherein one's self and goals are less significant than the collective (Shiota et al. 2007; Piff et al. 2015), whereas incidental pride has the reverse effect, enhancing one's sense of self and place in the world (Tracy et al. 2010; Tangney and Tracy 2012). We expect these divergent views of the self can carry over to impact consumers' SBC to social-benefit and luxury brands.

Specifically, we propose that incidental awe leads to an increase in self-brand connections to social-benefit brands that offer a social mission within their product. Further, we argue that momentary feelings of awe will decrease SBC for luxury brands that signal higher status and elevate the user. We predict that pride has the opposite effect, increasing connections to luxury brands.

Importantly, we contend that these changes in SBC are due to a match (or mismatch) between the self-prominence engendered by awe versus pride, and the importance of the self in these opposing brand propositions; a lessened self (self-diminishment) for social-benefit brands, and a heightened self (self-superiority) for luxury brands (see fig. 1). The current research contributes to the literature by not only demonstrating divergent effects for awe versus pride in SBC, but also showing that by changing consumers' view of the self, emotions can shift consumer interest in brands that are marketed either to emphasize their commitment to helping others or to improve one's own standing relative to others.

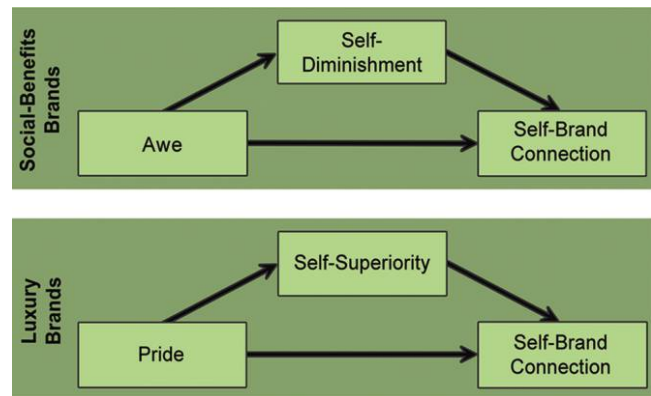


Figure 1. Conceptual mediation models.

STUDY 1: THE EFFECTS OF INCIDENTAL AWE AND PRIDE ON SOCIAL-BENEFIT AND LUXURY BRANDS

Procedure and Design

Study 1 is a 2 emotion (awe, pride) $\times$ 3 brand (social-benefit, luxury, control) between-subjects design. Participants were 302 members of Amazon's Mechanical Turk (46.7% female, $M^{\text{age}} = 34.42$; range = 20 to 73), paid \$0.80 for their participation.

Participants completed two ostensibly unrelated studies. First, participants experienced an emotion induction of awe or pride through an autobiographical writing task (Strack, Schwarz, and Gschneidinger 1985). In the awe condition they were asked to “Take a few minutes to think about a particular time, fairly recently, when you encountered a natural scene that caused you to feel awe. This might have been a sunset, a view from a high place or any other time that you were in a natural setting that you felt was beautiful.” Participants in the pride condition were asked to “Take a few minutes to think about a particular time, fairly recently, when you felt pride. This might have been being accepted into a competitive program, or any other time that you achieved a personal accomplishment.” Both prompts were taken from Piff et al. (2015). Participants were asked to write at least five sentences, providing as much detail as possible, describing any emotions they felt and what they were thinking about during the experience.

The second study presented an advertisement and asked participants to provide their reactions to the featured brand. In all three brand conditions, participants saw a print ad for a leather portfolio. The visual image, of a woman handcrafting leather goods, was identical in all ads, but the text and the brand name varied to portray either a real social-benefit

brand (United By Blue), a real luxury brand (Louis Vuitton), or a control brand (also United By Blue). The text emphasized helping others in the social-benefit brand condition, exclusivity in the luxury condition, and nationwide distribution in the control condition (see appendix, available online).

After reading the ad, participants completed the Self-Brand Connection scale (Escalas and Bettman 2003), a six-item self-diminishment scale (5-point scales where 1 = never and 5 = always; When making decisions I: Tend to think of others; Tend to think of myself (R); Consider other people's needs; Focus on my own needs (R); Make choices that benefit the group even if they are not my preference; Try not to rock the boat; Frimer, Schaefer, and Oakes 2014), a self-superiority scale (5-point scale where 1 = not at all true and 5 = very true; My friends follow my lead; I deserve favors from others; Running the show means a lot to me; I know that I have more natural talents than most; Being admired by others makes me feel fantastic; Achieving out of the ordinary accomplishments would make me feel complete; I could show up my friends if I wanted to; Robbins and Patton 1985), and provided their age and gender identity.

