How to Strategically Reject? The Impact of Market Segmentation Communication on the Brand Desire of Non-Target Consumers

by

Jun Yan

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Asper School of Business
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

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Abstract

When marketers select a target market for a brand, they are implicitly rejecting consumers who are not in the target market. Prior research has revealed that negative reactions emerge when consumers encounter brand rejection. This paper examines how a brand communicates its market segmentation strategy with its non-target consumers without decreasing their brand desire in the process. Six studies indicate that market segmentation communication via inclusion framing (vs. exclusion framing) was less likely to decrease the non-target consumers’ brand desires when they perceived that the rejecting brand was still attainable. We uncover a novel underlying mechanism—brand aspiration—that mediates the effect of brand rejection on brand desire. This research helps marketers to design effective market segmentation communication strategies when they deal with the dilemma of rejecting non-target consumers. This allows companies to achieve an increased market share without alienating other aspiring consumers.

Keywords:
market segmentation, brand rejection, inclusion framing, exclusion framing, brand aspiration
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Effect size (Partial ( \eta^2 ))</th>
<th>Power</th>
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Note: 1) Power is the post-hoc power analysis;

2) The effect size Partial \( \eta^2 \) – small: 0.01, medium: 0.06, and large: 0.14.

3) IF: inclusion framing; EF: exclusion framing; C: control group; BD: brand desire
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Brand Desire

Less attainable  More attainable

Inclusion Framing  Exclusion Framing

a). Interaction effect of communication type and perceived attainability on brand desire

Brand Aspiration

Less attainable  More attainable

Inclusion Framing  Exclusion Framing

b). Interaction effect of communication type and perceived attainability on brand aspiration
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Brand Desire

Less Attainable  More Attainable

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Meta-Analysis

Mixed-Effects Model (k = 10)

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<th>se</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>p</th>
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Note. Tau² Estimator: Restricted Maximum-Likelihood

Heterogeneity Statistics

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<th>I²</th>
<th>H²</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<td>0 (SE = 0.0286)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td>9.000</td>
<td>1.859</td>
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Forest Plot

2.1
3.1
4.1
5.1
6.1
2.2
3.2
4.2
5.2
6.2

0.25 [-0.31, 0.81]
0.13 [-0.30, 0.56]
0.28 [-0.06, 0.62]
0.25 [-0.22, 0.72]
-0.06 [-0.56, 0.44]
0.97 [0.37, 1.56]
0.78 [0.30, 1.25]
0.89 [0.47, 1.31]
1.01 [0.28, 1.76]
0.79 [0.30, 1.28]
Chapter I: Introduction

Never apologize for having high standards.
People who really want to be in your life
will rise up to meet them.

--- Ziad K. Abdelnour, 2011

The quote above paints an optimistic picture of how consumers may respond if they aspire to certain brand membership. Brands commonly define their target consumer segments, but they may communicate their segmentation choice in different ways, and that has implications for the success of their efforts. For example, Lululemon, a Canadian apparel brand, sells yoga pants only in sizes 2-14. Chip Wilson, its founder, once said in a TV interview that "Some women's bodies are not right for our pants." After this public announcement, Lululemon’s stock price fell by 20% (Dockterman, 2013). A different outcome occurred when an Italian fashion company Brandy Melville (BM), which sells only small size and extra small size clothing and targets only one type of girl: “young, white, skinny, and long-legged” (Bhasin, 2014)." Despite anger and jealousy from girls who cannot fit into BM's size (Liu, 2017), BM’s sales still have a 20-25% growth rate every year (Collett, 2015; Marsh, 2014).

Both Lululemon and Brandy Melville choose small sized people as their target consumers, and that leads non-target consumers to feel rejected. But why did the market react negatively to Lululemon's brand rejection strategy, while responding positively to Brandy Melville's? To date, there has been relatively little research focusing on the negative effects of market segmentation and targeting strategy, or on the effectiveness of various communication strategies which are designed to ameliorate the negative effects and enhance the positive effects of the strategy. The research presented here fills this gap by conceptualizing two contrasting communication strategies.
of segmentation choice (inspired by the practices of the above mentioned brands) and testing their differential effects on brand desire and the underlying mechanism. It is important for marketers to communicate with non-target consumers, because marketing communication is relevant to public relations (e.g., Lymer and Carney, 2016) which influence brand image. Additionally, the current non-target consumers may become the future potential target consumers if the brand aims to increase its market share by brand expansion or market expansion.

We label Lululemon's market segmentation communication strategy as *exclusion* framing, which involves blatantly telling motivated (but de-selected) consumers that they are not target consumers. We label Brandy Melville’s strategy as *inclusion* framing, which indicates who the target consumers are, and subtly making the motivated (but de-selected) consumers to see the difference between target consumers and themselves. In previous research, exclusion framing has been operationalized by having salespeople exhibit a condescending attitude, or by directly telling consumers they cannot purchase the brand, or by explicitly informing them they are not the target consumers (Hu et al., 2018; Wang and Ding, 2017; Ward and Dahl 2014; Johnson, Matear, and Thompson, 2012). What has been established in this research is that when a brand represents or expresses a consumer's self-concept, exclusion framing elicits a backlash effect and triggers negative brand attitudes and a decreased desire for the brand. In extreme cases, consumers engage in brand boycotting behaviors and spread negative word-of-mouth opinions when they are rejected by a brand (Johnson, et al., 2012).

In this paper, inspired by the work on market segmentation, framing discrimination, blatant and subtle threats, social comparison, and brand aspiration (e.g., Seibt and Forster, 2004; Burdina, Hiller, and Metz, 2017; Dyczewski and Markman, 2012), we propose that communicating market segmentation to non-target consumers via inclusion (vs. exclusion) framing is less likely to
decrease their brand desires when the brand is perceived as attainable and that this effect is mediated by brand aspiration. In Chapter two, we develop the proposed theoretical model by reviewing literature and illustrating the conceptualization.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Market Segmentation is a Form of Brand Rejection to Non-Target Consumers

Identifying which market segment(s) a company wants to serve helps the company satisfy the target consumers (e.g., Kotler, 1980). A brand segments the market depending on different criteria, such as geographical units (e.g., nations, cities, regions), demographic factors (e.g., age, house income, education, gender), psychographic variables (e.g., personality, lifestyle, values), or behavioral factors (e.g., knowledge, attitudes to a brand) (Kotler, 1976). Past research has recognized the value of market segmentation and targeting strategies (e.g., Bamford et al., 2000; Walsh, et al., 2001; Bass, Tigert, and Lonsdale, 1968). For example, market segmentation helps companies use limited resources to maximize business effectiveness (Chernew, 2012). "High growth companies succeed by identifying and meeting the needs of certain kinds of customer, not all customers… Entrepreneurs call it common sense." (Clifford and Cavanaugh, 1988, p.53). It is a practice adopted by a wide range of industries such as banking (e.g., Cocheo, 2010), apparel and fashion (e.g., Doeringer and Crean, 2006), and financial services (e.g., Lowry and Wrege, 1996).