The self-diminishment scale has been used in previous research to capture the extent to which an individual's self is reduced in centrality relative to the perception of other things larger than the self (Piff et al. 2015). While self-diminishment could have other connotations such as lower self-awareness or less focus on self-relevant goals, here we are consistent with prior work that defines the "small self" as a relative contraction of the individual and his or her interests. Self-superiority, on the other hand, encapsulates attention-seeking, unrealistic ambitions, and—most importantly for our purposes—an inflated self-image (Robbins and Patton 1985; Robbins 1989). Self-superiority is akin to (and one of three components of) grandiosity, which clinical psychology defines as having an exaggerated belief in one's importance, sometimes reaching delusional proportions (Kohut 1977; Robbins and Patton 1985). While we are not investigating clinical populations or effects, the concept of an inflated sense of self is consistent with the process we propose for incidental pride, and thus we leverage the existing self-superiority scale to capture these changes.

We also included measures of various alternative potential mediators. It is possible that incidental awe and pride might prime different self-construals (more interdependent for awe and more independent for pride). Thus, we assess self-construal (Singelis 1994) and consider it as an alternative mediator. Incidental awe has been associated with

greater religiosity and may lead to a lessened value placed on material possessions, relative to incidental pride. Thus, we also measure materialism (Richins and Dawson 1992) and consider it as a potential mediator of the proposed effects, as well. The self-diminishment and self-superiority scales used in this study are suggestive of a differential awareness of the needs of others. Thus we also include a scale to capture awareness of others' needs (e.g., "There are a lot of people in the world in need of help"). Finally, a brand positioned as focused on social benefits may lead to different perceptions of warmth and competence relative to a luxury brand. To consider this, we include a five-item measure of warmth and competence (Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner 2010). We thank the review team for these suggestions.

Results

Self-Diminishment. A two-way ANOVA with emotion and brand as predictors was run on the average self-diminishment index ($\alpha = .847$). A significant main effect of emotion emerged ($F(1, 301) = 80.617, p < .001$), as did a significant main effect of brand ($F(1, 301) = 7.055, p < .001$). These effects were qualified by an interaction of emotion and brand ($F(2, 301) = 3.259, p < .01$; see table 1).

Planned contrasts found that among participants in the incidental awe conditions, self-diminishment was highest in response to the social-benefit brand ($M = 4.87$) relative to the control ($M = 4.18$; $F(1, 301) = 7.658, p < .01$) or luxury brand ($M = 3.92$; $F(1, 301) = 11.043, p < .001$). Similarly, self-diminishment was also more pronounced in response to the control versus the luxury brand ($F(1, 301) = 3.906, p = .049$). Among participants feeling incidental pride, self-diminishment did not differ across the luxury ($M = 3.18$), control ($M = 2.90$; $F(1, 301) = 1.380, p = .241$) or social-benefit ($M = 2.76$; $F(1, 301) = .027, p = .868$) brands. These results demonstrate that while awe is associated in general with a sense of self-diminishment, it is enhanced in response to social-benefit brands and attenuated in response to luxury brands.

Self-Superiority. A two-way ANOVA with emotion and brand as predictors was run on the average self-superiority index ($\alpha = .895$). A significant main effect of emotion emerged ($F(1, 301) = 131.017, p < .001$), as did an interaction between emotion and brand ($F(2, 301) = 5.329, p < .01$).

Within the incidental awe condition, there were no significant differences in reported self-superiority (all $p > .20$).

Table 1. The Effect of Awe Versus Pride on Self-Brand Connection: Summary Results

	Self-Brand Connection			Self-Diminishment			Self-Superiority		
	Awe	Pride	Neutral	Awe	Pride	Neutral	Awe	Pride	Neutral
Study 1 ($n = 307$):									
Social Benefits	4.75 (1.05)	3.35 (1.33)	...	4.87 (1.37)	2.76 (.77)	...	2.98 (1.00)	4.36 (1.23)	...
Luxury	2.83 (1.50)	4.49 (1.30)	...	3.92 (1.34)	3.18 (1.21)	...	2.88 (1.23)	5.08 (1.13)	...
Control	3.64 (1.63)	3.48 (1.41)	...	4.18 (1.33)	2.90 (.95)	...	3.17 (1.32)	4.32 (1.26)	...
Study 2 ($n = 614$):									
Social Benefits	4.60 (1.48)	3.61 (1.68)	3.87 (1.53)	4.13 (1.29)	2.73 (.83)	3.21 (.95)	3.23 (1.27)	3.34 (1.10)	3.50 (1.19)
Luxury	2.83 (1.59)	4.20 (1.53)	3.57 (1.32)	3.02 (1.11)	2.91 (1.03)	3.20 (1.24)	3.32 (1.11)	4.67 (1.01)	3.93 (1.38)
Luxury Plus	3.46 (1.39)	4.32 (1.40)	3.08 (1.48)	3.65 (.97)	3.08 (1.01)	3.06 (.90)	3.11 (.92)	4.70 (1.13)	3.56 (1.07)
Control	3.53 (1.38)	3.48 (1.40)	3.31 (1.64)	3.53 (1.11)	2.89 (.97)	2.93 (.94)	3.37 (1.10)	3.99 (1.29)	3.60 (1.04)

Note.—Standard deviations are in parentheses.

However, within the incidental pride condition, participants indicated higher levels of self-superiority in response to the luxury ($M = 5.08$) versus control ($M = 4.33$; $F(1, 301) = 9.718$, $p < .005$) and social-benefits brand ($M = 4.36$; $F(1, 301) = 8.976$, $p < .005$). There was no significant difference in self-superiority in response to the control and social-benefits brands ($p = .89$). These results suggest that while pride is associated in general with a sense of self-superiority, it is enhanced in the presence of luxury brands.

Self-Brand Connection (SBC). A two-way ANOVA with emotion and brand as predictors was run on the average SBC index ($\alpha = .96$). There was no significant effect of emotion ($F(1, 301) = .04$, $p = .85$). There was a significant main effect of brand condition ($F(2, 301) = 3.495$, $p = .032$). This was subsumed within the predicted two-way interaction of emotion and brand ($F(2, 301) = 31.22$, $p < .001$).

Planned contrasts found that among participants feeling incidental awe, SBC was highest in response to the social-benefit brand ($M = 4.75$) relative to the control ($M = 3.64$; $F(1, 301) = 9.41$, $p < .001$) or luxury brand ($M = 2.83$; $F(1, 301) = 12.38$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, SBC was lower for the luxury brand than for the control brand among those experiencing awe ($F(1, 301) = 8.95$, $p = .003$). Par-

ticipants feeling incidental pride indicated a higher SBC for the luxury brand ($M = 4.49$) relative to the control ($M = 3.48$; $F(1, 301) = 8.98$, $p < .001$) or social-benefit ($M = 3.35$; $F(1, 301) = 9.03$, $p < .001$) brand. There was no significant difference in SBC between the control and social-benefit brands ($F(1, 301) = .22$, $p = .64$). Thus, participants feeling incidental awe report elevated SBC for social-benefit brands; those feeling incidental pride report elevated SBC for luxury brands.

Mediation Analyses. Since our theory proposes a second-stage moderated mediation model with parallel mediators, where the effect of the mediator (self-diminishment and/or self-superiority) on the outcome variable (SBC) depends on the moderator (type of brand: social-benefit vs. luxury), Model 15 is the appropriate PROCESS model (Edwards and Lambert 2007; Hayes 2015). However, for simplicity of exposition, the current analyses report separate mediation analyses for each of the focal effects to highlight the key results. The comprehensive mediation analyses utilizing Model 15 are available in the appendix.

Mediation Analysis of Awe and Self-Diminishment on SBC for Social-Benefit Brands. A bootstrap mediation analysis using Model 4 was run with awe as the independent variable

and self-diminishment as the mediator, predicting self-brand connection for social-benefit brands. As predicted, a significant indirect effect of awe through self-diminishment was found ($b = .533$, $SE = .14$, $CI_{95} [.30, .88]$; see table 2), such that participants experiencing awe had greater feelings of self-diminishment, which then led to enhanced self-brand connection for social-benefit brands.

Mediation Analysis of Pride and Self-Superiority on SBC for Luxury Brands. A bootstrap mediation analysis using Model 4 was run with pride as the independent variable and self-superiority as the mediator, predicting self-brand connection with luxury brands. As predicted, a significant indirect effect of pride through self-superiority emerged ($b = 1.10$, $SE = .28$, $CI_{95} [.55, 1.66]$), such that participants experiencing pride felt more self-superiority, which in turn increased self-brand connection for luxury brands.