Most marketers and prior research focus only on the choice and needs of the selected consumers when making segmentation decisions (e.g., Haley, 1968; Schaefer, 2014; Varadarajan and Jayachandran, 1999). They deliver a message of their market segmentation to their target consumers via different ways, such as, advertising (e.g., Nike presents an athletic lifestyle of
consumers in its commercial), brand name (e.g., Baby R Us), slogan (e.g., The best a man can get, Gillette). What is missing from previous perspectives is that market segmentation and targeting are also about de-selection and rejection. This blind spot triggers important research questions about how the motivated but non-target consumers will react to the rejecting brand, and how the market segmentation decision should be communicated to the motivated but non-target consumers so as not to decrease their desire to possess the brand.

In social psychology, rejection is “a state of low relational evaluation in which a person does not regard his or her relationship with another individual as valuable, important or close” (Leary, 1990, p. 6). Similarly, a brand segments the market, selects the target market, and provides products or service to its target consumers, meanwhile considering others less important or valuable. We define market segmentation as a brand rejection, specifically, when motivated consumers approach a brand for themselves, but receive a signal that they are not considered important or valuable consumers. Using this definition, we study the effect of market segmentation as a brand rejection to the non-target consumers based on the following assumption: consumers are motivated to approach a brand because it is self-relevant. Marketers can use more than one basis or standard (e.g., gender, regions, lifestyle) to segment and identify the target market (Lee, 1992). Consumers do not react to market segmentation that is irrelevant to them. For example, the target consumers of Lululemon, an athletic brand, are women who pursue a healthy lifestyle and whose size ranges from 2 to 14. Those who pursue an athletic lifestyle but are larger than size 14 feel rejected, while those who are not interested in being athletic are not affected. Similarly, a female consumer does not react to market segmentation for a product that is used only by men. This assumption is consistent with previous research which shows that consumers exhibit negative reactions from brand rejection when the rejecting brand expresses their self-concepts (Ward and
Dahl, 2014; Johnson et al., 2012), but consumers do not exhibit negative responses when the rejecting brand is not self-relevant (Johnson et al., 2012).

*How to Communicate Market Segmentation: Exclusion Framing vs. Inclusion Framing*

When non-target consumers approach a brand, brand representatives need to know how to communicate with them to avoid a backlash effect. In social psychology, selecting targets and excluding others from a pool of candidates can be accomplished by either an exclusion strategy or an inclusion strategy (Heller, Levin and Goransson, 2002; Hugenberg, Bodenhausen, and McLain, 2006). An exclusion strategy eliminates candidates who are not qualified to use the product, while an inclusion strategy selects those who are qualified (Hugenberg, et al., 2006). Similarly, market segmentation strategy is to divide the market to different groups and select target consumers, and this strategy can be communicated via exclusion framing, saying who are excluded, or via inclusion framing, indicating who are included.

Previous research has generally studied consumers’ reactions towards brand rejection by explicitly stating that they are not the target consumers. For example, Hu et al. (2018, p. 167) examined consumers’ brand attitudes after they were told “unfortunately they were not identified as a target consumer.” Johnson et al (2012) studied the termination of brand-consumer relationships in which consumers were told by an online retailer directly that they could not buy the brand because they used too many discount coupons or because they did not share the same values as the brand. Ward and Dahl (2014) explored brand rejection in terms of salespeople’s condescending attitudes toward customers. Wang and Ding (2017) signaled that non-target consumers were not deserving of brand membership.
Inclusion framing is an alternate way to exclude others from a choice set (Heller, et al., 2002). Unlike exclusion framing, which focuses on the out-group, inclusion framing emphasizes who are the in-group members, making the out-group ones perceive the difference. In the social psychology literature, a direct attitude toward the out-group is a blatant threat, whereas, stressing the differences between groups, rather than negatively judging the out-group members is a more subtle way to communicate discrimination (Pettigrew and Meertens, 1995). A subtle threat is less recognizable, but still attracts one's attention and increases one's rumination over group membership differences (e.g., Seibt & Forster, 2004). In the market segmentation context, a subtle way to communicate with non-target consumers is to avoid any direct statement about individuals who are not the target consumers. Instead, it is to showcase the standard of being a target consumer, so that the non-target consumers perceive they are not the target consumers because they do not meet the standard. A company should be concerned about non-target customers getting upset for having been excluded because rejected consumers have decreased brand evaluation and want-to-pay, and even brand boycott or anti-brand retaliation (Ward and Dahl, 2014; Johnson et al., 2012; Wang and Ding, 2017; Hu et al., 2018).

In this paper, we focus on standards which are seen as socially desirable. Socially desirable attributes that have been studied in prior research include personality (being kind, sociable, interesting, outgoing, strong, or exciting) (Bersheid and Walster, 1974); status (having a prestigious occupation, or a happy marriage, or competence) (Miller, 1970); children (having great social relationships and excellent academic potential) (Clifford and Walster, 1973); body weight (being slim and skinny is socially desirable for girls, while being overweight is generally seen as socially undesirable) (e.g., McKinley et al., 2005); and gender differences (being older (vs. younger) is socially desirable for men (vs. women)) (Perlini et al., 2001; Perlini et al., 1999).
In a marketing context, the standards for target consumers can be socially desirable traits. For example, the owners of luxury products are assumed to have power, status, and wealth (e.g., Truong, 2010). Buying small size clothes means that the consumer is slim and has a good body shape. Being a member of an elite club means upper class membership, social capital, and personal power (Kendall, 2008). When people see someone who is more attractive, talented, or successful than they are, upward social comparison is activated (e.g., Burleson et al., 2005). We argue that this standard in the inclusion framing makes non-target consumers highly cognizant of the difference between themselves and the target consumers, and the socially desirable standard of target consumers creates an upward social comparison for non-target consumers.

**How does Exclusion Framing (vs. Inclusion Framing) Affect the Non-Target Consumers?**

Converging evidence shows that linguistic framings and phrases influence consumers’ perception and purchase decision making (e.g., You et al., 2019; Wolf et al., 2016; Pennebaker, Mehl, and Niederhoffer, 2003; Cheema and Patrick, 2008; Levin and Gaeth, 1988). For example, “Thank you for the wait”, compared with “Sorry for the wait”, enhances consumers’ self-esteem and satisfaction (You et al., 2019). Self-talks beginning with “I don’t” makes consumers feel more empowered than “I can’t” (Patrick and Hagtvedt, 2012). The message from a firm agent using “I” vs. “we” causes more customer satisfaction (Packard, Moore, and McFeran, 2018). “I think” vs. “I feel” in persuasion message has been found more convincing for recipients who are cognitively vs. affectively oriented (Mayer and Tomala, 2010).

Similarly, a minor change in framing a choice option also influences people’s judgement and decisions (e.g., Tversky and Kahneman, 1986; Kühberger, 1998). Exclusion framing emphasizes eliminating those who are not qualified as an in-group member (Yaniv et al., 2002),
inducing more stereotyping (Hugenberg, Bodenhausen, and McLain, 2006) and causing non-target consumers to focus on their lack of qualifications. Direct and blatant feedback on one’s lack of qualification generates negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, helplessness, depression, and frustration (Williams and Govan, 2005; Cacioppo and Hawkley, 2009; Baumeister and Leary, 1995), diminished self-esteem (Lee and Shrum, 2012; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, and Downs, 1995), and decreased self-confidence (Abrams, Hogg and Marques, 2005). Blatant threat causes the targets to be inclined to react defensively (e.g., Wan, et al., 2013), to avoid the threat source to prevent any potential further threat (Seibe and Forster, 2004; Keller and Dauenheimer, 2003), and to focus on restoring their self-concept (Bechwati and Morrin, 2007; Baumeister, Dale, and Sommer, 1998).