Alternative Mediators. Beyond exploring the mediating effects of self-diminishment and self-superiority, we also measured four potential alternative mediators: self-construal, warmth versus competence, materialism, and awareness of others' needs. Each alternative was entered as a mediator into Model 15, with awe predicting SBC for social-benefit

or luxury brands. The details of these analyses can be found in the appendix, but none were significant mediators, and the index of moderated mediation was not significant in any case.

Discussion

Study 1 finds that incidental awe increases SBC for social-benefit brands and reduces it for luxury brands, while incidental pride increases SBC for luxury brands. Importantly, the effects of awe on SBC are mediated by self-diminishment, while those for pride are mediated by self-superiority. These results support our view that incidental awe and pride trigger diverging views of the self, leading to differential connections to brands that match or mismatch those self-views. Importantly, study 1 is also able to rule out a variety of alternative mediators, including self-construal, warmth versus competence, materialism, and awareness of others' needs. Interestingly, we observed not only the predicted main effect of emotion on self-diminishment and self-enhancement, but an interaction between emotion and brand type. This suggests that a match between emotion type and brand positioning (awe with a social-benefit brand position or pride

Table 2. Focal Mediation Results for Study 1

Social-Benefit Brand								
Antecedent	Consequent							
	Self-Diminishment (M)				Self-Brand Connection (Y)			
	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Awe (X)	1.360	.249	5.456	<.0001	.866	.249	3.480	.001
Self-diminishment (M)	...	...	...	...	.392	.087	4.496	<.0001
Constant	3.293	.170	19.353	<.0001	2.056	.324	6.352	<.0001
Model summary	R ² = .2276 F(1, 101) = 29.7663, <i>p</i> < .0001				R ² = .3796 F(2, 100) = 30.5911, <i>p</i> < .0001			
Luxury Brand								
Antecedent	Consequent							
	Self-Superiority (M)				Self-Brand Connection (Y)			
	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pride (X)	2.202	.235	9.385	<.0001	.555	.349	1.592	.115
Self-superiority (M)	...	...	...	...	.499	.108	4.602	<.0001
Constant	2.877	.166	17.342	<.0001	1.400	.360	3.892	.000
Model summary	R ² = .4683 F(1, 100) = 88.0779, <i>p</i> < .0001				R ² = .3906 F(2, 99) = 31.7264, <i>p</i> < .0001			

with a luxury brand) enhances the effect of the emotion on the self.

In study 2, we examine whether the reduced SBC to luxury brands caused by incidental awe could be mitigated if the luxury brands also position themselves as offering social benefits. Finally, study 2 also includes a neutral emotion condition.

STUDY 2: CAN LUXURY BRANDS POSITION THEMSELVES TO OFFER SOCIAL BENEFITS?

Procedure and Design

Study 2 is a 3 emotion (awe, pride, neutral) $\times$ 4 brand (social-benefit, luxury, luxury-plus, control) between-subjects design. Participants were 614 Mechanical Turk workers (52.9% female, $M^{\text{age}} = 35.89$; range = 18 to 80), paid \$0.80 for their participation.

The procedure was similar to study 1. Participants completed the autobiographical writing task (Strack, Schwarz, and Gschneidinger 1985) and then saw an advertisement. Participants in the social-benefit, control, and luxury brand conditions saw the same ads used previously. In the luxury-plus condition, participants saw the same images as in the luxury ad, but with text modified to emphasize that Louis Vuitton products provide a combination of luxury, plus social benefits (see appendix).

After viewing the ads, participants completed the SBC scale, the self-diminishment scale, a seven-item self-superiority scale, and provided their age and gender identity.

Results

Self-Diminishment. A two-way ANOVA with emotion and brand as predictors was run on the average of the self-diminishment index. Both a main effect of emotion ($F(2, 602) = 22.430, p < .001$) and of brand ($F(3, 602) = 2.874, p = .036$) were significant. These effects were qualified by a two-way interaction between emotion and brand ($F(6, 602) = 4.234, p < .001$). Planned contrasts within the incidental awe condition show self-diminishment was significantly greater in response to the social-benefits ($M = 4.13$) compared to the control ($M = 3.53$; $F(1, 602) = 8.692, p < .003$), luxury ($M = 3.02$; $F(1, 602) = 11.162, p < .001$), and luxury-plus brand ($M = 3.65$; $F(1, 602) = 5.121, p < .004$). Similarly, respondents report more self-diminishment in response to the luxury-plus compared to the luxury brand ($F(1, 602) = 8.395, p = .004$), and in response to the control brand compared to the luxury brand ($F(1, 602) = 5.957, p = .015$). There was no significant difference between the luxury-plus and control brands, however

($p = .55$). Within the incidental pride condition, there was a marginal difference in self-diminishment between the luxury-plus ($M = 3.08$) and the social-benefits brand ($M = 2.73$; $F(1, 602) = 2.746, p = .098$). All other pairwise contrasts were nonsignificant (all $p > .36$). In the neutral emotion condition, all pairwise contrasts were nonsignificant (all $p > .17$).

Self-Superiority. A two-way ANOVA with emotion and brand as predictors was run on the average self-superiority index. Both a main effect of emotion ($F(2, 602) = 32.497, p < .001$) and of brand ($F(3, 602) = 8.068, p < .001$) emerged. These effects were qualified by a significant two-way interaction of emotion and brand ($F(6, 602) = 5.130, p < .001$). Within the incidental awe condition, there were no significant differences in reported self-superiority (all $p > .26$). However, within the incidental pride condition, participants indicated higher levels of self-superiority in response to the luxury ($M = 4.67$) versus control ($M = 3.99$; $F(1, 602) = 6.074, p < .003$) and social-benefits brand ($M = 3.34$; $F(1, 602) = 4.370, p < .001$). Similarly, respondents indicated higher levels of self-superiority in response to the luxury-plus ($M = 4.70$) versus control ($F(1, 602) = 7.323, p = .003$) and social-benefits brands ($F(1, 602) = 5.531, p < .001$). There was no significant difference in self-superiority in response to the luxury and luxury-plus brand ($p = .872$).

Self-Brand Connection (SBC). A two-way ANOVA with emotion and brand as predictors was run on the average SBC index ($\alpha = .956$). Both main effects of emotion ($F(2, 602) = 4.73, p < .0001$) and of brand ($F(3, 602) = 7.06, p < .001$) emerged. These effects were qualified by the predicted two-way interaction of emotion and brand ($F(6, 602) = 7.06, p < .0001$; see table 1). Within the incidental awe condition, planned contrasts show the highest SBC for the social-benefit brand ($M = 4.60$) compared with the control ($M = 3.53$; $F(1, 602) = 11.78, p < .001$), luxury ($M = 2.83$; $F(1, 602) = 13.16, p < .001$) and the luxury-plus brand ($M = 3.46$; $F(1, 602) = 11.86, p < .001$). SBC was significantly higher for the luxury-plus brand compared with the luxury brand ($F(1, 602) = 3.86, p = .05$), and higher for the control relative to the luxury brand ($F(1, 602) = 5.44, p = .02$); however, there was no significant difference in SBC between the control and the luxury-plus brands ($F < 1, p = .802$). Within the incidental pride conditions, planned contrasts show that SBC is higher for the luxury ($M = 4.20$), compared with the control ($M =$

3.48; $F(1, 602) = 6.07, p = .014$) and social-benefit brands ($M = 3.61$; $F(1, 602) = 4.37, p < .037$). SBC was also significantly higher for the luxury-plus brand relative to control ($F(1, 602) = 7.32, p = .007$) and relative to the social-benefits brand ($F(1, 602) = 5.531, p = .019$). There was no significant difference in SBC between the luxury and luxury-plus brands ($F < 1, p = .680$), or between the social-benefits and control brands ($F < 1, p = .664$). Within the neutral condition, contrasts reveal SBC was significantly higher for the social-benefits ($M = 3.87$) versus control ($M = 3.58$) and luxury-plus brands ($M = 3.08$; $F(1, 602) = 8.35, p < .004$). There was a marginal difference in SBC between the luxury ($M = 3.57$) and luxury-plus brand ($F(1, 602) = 2.87, p = .091$); all other contrasts were nonsignificant (all $p > .30$).

Mediation Analyses. Again, since our theory proposes a second-stage moderated mediation model with parallel mediators, where the effect of self-diminishment and/or self-superiority on SBC depends on the type of brand (social-benefit vs. luxury vs. luxury plus), Model 15 is the appropriate PROCESS model to use (Edwards and Lambert 2007; Hayes 2015). However, for simplicity of exposition, the current analyses report separate mediation analyses for each of the focal effects to highlight the key results. The comprehensive mediation analyses utilizing Model 15 are available in the appendix.