In contrast, inclusion framing emphasizes the qualified options, making people consider seriously and engage in deeper deliberations about the selected options (Levin, Huneke, and Jasper, 2000; Hugenberg, Bodenhausen and McLain, 2006). In this case, inclusion framing highlights the boundary between the in- and out-brand group members, which is a more ambiguous message. Research in social psychology shows that individuals facing negative feedback usually prefer an ambiguous interpretation of their qualities rather than explicit negative feedback (Snyder and Wicklund, 1981). When motivated (but rejected) consumers are aware that target consumers possess socially desirable traits that the rejected consumer does not possess, upward social comparison emerges automatically, and this creates an aspirational effect (Festinger, 1954); this motivates the rejected consumer to reduce the “distance” between themselves and those who have the desired qualities. Therefore, we hypothesize that

*H1: Non-target consumers encountering inclusion (vs. exclusion) framing will have higher brand desire.*
**The Moderating Effect of Perceived Attainability**

We argue that when consumers perceive that the rejecting brand is less attainable, the positive effect of inclusion framing (vs. exclusion framing) on brand desire will diminish. Upward social comparison can trigger a desire for people to enhance their attributes (Wheeler, 1966) and to improve themselves in order to be closer to the comparison target, but only if the improvement is seen as attainable (Dyczewski and Markman, 2012). Attainability makes the process seem less unfair (Gilliland, et al., 2001), and promotes a sense of self-efficacy and control (Coffee, Rees and Haslam, 2009; Gernigon and Delloye, 2003). Major, Testa, and Bylsma (1991) indicated that if a superstar's success is perceived as attainable, others are encouraged to strive for higher achievement. Similarly, research on goal setting shows that individuals work harder and are more motivated to achieve a goal only if the goal is seen as attainable (Burdina, Hiller, and Metz, 2017). Thus, upward social comparison can threaten one's self-esteem and self-efficacy (Marsh, Kong and Hau, 2000; Collins, 1996; Richins, 1991), but only when the person perceives that there is little chance to improve (Collins, 1996).

In the brand rejection context, inclusion framing is less likely to trigger ego defense than exclusion framing, and the perceived attainability of becoming a brand's target consumer justifies the legitimacy of consumers’ needs for being one of the target consumers (Jost et al., 2005). The perception that the standard can be attained creates hopes and possibilities (Weiner, 1979); as a result, consumers in an inclusion framing situation aspire to meet the standard, decrease the “distance” between themselves and the desired positive stimuli, and manifest a stronger brand desire.

We believe that this moderating effect of perceived attainability is not present in the exclusion framing condition. Once a person’s defensive mechanism is activated, it overwhelms
the possibility that the person can continue pursuing the brand; this occurs because a defense
mechanism is a “motivated unconscious process” that is beyond conscious awareness (Cramer,
2001, pp., 639; Roediger, 1990). Therefore, we argue that consumers encountering exclusion
framing will experience decreased brand desire regardless of the perceived attainability of the
brand.

Based on the above reasoning, we hypothesize that:

\( H_2: \) After encountering inclusion framing (vs. exclusion framing), non-target consumers
have higher brand desire if they perceive the brand is attainable. If the brand is perceived to be
less attainable, the positive effect of inclusion framing will be mitigated.

**Market Segmentation Communication Influences Brand Desire via Brand Aspiration**

We propose that market segmentation communication influences non-target consumers’
brand desires, but the effect is mediated by their brand aspirations. Aspirations refer to goals and
motives which are generated from previous experiences and the expectations of the future (Ansoff,
1979). Brand aspiration refers to consumers’ expectations that the brand provides “identity
signaling, social recognition, self-esteem, and achievement signaling” (e.g., Sreejesh, Sarkar, and
Roy, 2016, p. 465). Even a non-luxury brand has an aspired identity (e.g., an energy drink for
athletes) (Dimofte, Goodstein, and Brumbaugh, 2015).

Exclusion framing reduces peoples’ aspirations for the rejecting brand. Communication by
exclusion framing makes non-target consumers focus on who is excluded, but not on who is
included. With an exclusion mind-set rather than an inclusion mind-set, individuals are less likely
to consider possible options (Levin et al. 2000). Non-target consumers who encounter exclusion
framing perceive the rejecting brand as a threat to their personal or social identity, self-esteem, or
achievement. In other words, exclusion framing decreases the brand aspiration of non-target consumers by making them feel that they have little hope or expectation that this brand can bring them any benefits.

In contrast, communicating market segmentation via inclusion framing motivates people to pursue the brand because rejecting non-target consumers via inclusion framing delivers a message that only those who meet the standard have the prestige to be the target consumers. This creates an image and identity of in-group members (e.g., being slim, educated, successful, or powerful). Possessions can reflect success (Richins, 1994; Belk, 1988), and the object that symbolizes that success is often beyond the reach of the average person (Founier and Richins, 1991). People seek group distinctiveness in order to secure their social identity and status (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Possessing a brand is a symbol of social status and helps consumers gain or maintain recognition in a social environment (Truong, 2010). Inclusion framing communicates the message that consumers who own the brand are those who have successfully achieved a certain standard. Therefore, “the extent to which consumers perceive that a brand can stand out as a signal of their own personal achievement” influences brand aspiration (Sreejesh, Sarkar, and Roy, 2016, p. 470). Based on the argument above, we propose that communicating brand rejection via inclusion framing increases consumers’ brand aspirations.

The generation of brand aspiration is also influenced by perceived attainability. A challenging but unachievable goal has been found to decrease one’s intrinsic motivation (Locke, 1968), while a realistically obtainable goal motivates people to expend more effort (e.g., Locke, 1968; Gómez-Miñambres, 2012). Research also demonstrates that when individuals perceive a gap between themselves and a superior comparison target, they are motivated to improve themselves
and be closer to the comparison target, but only if the improvement is seen as attainable (e.g., Dyczewski and Markman, 2012). Therefore, we hypothesize that

**H3:** After encountering inclusion framing (vs. exclusion framing), non-target consumers have higher brand desire if they perceive the brand is attainable, mediated by their increased (vs. decreased) brand aspiration. If the brand is perceived to be less attainable, the effect will be mitigated.

**Chapter III: Methods**

To test these hypotheses that had been developed in Chapter two, we conducted six studies. Study 1 tested the main effect of market segmentation framing on non-target consumers’ brand desires (Hypothesis 1). Study 2 examined the interaction effect of brand rejection and perceived attainability on brand desire (Hypothesis 2). Studies 3 and 4 tested the mediating effect of brand aspiration to examine Hypothesis 3. To rule out an alternative explanation that the feedback length may influence peoples’ reactions to the rejecting brand, we conducted studies 5 and 6 by using comparable manipulations for exclusion vs. inclusion framing. Finally, a meta-analysis was conducted by the results of Studies 2-6, to detect the statistical power of the proposed interaction effect.