Mediation Analysis of Awe and Self-Diminishment on SBC for Social-Benefit Brands. A bootstrap mediation analysis using Model 4 was run with awe as the independent variable and self-diminishment as the mediator, predicting self-brand connection for social-benefit brands. As predicted, a significant indirect effect of awe through self-diminishment was found ($b = .258, SE = .12, CI_{95} [.060, .55]$; see table 3), such that participants experiencing awe had greater feelings of self-diminishment, which then led to enhanced self-brand connection for social-benefit brands.

Mediation Analysis of Pride and Self-Superiority on SBC for Luxury Brands. A bootstrap mediation analysis using Model 4 was run with pride as the independent variable and self-superiority as the mediator, predicting self-brand connection with luxury brands. As predicted, a significant indirect effect of pride through self-superiority emerged ($b = .377, SE = .11, CI_{95} [.19, .64]$), such that participants experiencing pride felt more self-superiority, which in turn increased self-brand connection for luxury brands.

Mediation Analysis of Awe on SBC for Luxury-Plus Brands. A bootstrap mediation analysis using Model 4 was run with

awe as the independent variable, with self-diminishment and self-superiority as parallel mediators, predicting self-brand connection for luxury-plus brands. A significant indirect effect of awe through self-superiority was found ($b = -.62, SE = .15, CI_{95} [-.93, -.36]$), such that participants experiencing awe had lowered feelings of self-superiority, and lowered self-superiority then led to enhanced self-brand connection for luxury-plus brands.

Mediation Analysis of Pride on SBC for Luxury-Plus Brands. A bootstrap mediation analysis using Model 4 was run with pride as the independent variable, with self-diminishment and self-superiority as parallel mediators, predicting self-brand connection for luxury-plus brands. A significant indirect effect of pride through self-superiority was found ($b = .675, SE = .19, CI_{95} [.35, 1.09]$), with no corresponding indirect effect through self-diminishment ($CI_{95} [-.07, .05]$). This means that the positive effect on SBC for luxury-plus brands, among participants experiencing pride, was similar to that for luxury brands: those feeling pride felt more self-superiority, which in turn increased self-brand connection.

Discussion

In study 2, we again find that incidental awe enhances SBC to social-benefits brands and decreases SBC to luxury brands, driven by self-diminishment. Similarly, we find that incidental pride enhances SBC to luxury brands but decreases it for social-benefits brands, and we find that self-superiority is responsible for these effects. Together these effects demonstrate that by changing consumers' view of the self to be smaller or larger, incidental emotions can change consumer relationships with brands. Further, we find that luxury brands that add a social-benefits component to their marketing messages can overcome the decline in SBC among consumers experiencing incidental awe, while still preserving the enhanced appeal to those experiencing incidental pride.

As in the first study, we also find an interaction between brand and emotion conditions on self-diminishment and self-enhancement. However, it is interesting that we do not find these effects in the neutral emotion condition. This suggests that while the focal emotions are significant drivers of the effects on the self, and that they can be augmented when there is a match between the emotion type and brand positioning (i.e., awe paired with a social-benefits brand), the brand positions alone are not enough to provoke the self-diminishment and self-enhancement that lead ultimately to higher SBC.

Table 3. Focal Mediation Results for Study 2

Social-Benefit Brand

Antecedent	Self-Diminishment (M)				Self-Brand Connection (Y)			
	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Awe (X)	1.035	.214	4.840	<.0001	.589	.282	2.092	.038
Self-diminishment (M)	...	...	...	...	.250	.099	2.532	.012
Constant	3.066	.122	25.142	<.0001	2.984	.337	8.855	<.0001
Model summary	$R^2 = .1313$ $F(1, 155) = 23.4248, p < .0001$				$R^2 = .0986$ $F(2, 154) = 8.4195, p = .0003$			

Luxury Brand

Antecedent	Self-Superiority (M)				Self-Brand Connection (Y)			
	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pride (X)	1.034	.192	5.380	<.0001	.614	.258	2.383	.018
Self-superiority (M)	...	...	...	...	.365	.099	3.677	.000
Constant	3.634	.123	29.522	<.0001	1.885	.391	4.822	<.0001
Model summary	$R^2 = .1582$ $F(1, 154) = 28.9476, p < .0001$				$R^2 = .1689$ $F(2, 153) = 15.5456, p < .0001$			