**Study 1**

**Pretest** To choose self-expressive features of the stimuli in Study 1, we did a pretest among 27 university students via an online study. We first asked participants to write down five important things that they felt defined their current selves, and five important things that they felt defined their ideal selves. We then gave them the definition of the self-expressive benefits of
products (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), and asked them to evaluate the degree of self-expressiveness (Not at all = 1, Extremely = 5) of 11 different stimuli (e.g., classical meat balls, coffee, a romantic hotel room, healthy food, young professional groups, etc.). Based on the one-sample t-test, we compared the self-expressiveness value with the midpoint of the scale (3). Four stimuli were chosen with high levels of self-expressiveness, including a romantic hotel room ($M_1 = 3.65, t (26) = 3.56, p < .005$), modern lifestyle ($M_2 = 3.88, t (26) = 4.07, p < .000$), young professionals ($M_3 = 3.46, t (26) = 2.60, p < .05$), and a night club ($M_4 = 3.85, t (26) = 3.35, p < .005$).

*Design and Procedure* Study 1 was a one-way design with 3 levels of independent variable (Exclusion Framing (EF) vs. Inclusion Framing (IF) vs. Control) between-subjects design. A total of 297 university students ($M_{age} = 20.6, Male: 50.5\%$) participated in this study for partial course credit.

Participants were first introduced to the "Banyan Tree Restaurant & Hotel" brand, and told that the company was searching for target consumers. Descriptions indicated that Banyan Tree fits a modern lifestyle, offers night clubs for a fun-seeking young crowd, gives young business elites networking opportunities, and also provides a romantic environment for young couples. Participants were told that if they completed the survey and were then identified as target consumers, they would be given membership benefits. The eleven-item survey contained a variety of questions (e.g., "How many times do you go to the gym per week?" "How many times do you go to a restaurant per month?" etc.).

After they completed the survey, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the EF condition, after waiting 10 seconds, participants were given feedback which read as follows: "Based on our analysis of your information, unfortunately, you are not a target consumer of Banyan Tree Restaurant & Hotel." In the IF condition, after waiting for 10 seconds,
participants were shown four examples of Banyan Tree's target consumers, including their names, the graduation year, employers, and job titles. In the control condition, participants were told that before they received the results they could opt to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

Next, the brand desire of all participants was measured with items adapted from a scale used to assess the "desire for fame" (Gountas, et al., 2012, p. 680) and desire to save face (Zhang, Cao, and Grigoriou, 2011). "I hope that I can be the target customer of Banyan Tree," "One day I would like to go to a Banyan Tree Restaurant," etc. (1= Strongly disagree; 7= Strongly agree) (α = .91) (see Appendix 4). To check the manipulation effect, we used the definition of rejection to test participants' perceived feelings of rejection (Leary, 1990). "I think that Banyan Tree considers me as an important consumer" (Reverse scored), "I think that Banyan Tree considers me as its target consumer" (Reverse scored), “I think that Banyan Tree considers me as its target consumer” (Reverse scored), and “I feel that I am excluded by Banyan Tree” (Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 7). Last, they provided some demographic data.

Results Compared with the control group, both EF and IF strategies make participants feel that they are being rejected (M_{EF} = 3.95, M_{control} = 2.37, F (1, 196) = 105.21, p < .000; M_{IF} = 3.19, M_{control} = 2.37, F (1, 198) = 21.45, p < .000). Compared with participants in the control condition, those in IF conditions had reduced brand desire (M_{IF} = 4.51, M_{control} = 4.90, F (1, 198) = 5.35, p < .05, Cohen’s d = 0.327). Also, there was a significant main effect of EF (vs. IF) on brand desire (M_{EF} = 4.11, M_{IF} = 4.51, F (1, 194) = 5.02, p < .05, Cohen’s d = 0.328) (see Fig. 1). Furthermore, given the sample size, effect size and an α level 5%, a post hoc power was calculated in G*Power. Results show that the power of the comparison between IF and control condition is 0.745, and the power of the comparison between EF and IF is 0.740.
**Discussion**  Participants in both inclusion framing and exclusion framing conditions felt that they were not target consumers, however, inclusion framing induced a higher brand desire for non-target consumers than exclusion framing. This result supports Hypothesis 1, with a statistical power 0.74. Additionally, compared with the control group, participants in the IF condition had reduced brand desire. One possible reason is that participants may have little interest in the stimuli we used in Study 1 (i.e., Banyan Tree Hotel & Restaurant). Instead, university students have more salient social or self-identities, such as a sports team, a music group, a favorite color, a specific hobby, etc. (Chernev, Hamilton, and Gal, 2011). In this case, a night club, a sports team, or a university association rather than a hotel & restaurant may have more appeal for them. Therefore, when a restaurant & hotel did not represent the important self-identity of participants, they felt that the brand was not relevant to them. In the second study, we look into this issue by using a stimulus that may have a stronger association with the self-identity of participants.

**Study 2**

Political identities are stronger than some other social identities (Westwood et al., 2015). In 2017, approximately 57% of Americans who were polled self-identified with a specific political party (28% were Democrats and 29% were Republicans, Party Affiliation, 2017). In Study 2, we used a brand – Parliament Pub that fits with participants’ political identities and examine the interaction effect between marketing segmentation communication and perceived attainability on non-target consumers’ brand desires.
Pretest 1  

Attainability is influenced by a person’s perceived improvement opportunity (Lockwood, Kunda, and Insco, 1997) and one's self-efficacy (Nasco and Marsh, 1999). To manipulate perceived attainability, we used two criteria for the target consumers: volunteer experience in the Party and work experience for the Party. We predicted that compared with work experience, volunteer experience for a Party would be perceived as more attainable. We conducted a between-subjects design pretest on CrowdFlower (an online data collecting website). Participants were asked about their political identity, i.e., "Which political Party are you in?" Then they were asked either "In your opinion, to do some volunteer work for the Party is ____" or "In your opinion, to have work experience in the Party is ____" (1 = unattainable, 7 = attainable). Results revealed that to have volunteer experience in a Party was considered significantly more attainable than having work experience in a Party ($M_{volunteer} = 5.92$, $M_{work} = 5.10$, $F (1, 327) = 22.12$, $p < .000$).

Pretest 2  

To manipulate IF, participants should perceive that the target consumers are different from them and are admirable. Pretest 2 was also conducted on CrowdFlower, and 92 participants were asked about their political identity (either Democratic or Republican). Then they were shown the profile of each target consumer including their name, age, occupation, employer, and work experience/volunteer experience for the Party. All participants then completed a survey about (1) their perceived difference from these people, and (2) whether they consider these people good standards (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). A one-sample t-test showed that participants perceived these people as significantly different from them ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.09$, $t (91) = 3.688$, $p < .000$); they also saw them as representing a good standard, which made them admirable ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.67$, $t (91) = 2.493$, $p < .05$). Additionally, between more attainable (MA) and less attainable (LA) groups, there was no significant difference in the perceived
difference from the target consumers (M_{MA} = 4.26, M_{LA} = 4.58, F (1, 90) = 2.012, p > .10) and perceived admired standard (M_{MA} = 4.14, M_{LA} = 4.74, F (1, 90) = 2.97, p > .05).

**Design and Procedure**  In a 3 (EF vs. IF vs. Control) by 2 (Perceived attainability: high vs. low) between-subject design, 306 participants (M_{age} = 38, Male: 40%) were recruited from CrowdFlower. Based on the study design, we chose contributors only from the United States to make sure the participants had an American political identity.

Participants were first asked (1) whether they were basically a Democratic or a Republican, and (2) which candidate they voted for in the presidential election of 2016 (Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump). “When individuals transition from voting for a candidate from a particular political party to viewing themselves as members of that political party, they shift from being unaffiliated individuals who happened to behave in a certain way to being individuals who embrace a full-fledged political identification” (Reed et al., 2012, p. 312). They were then told that the Parliament Pub was one famous local political-theme pub for the ____ Party (this blank was customized based on participants’ answers to the first question).

Second, participants were invited to complete a survey that included the Conservatism-Liberalism Scale (Mehrabian, 1996). They were then randomly assigned to complete one of two surveys relevant to their volunteer experience with the ___ Party or work experience for the ____ Party (pretest showed that volunteer experience was perceived more attainable than work experience with the Party, M_{volunteer} = 5.92, M_{work} = 5.10, F (1, 327) = 22.12, p <.000). Namely, they were asked “How long have you volunteered for ___ Party? (1: Never, 2: Once, 3: A few times, 4: Most of the time, 5: Always” or “Have you worked for ___ Party? (1: No, 2: Yes)”. After that, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: EF, IF, or Control (see Appendix 2). In the less attainable (vs. more attainable) EF condition, participants were told they were not
the target consumer based on their work (vs. volunteer) experience for the ___ Party, while in the less attainable (vs. more attainable) IF condition, participants were shown four profiles of target consumers, including their name, occupation, and work (vs. volunteer) experience for the ___ Party (the pretest result shows that the four people are considered admirable: M = 4.43, SD = 1.67, t (91) = 2.493, p < .05). In the control condition, participants were told that they would receive the results after filling out a questionnaire. All participants were then asked to complete a questionnaire which focused on brand desire, manipulation check, and demographic questions.

Results  Before analyzing the data, eleven participants were removed from the sample because they indicated that they were neither Republican nor Democratic. To make sure participants in IF condition feel they were different from the target consumers, seventy-five participants were discarded because they indicated that they had work experience for the Party or had volunteered for the Party “most of the time” or “always” (the four target consumers in the unattainable IF condition had work experience for the Party, while the four target consumers in the attainable IF condition had at least 3 year volunteer experience for the Party). The valid data for further analysis was from 219 participants. The manipulation check showed that compared with the control group, the EF and IF group participants felt that they were rejected (M_{EF} = 5.21, M_{control} = 3.19, F (1, 144) = 107.24, p < .000; M_{IF} = 3.74, M_{control} = 3.19, F (1, 139) = 7.19, p < .01).

We created the dummy variables D1 (EF = 1, others are 0), D2 (IF = 1, others are 0) and D3 (Control = 1, others are 0) to examine the effect of EF and IF on brand desire influenced by perceived attainability. A 2-way interaction effect indicated that IF (vs. EF) caused a higher brand desire when the rejecting brand was perceived as more attainable (vs. less attainable) (β = 1.121, t = 2.432, p < .05, partial $\eta^2 = 0.021$, statistical power = 0.578). EF (vs. control) had a negative main effect on brand desire (β = -.965, t = -4.220, p < .000), but the 2-way interaction effect with
perceived attainability was not significant (β = -.514, t = -1.112, p > .10) (see Figure 2). Moreover, the post-hoc tests showed that when the brand was perceived as less attainable, there was no significant difference between EF and IF (M_{EF} = 3.42, M_{IF} = 3.50, F (1, 87) = .059, p > .10), while participants in EF or IF condition have a lower brand desire than those in the control condition M_{EF} = 3.42, M_{control} = 4.19, F (1, 86) = 6.005, p < .05; M_{IF} = 3.50, M_{control} = 4.19, F (1, 83) = 5.094, p < .05). When the brand was perceived as more attainable, participants in the IF condition had a significantly higher brand desire than those in the EF condition (M_{IF} = 4.27, M_{EF} = 3.07, F (1, 57) = 14.92, p < .000), participants in the EF condition had a significant lower brand desire than those in the control condition (M_{EF} = 3.07, M_{control} = 4.36, F (1, 57) = 14.78, p < .000), while those in IF condition and control condition had no significant difference (M_{IF} = 4.27, M_{control} = 4.36, F (1, 58) = .066, p > .10) (see Figure 2).
leading to more brand desire. Study 3 was conducted to examine the hypothesized mediating effect.

**Study 3**

In this study, we tested the mediating effect of brand aspiration (i.e., the aspirational value a consumer perceives from the brand) (Lant, 1992; Sreejesh, 2015). We conducted a 2 (EF vs. IF) by 2 (perceived attainability: high vs. low) between-subjects design by using the same scenario as in Study 2. We predicted that for participants who encounter a rejecting but attainable brand, IF would make them have a higher brand aspiration and brand desire than EF. Whereas those who encounter a rejecting but unattainable brand, the positive effect of IF (vs. EF) would diminish. We also predicted that brand aspiration mediates the effect of brand rejection on brand desire.

**Design and Procedure** Two hundred participants were recruited from Mturk (M<sub>age</sub> = 41.7, Male: 47%). This study replicated Study 2 except that the control condition was dropped and brand aspiration was measured. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two condition (EF or IF). For each condition, participants randomly received one of two types of feedback: lack of work experience or limited volunteer experience for the Political Party (as in Study 2). After that, we measured participants’ brand desires, brand aspiration, manipulation checks, and demographic questions. The scale of brand aspiration is adapted from Sreejesh, Sarkar, and Roy (2016). For example, “Joining Parliament Pub makes me stand out from the crowd”; “Joining Parliament Pub appropriately showcases my identity”; “Joining Parliament Pub makes me be noticed among others”; and “Joining Parliament Pub gives me an elevated sense of pride” (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) (see Appendix 5). To increase the accuracy of the results, we also added one question at the end of the survey which read as follows: “Overall, I believe that politically I am
There were three options: “Democratic,” “Republican,” or “neither Democratic nor Republican.” We deleted participants who chose the third option. Additionally, we filtered participants who indicated that they had done this study before, and those who had work experience or long-term volunteer experience for the Party. After these adjustments, 156 valid data points were available for further analysis.

Results Consistent with the results of Study 2, brand rejection has a significant interaction effect with perceived attainability on brand desire ($\beta = -.975, t = -2.05, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.027$, statistical power = 0.54, see Figure 3a). Specifically, ANOVA analysis shows that when the brand is perceived as less attainable, there is no difference between the EF and IF conditions ($M_{EF} = 3.35, M_{IF} = 3.54, F (1, 80) = .344, p > .10$), but when the brand is perceived as more attainable, those in the IF condition have a higher brand desire than those in the EF condition ($M_{EF} = 3.43, M_{IF} = 4.60, F (1, 72) = 11.38, p < .005$). The interaction effect is also significant on brand aspiration ($\beta = -.897, t = -2.00, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.025$, statistical power = 0.51, see Figure 3b). Specifically, when the brand is perceived as less attainable, there is no difference between the EF and IF conditions ($M_{EF} = 3.43, M_{IF} = 3.87, F (1, 80) = 2.13, p > .10$), but when the brand is perceived as more attainable, those in the IF condition have higher brand aspirations than those in the EF condition ($M_{EF} = 3.30, M_{IF} = 4.63, F (1, 72) = 15.40, p < .000$).