Luxury-Plus Brand (Awe)

Antecedent	Consequent											
	Self-Superiority (M1)				Self-Diminishment (M2)				Self-Brand Connection (Y)			
	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Awe (X)	-.960	.206	-4.660	<.0001	.636	.231	2.758	.007	.464	.261	1.780	.077
Self-superiority (M1)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	.642	.095	6.787	<.0001
Self-diminishment (M2)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	-.028	.085	-.334	.739
Constant	4.068	.111	36.684	<.0001	3.151	.124	25.393	<.0001	1.107	.490	2.258	.025
Model summary	$R^2 = .1265$ $F(1, 150) = 21.7139, p < .0001$				$R^2 = .1265$ $F(1, 150) = 7.6050, p = .0065$				$R^2 = .2403$ $F(3, 148) = 15.6032, p < .0001$			

Luxury-Plus Brand (Pride)

Antecedent	Consequent											
	Self-Superiority (M1)				Self-Diminishment (M2)				Self-Brand Connection (Y)			
	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pride (X)	1.334	.186	7.192	<.0001	-.213	.230	-.927	.355	.407	.271	1.500	.136
Self-superiority (M1)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	.506	.103	4.912	<.0001
Self-diminishment (M2)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	.005	.083	.064	.949
Constant	3.368	.186	32.309	<.0001	3.403	.129	26.325	<.0001	1.515	.481	3.147	.002
Model summary	$R^2 = .2564$ $F(1, 150) = 51.7303, p < .0001$				$R^2 = .0057$ $F(1, 150) = .8598, p = .3553$				$R^2 = .2356$ $F(3, 148) = 15.2088, p < .0001$			

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Two studies find that by changing consumers' view of the self, incidental emotions can also change consumer attachment to brands positioned as either helping others or improving one's own social standing. In study 1, we find that incidental awe heightens SBC to social-benefits brands and dampens SBC to luxury brands. In contrast, incidental pride increases SBC for luxury brands, but not for social-benefit brands. We find these effects of incidental awe are mediated by a diminished sense of self, which drives the heightened SBC to social-benefits brands. We further find that consumers feeling incidental pride feel a superior sense of self, which drives their heightened SBC with luxury brands. Notably, study 2 also shows that luxury brands can mitigate the negative effects of awe by incorporating social-benefit initiatives into their marketing actions, while remaining equally appealing to consumers looking to use the brands to self-enhance.

Together these results contribute to existing literature in several ways. First, we demonstrate that incidental emotions can impact the relationships that consumers form with brands. Further, we extend recent research on awe and its impact on prosocial behavior. Though awe is typically evoked from nonsocial stimuli (such as the natural world or artistic beauty), we find that incidental awe not only enhances social connections with other people but also builds connections with brands that similarly emphasize social benefits. Further, incidental awe simultaneously dampens connections with luxury brands that emphasize their self-oriented benefits. Additionally, we find that the differential effects of awe and pride on SBC are mediated by their different implications for the self. Whereas awe is associated with a sense of self-diminishment, pride is associated with a sense of self-superiority. These results suggest that the nature of SBC depends not just upon the fit between a person's identity and the brand's elements, as suggested in previous literature, but also upon how the consumer's self-view matches with the brand's positioning. Finally, we add to the literature by explicitly examining these new brands that emphasize social benefits as central to their value proposition, offering insights into when and how consumers meaningfully connect to such brands.

Social-benefit brands that emphasize their efforts to help others have proliferated in the past 10 years; their success in the marketplace suggests that consumers do indeed value this aspect of their positioning. In *Firms of Endearment* (2014), Sisodia, Sheth, and Wolfe argue this is a new era of capitalism in which consumers seek connections with companies that transcend materialistic self-oriented bene-

fits in favor of meaningful, others-centered values. In their view, brands will build deep bonds with consumers not on the basis of product features but in their ability to feed consumers' souls. The present research speaks to this in several ways. First, we examine the process by which consumers build connections with these types of brands. We find, consistent with the *Firms of Endearment* view, that these bonds arise when accompanied by consumers' self-diminishment relative to the concerns of others. This self-diminishment happens when consumers feel incidental awe.