To examine the mediation effect of brand aspiration, we put the variable brand aspiration in the full model as an independent variable. Then, the direct effect of brand rejection interacted with perceived attainability and became insignificant ($\beta = -.274, t = -.874, p > .10$) while brand aspiration had a significant effect on brand desire ($\beta = .781, t = 13.673, p < .000$). We also conducted a bootstrapping analysis to examine the moderated mediation effect of brand aspiration (Process Model 8, Hayes, 2013). Results show that the indirect effect through brand aspiration is
significant ($\beta = .7010$, SE = .356, 95% CI = .027 to 1.426). Therefore, brand aspiration mediates the interaction effect between market segmentation communication framing and perceived attainability on brand desire, which supports H3.

Insert Figure 3 about here

**Discussion** Consistent with Study 2, Study 3 suggests that market segmentation communication framing interacting with perceived attainability effects non-target consumers’ brand desires. Specifically, when consumers perceive that the rejecting brand is still attainable, consumers encountering IF (vs. EF) have higher brand desire. Study 3 also demonstrates the underlying mechanism of an attainable exclusive standard's effect on brand desire, i.e., consumers' brand aspirations. Specifically, when consumers perceive that the rejecting brand is still attainable, IF increases their brand aspiration and brand desire, but when they perceive the rejection brand to be unattainable, this effect diminishes. Also, EF has a negative effect on consumers’ brand aspirations and desires, regardless of the perceived attainability.

These three studies supported H1, H2, and H3. In Study 1, we described a restaurant & hotel as a place for business elites, night club lovers, and romantic couples to university students. In Studies 2 and 3, we chose Americans as participants and designed a “Parliament Pub” to express their political self-identity. However, the effect size and statistical power of the interaction effect in Study 2 and 3 are not high (Study 2: partial $\eta^2 = 0.021$, statistical power = 0.58; Study 3: partial $\eta^2 = 0.027$, power = 0.54). The low power may result from the small sample size, or that in the specific scenario there are other factors influence the results. In Study 4, we examined the
moderated mediation effect by using a female fashion brand as the stimulus to increase the external validity of our hypothesized model.

Study 4

Studies 1, 2, and 3 used service brands (a restaurant or a pub) as a stimulus; in Study 4, we use a product brand (an athletic apparel brand) to test our hypothesized moderated mediation model. We used female participants because women are the dominant consumers of fashion brands (Lertwannawit and Mandhachitara, 2012). In the business world, clothing size is a usual exclusive standard, applied in apparel brands (e.g., Abercrombie & Fitch, Lululemon, and Brandy Melville). Many people have the motivation to be thin and healthy, and they are willing to diet or to exercise in order to achieve a smaller size of clothes (e.g., Hoegg et al., 2014; McFerran et al., 2009). Whether it is possible to be thin and wear small size clothes is subjective, based on their own motivation and personal physical condition. Therefore, in this study's scenario, perceived attainability was measured based on participants' perceived possibilities of becoming as thin as the models of the brand.

Design and Procedure In a 3 (EF vs. IF vs. Control) between-subjects study design with measured self-expressiveness and perceived attainability, 554 female participants (M_{age} = 40.5) were recruited from Mturk. After reading a consent form, participants were introduced to a women's fashion brand, (Dorna Vielly, a mock brand), and told that it was searching for target consumers. As potential consumers, participants were asked to evaluate its features and market position. We introduced the brand with words adapted from the introduction of a real fashion brand (e.g., Wone). Not every woman pursues an athletic lifestyle or perceives athletic clothing as self-relevant. We aim to study participants who think this brand is self-expressive, so after they read
the brand description we measured self-expressiveness by using five items that were adapted from an existing scale of the brand-consumer relationship (Aaker et al., 2004, p. 8). For example: "This Dorna Vielly brand connects with the part of me that really makes me tick," "This Dorna Vielly brand fits well with my current stage of life," and "This Dorna Vielly brand says a lot about the kind of person I would like to be" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Then, all participants were asked to fill out a survey, in which they were asked about their hobbies, their personal philosophy, their evaluation of the Dorna Vielly products, and their weight, height, and clothing size. Next, they were thanked and told that their information was sent to the internal screening system of Dorna Vielly, and they were asked to wait for the results.

Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the EF condition, they were told that "Based on the analysis of your information, unfortunately, you are not a target consumer of Dorna Vielly." In the IF condition, participants were showed four target consumers and indicated their name, height, weight and clothing size (which was either size 0 or size 2). In the control condition, participants were told to continue with the study by completing the survey.

Next, brand desire and brand aspiration were measured (as in Study 3). In addition, we measured perceived attainability of becoming slim by using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). For example: "It is easy for me to become as slim as the models of Dorna Vielly," "It is possible for me to have the same size as the models of Dorna Vielly," and "It is not a big problem for me to be as thin as the models of Dorna Vielly." Finally, participants completed manipulation check questions, answered demographic questions, and were debriefed.

**Results** Prior to data analysis, we filtered 167 participants who do not think the brand is relevant to them (i.e., those whose average score on the scale of self-expressiveness was smaller than 4). We also removed 32 participants whose clothing size was either 0 or 2. This was necessary
because target consumers in the IF condition have either a size 0 or size 2, and only participants whose size is larger than 2 could perceive a difference from the target consumers. A manipulation check also showed that those whose size is 0 or 2 did not feel they were rejected ($M_{IF} = 3.80$, $M_{control} = 3.53$, $F(1, 26) = .182, p > .10$), while only those whose size is larger than 2 felt rejected ($M_{IF} = 5.36$, $M_{control} = 3.70$, $F(1, 337) = 120.361, p < .000$). The valid data for the following analysis is therefore 355 participants.

The results also showed that participants in the EF condition felt rejected compared with those in the control condition ($M_{EF} = 5.88$, $M_{control} = 3.70$, $F(1, 340) = 263.134, p < .000$). To test the multicollinearity between brand rejection and perceived attainability of the rejecting brand, regression results show that there is no significant causal relationship between brand rejection (EF vs. IF vs. control) and perceived attainability ($\beta = .147, t = 1.517, p > .10$).

We created dummy variables D1 (EF is 1, and others are 0), D2 (IF is 1, and others are 0), and D3 (Control group is 1, and others are 0). We ran a two-way regression with brand desire and brand aspiration as the dependent variables, and D1, D2, and perceived attainability, as well as their two-way interactions as predictors of brand desire and brand aspiration. We also calculated everyone's Body Mass Index (BMI), which is an index that indicates body fat by using height and weight. BMI is an objective variable that may affect peoples’ subjective perceptions of attainability and their reactions to brand rejection. The correlation between participants' real clothing sizes and perceived attainability showed that they were strongly correlated ($r = -.450, n = 355, p < .005$). Therefore, we considered BMI as a control variable in case of confounding effects.

The results showed a significant 2-way interaction effect among D2 and perceived attainability on brand desire ($\beta = .324, t = 2.915, p < .005$; see Fig. 4a) and on brand aspiration ($\beta = .445, t = 4.252, p < .000$; see Fig. 4b). D1 has a negative main effect on both brand desire ($\beta = -$
1.322, t = -7.169, p < .000) and brand aspiration (β = -1.163, t = -6.668, p < .000). However, the two-way interaction effect among D1 and perceived attainability was not significant on either brand desire (β = -.055, t = -.553, p > .10) or brand aspiration (β = .139, t = 1.493, p > .10). The results suggest that exclusion framing decreases non-target consumers’ brand desires and brand aspirations regardless of their perceived attainability, but when they perceive the rejecting brand is attainable, inclusion framing increases non-target consumers’ brand desires and brand aspirations.

Next, to compare IF with EF, we ran a two-way regression with brand desire and brand aspiration as the dependent variables, and D2, D3, and perceived attainability, and their two-way interactions as predictors, with BMI as a control variable. We ran a two-way regression with brand desire as the dependent variable, and D2, D3, and perceived attainability, as well as their two-way interactions as predictors of brand desire and brand aspiration. The results showed a significant 2-way interaction effect among D2 and perceived attainability on both brand desire (β = .379, t = 3.513, p < .005, partial η² = 0.092, statistical power = 0.98; see Fig. 4a) and on brand aspiration (β = .305, t = 3.010, p < .005, partial η² = 0.039, statistical power = 0.62; see Fig. 4b). The results support the argument that when non-target consumers perceive the rejecting brand as attainable, inclusion framing leads to higher brand desire and brand aspiration than exclusion framing.

Furthermore, we analyzed the mediating effect of brand aspiration (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Regression results showed that the significant two-way interaction effect among IF (vs. EF), and perceived attainability disappeared when we added brand aspiration in the full model (β = .146, t = 1.915, p > .05), and that brand aspiration had a direct effect on brand desire (β = .765, t = 19.591, p < .000). We also examined the moderated mediation effect by PROCESS analysis (Hayes, 2013, model 8), with D2 (IF is 1, and others are 0) as an independent variable (X),
perceived attainability as the moderator (W), brand aspiration as a mediator (M), brand desire as the dependent variable (Y), and D3 (Control is 1, and others are 0) and BMI as covariate variables. Result indicated that the indirect effect of brand aspiration was significant between IF (vs. EF) on brand desire (β = .2796, SE = .0662; 95% CI = .1515 to .4090). To compare IF and the control group, in model 8, we used D2 (IF is 1, and others are 0) as an independent variable (X), perceived attainability as a moderator (W), brand aspiration as a mediator (M), brand desire as the dependent variable (Y), and D1 (EF is 1, and others are 0) and BMI as covariate variables. The PROCESS analysis indicated that the indirect effect of brand aspiration was significant between IF (vs. control), moderated with perceived attainability and brand desire (β = .2796, SE = .0655; 95% CI = .1550 to .4108).

Discussion  Study 4 showed that non-target consumers who encountered inclusion framing had higher brand desire if they felt that the brand was attainable, and this effect was mediated by their higher brand aspiration. This finding replicates the results of Studies 2 and 3. When we compared inclusion framing and the control group, we found inclusion framing increased non-target consumers’ brand desires because it increased their brand aspiration. The existing literature notes that rejection from an aspirational brand can increase consumers' desires for this brand (Ward and Dahl, 2014). This study used a mock product brand and we found that even if consumers had never heard of the brand before, brand rejection via inclusion framing can enhance consumers’ brand aspirations and brand desires. Additionally, Study 4 shows that brand aspiration mediates the effect of brand rejection on brand desire. These findings are new, and show how a non-luxury
brand can increase the brand desire of rejected consumers. The rejection apparently creates an aspirational effect, making motivated but non-target consumers desire the rejecting brand and thereby to become the target consumers. Study 4 also demonstrates that this positive effect is eliminated when the perceived attainability is low.

**Study 5**

Market segmentation can be explicitly communicated as feedback to non-target consumers when they approach a brand. It can also be positioned subtly by slogan, for example, when Haggar, an American apparel brand, positions their men’s clothes as “fit for the fit” to indicate their target consumers are men who work out (Crawford, 1985). To examine the effect of inclusion vs. exclusion framing in terms of a slogan in brand positioning, we conducted study 5. In the first four studies, inclusion framing showing the examples of target consumers provides more information than exclusion framing. To rule out the alternative explanation that the positive effect of inclusion framing results from more information being provided to consumers, study 5 manipulated two different ways of communicating brand positioning by stating an identical standard of clothing size for target customers.

**Design and Procedure**  Study 5 replicates Study 4, but drops the control condition and changes the manipulation of IF and EF. In a 2 conditions (EF vs. IF) between-subjects study design with measured perceived attainability, 260 female participants ($M_{age} = 39.7$) were recruited from Mturk. After reading the brand story (as in Study 4), participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in which they saw brand positioning of this brand. In the inclusion framing condition, the brand positioning said “Dorna Vielly comes in sizes 0-10.”, while in the exclusion framing condition, it said “”Dorna Vielly does not come in sizes bigger than 10” (see Appendix
3). After that, all participants were measured for brand desire, perceived attainability, manipulation check, etc. We also measured their attention by asking them 1) what is the biggest size of clothes Dorna Vielly produces, and 2) what is the brand name? We discarded the data of participants who gave a wrong answer to the first question or those who could not remember the brand name. Additionally, to analyze non-target consumers, we also removed participants whose size was smaller than and including 10. Finally, 98 participants were left as the valid data for the following analysis.

Results One sample t test was used to examine the manipulation effect; it showed that people in exclusion framing and inclusion framing conditions both felt that they were rejected by the brand (\(M_{EF} = 5.74, SD = .458, t (50) = 42.711, p < .000; M_{IF} = 5.30, SD = 1.211, t (46) =13.004, p < .000\)). Participants in the inclusion framing condition had higher brand desire than those in the exclusion framing condition (\(M_{EF} = 1.60, M_{IF} = 2.26, F(1, 96) = 8.268, p < .005\)). The interaction effect between market segmentation communication and perceived attainability showed a significant effect on participants’ brand desires (\(\beta = .608, t = 2.455, p < .05\), partial \(\eta^2 = 0.099\), statistical power = 0.70). Specifically, for people who perceived this brand as more attainable (M+SD), those in the inclusion framing condition had higher brand desire than those in the exclusion framing condition (\(M_{IF} = 3.23, M_{EF} = 1.56, F (1, 9) = 11.30, p < .005\)). For those who perceived the brand as less attainable (M-SD), those in the inclusion framing condition did not show higher brand desire than those in the exclusion framing condition (\(M_{IF} = 1.85, M_{EF} = 1.51, F (1, 59) = 1.917, p > .10\)).