Nevertheless, questions remain regarding whether or not these effects would also occur with more integral instantiations of awe and pride, rather than the incidental manipulations here. Is it possible that social-benefits brands could evoke a feeling of awe in their promotional materials, perhaps through imagery that connotes the vast impact their efforts have in creating social good? And would such integral feelings of awe similarly result in self-diminishment and enhanced SBC? Results in the neutral emotion condition in our study 2 are not consistent with this—we do not find in the neutral incidental emotion condition that the social-benefits brand provoked a sense of self-diminishment and heightened SBC, but it is possible that ads explicitly designed to evoke awe could.

Note that the literature on awe has distinguished that emotion from others in a larger family of self-transcendent, other-praising emotions, including elevation and admiration (Haidt and Morris 2009; Shiota et al. 2014). Elevation is a positive emotion, often felt when witnessing an exemplary moral act performed by another person. It typically shares with awe the need for accommodation, but need not involve the perceptions of vastness that accompany awe. It is possible that elevation may be a more likely integral emotion for many social-benefits brands. Feelings of elevation in response to the brand's good deeds might inspire consumers to want to join in and do good themselves, driving transactions with social-benefits brands. But questions remain regarding whether or not elevation would similarly evoke a diminished sense of self and the resulting stronger self-brand connections with these brands observed in the present data.

Admiration is also a positive other-praising emotion, but it arises out of appreciation for nonmoral excellence (Haidt and Morris 2009); it is believed to energize and inspire a desire to succeed in efforts that are better or more important than one's usual concerns. It is possible that luxury brands, which are often exceptionally beautiful and expertly crafted, might trigger a sense of admiration and a desire to step outside one's usual actions or patterns. But again, questions re-

main regarding how admiration might implicate the self and the resulting self-brand connections that might be formed with brands that elicit it.

In the current research, we examined how incidental feelings of awe, through self-diminishment, lead to heightened self-brand connections to social-benefit brands, whereas feelings of pride, through self-superiority, lead to deeper connections with luxury brands. However, we acknowledge that the experience between emotions and brands may be far more complex and dynamic than the current investigation allows. For example, even though the self-diminishment evoked by awe may initially lead to greater attraction to social-benefit brands, it may be that purchasing such brands actually leads consumers to experience pride in making such prosocial choices. Consumers may also feel so connected to the social-benefit brands that they share their excitement about such brands, and specifically their choices to purchase such brands, with others on social media. To the degree that their excitement over purchasing social-benefit brands is perceived as bragging, an act that started from feelings of awe and self-diminishment could lead to perceptions of reduced generosity and selfishness (Berman et al. 2015). Future work should explore the dynamic emotional processes and consequences resulting from the initial SBC examined in the current research.

This research offers synergistic contributions to other papers in this special issue on brand relationships, emotions, and the self. In their extensive synthesis of the consumer-brand relationship literature, Albert and Thomson (2018) identify the major constructs and emotions, research streams, and trends that have shaped this area and suggest future research streams. Our research fits within the stream they identify as “self-relevant relationships,” since it focuses on consumer’s self-brand connections with both social-benefit and luxury brands. Our research also contributes to further the understanding of what those authors call “niche” and “generic” emotions in the self-brand connection literature, specifically on the role, respectively, that awe and pride play in consumers’ self-brand connections. Our research also provides initial answers to two of the future research streams proposed by the authors, specifically linking self-relevant emotions to self-relevant (brand-consumer) relationships, and looking at “ambiguous” emotions, such as awe. Similarly, the work by Ahuvia et al. (2018) also overlaps with the present research: both papers examine pride, the ultimate self-praising emotion, in both its authentic and hubristic facets (Tracy and Robins 2007). Our work, however, focuses on the consequences of incidental feelings of pride, as they increase

consumers’ self-brand connections to luxury brands via self-enhancement motives. The Ahuvia et al. (2018) work uses a qualitative *surfacing* methodology to delve into the antecedents, features, and consequences of “pride of ownership” (broadly intended), focusing on the implicit identity goals that are salient over time.

In conclusion, the current work examines how consumers respond to social-benefit brands and what factors might make such brands more or less appealing. Consistent with prior work that shows incidental emotions can influence consumers’ interest in certain products, we show that incidental awe and pride have distinct effects on consumers’ SBC to brands that emphasize their social-benefits versus luxury brands. By affecting self-prominence, we show that awe creates a smaller, diminished self, leading to more positive (negative) SBC for social-benefit (luxury) brands. However, pride enhances the self, increasing SBC for luxury brands. Through these two mechanisms, each implicated by a specific emotion, we demonstrate how the “self” in self-brand connections is intimately related to the emotions consumers are experiencing.

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