Discussion Study 5 uses brand positioning to convey market segmentation and targeting strategy to examine the different effect of inclusion and exclusion framing on non-target consumers. The results show that non-target consumers who encounter inclusion framing of
market segmentation have a higher brand desire than those who experience exclusion framing, even though both groups know they are not target consumers. This is especially true when participants perceive that the brand is still attainable.

However, the brand desire in all conditions is lower than the mid-point 4 (more attainable: \( \text{M}_{\text{IF}} = 3.23, \text{M}_{\text{EF}} = 1.56 \); less attainable: \( \text{M}_{\text{IF}} = 1.85, \text{M}_{\text{EF}} = 1.51 \)), which means participants did not have a positive desire to purchase this brand. One possible reason is that not all females are interested in athletic clothes or an athletic lifestyle. In Study 4, for example, about 30% of participants indicated that the athletic clothing brand did not express their identity. Another possible reason is that the exclusive standard of target consumers of this rejecting brand (size 10) did not trigger consumers’ brand aspiration. In other words, the exclusion standard (i.e., size 10) in Study 5 did not make non-target consumers feel this brand could make them special or unique, and to be a target consumer with size 10 was not so admirable.

To find out which size is admirable for women in general, we did a post-test. We recruited 94 female participants and asked them to help a fashion brand understand how consumers perceive different clothing sizes. All participants were first asked to choose which sizes from 0 to 18 are admirable for women, and which sizes make women feel proud. Then they were asked to evaluate each size, that is, “Being size 6 is admirable”; “Being size 6 would make a female feel proud” (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). Results showed that size 6 and 4 were considered the most admirable sizes for females, with 60% and 56% participants choosing those sizes, respectively. Also, sizes 6 and 4 were chosen by 51% and 61% participants to be the sizes that make the female feel proud. In contrast, 33% people chose size 10 as admirable, and 23% people said size 10 could make the female feel proud. A one sample t-test also demonstrated that size 6 was considered admirable (\( \text{M}_{6} = 4.77, \text{SD} = 1.719, t(93) = 4.320, p < .000 \)), and size 6 made a
female feel proud ($M_6 = 4.80$, SD = 1.590, t (93) = 4.865, $p < .000$), however, size 10 was not considered admirable ($M_{10} = 3.96$, SD = 1.759, t (93) = -.235, $p > .10$), and size 10 could not make a female feel proud ($M_{10} = 3.63$, SD = 1.620, t (93) = -2.229, $p < .05$). The results showed that size 10 as an exclusion standard was not considered admirable, which might be the reason that participants did not have high brand desire overall. The finding also provides an interesting moderator for future research, namely that the exclusion standard plays a role in the effect of market segmentation on non-target consumers’ brand desires.

**Study 6**

We conducted Study 6 to examine the effect of inclusion framing vs. exclusion framing in terms of a slogan in brand positioning on non-target consumers’ brand desire, on condition that 1) this brand is self-expressive, and 2) the rejection standard is socially desirable. To increase the homogeneity of participants, we recruited students from University of Manitoba and used a mock brand – Leadership Institute of Manitoba that expresses their identity as the stimulus. One factor to evaluate students’ success is the grade point average (GPA) (Deviney, Mills, Gerlich, and Santander, 2011), in other words, a high GPA is generally desired. Therefore, in this study, a GPA was considered the rejection criteria of a university student association.

**Pretest** To understand what is a desired GPA for the participants, a pretest was conducted to 41 undergraduate students ($M_{age} = 20.02$, Male: 70.7%). They were asked three questions “What is your current GPA (out of 5.0)?”, “What is your desired GPA (out of 5.0) for your undergraduate program?”, and “In your opinion, what is the ideal GPA (out of 5.0) for undergraduate students?”. Results revealed that the average GPA for current students is 3.33 (SD = 0.692), and their desired GPA is 3.95 (SD = 0.474). Therefore, in Study 6, we used GPA 4.0 as the rejection standard.
Design and Procedure  Two hundred and thirty nine students (M_{age} = 19.87, Male: 63.2\%) were invited to a marketing research lab. First, all participants read the introduction of The Leadership Institute of Manitoba (LIM), including its mission, value, and objectives. Then, they were told that LIM was conducting market research to identify its target members and they were invited to do a short survey. In the survey, they were measured the extent of self-expressiveness of LIM, their daily activities, hobbies, GPA, and work experience. After they submitted the answers of the survey, they were told that the internal system was assessing the matching degree of their information with the standard of its members. After waiting for 10 seconds, they were randomly assigned into one of two conditions. The exclusion framing of the feedback was “Thank you for your response! You GPA is lower than 4.0, so you are not eligible to be a member of LIM”, while the inclusion framing of the feedback was “Thank you for your response! Only students whose GPA are higher than 4.0 are eligible to be the members of LIM”. Then all participants were measured their brand desire, brand aspiration, perceived attainability, and responses to the manipulation. Finally, they provided demographic information and got debriefed. Fifty participants indicated their GPA were equal or bigger than 4.0, seventy-four participants demonstrated that LIM was not self-expressive (the mean of their perceived self-expressiveness were smaller than the mid-point 4, min = 1, max = 7). Also, sixteen participants gave conflict answers in a scale. After filtering these participants, 133 valid data was left for the future analysis.

Results  One-way ANOVA result showed that people in exclusion framing and inclusion framing conditions both felt that they were rejected by the brand without significant difference (M_{EF} = 5.48, SD = 1.388, M_{IF} = 5.40, SD = 1.267, F(1, 131) = .102, p > .10, min =1, max = 7).

Regression results indicated market segmentation communication and perceived attainability have significant interaction effects on participants’ brand desires (β = .394, t = 2.779,
$p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.137$, statistical power = 0.80) and their brand aspiration ($\beta = .330, t = 2.262, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.123$, statistical power = 0.73). Specifically, for people who perceived this brand as more attainable (M+SD), those in the inclusion (vs. exclusion) framing condition had higher brand desire ($M_{IF} = 5.42, M_{EF} = 3.77, F (1, 25) = 10.99, p < .005$) and brand aspiration ($M_{IF} = 5.22, M_{EF} = 4.03, F (1, 25) = 4.07, p < .10$). For those who perceived the brand as less attainable (M-SD), those in the inclusion framing condition, compared with those in the exclusion framing condition, did not show higher brand desire ($M_{IF} = 3.56, M_{EF} = 3.72, F (1, 22) = .061, p > .10$) or higher brand aspiration ($M_{IF} = 3.49, M_{EF} = 3.68, F (1, 22) = .096, p > .10$) (see Figure 6).

To examine the indirect effect of brand aspiration in the model, we conducted a bootstrapping analysis by using Process Model 8 (Hayes, 2013). Results show that the indirect effect through brand aspiration is significant ($\beta = .2215, SE = .100, 95\% CI = .0383 to .4352$). Therefore, brand aspiration mediates the interaction effect between market segmentation communication framing and perceived attainability on brand desire, which supports H3.

*Discussion* Study 6 replicates the results of Studies 3 and 4 and supports H2 and H3. When the brand is perceived attainable, the brand desire in IF condition is higher than the mid-point 4 ($M = 5.42, SD = .988, t (9) = 4.533, p < .001$). The result suggests that when a brand is self-expressive, and the rejection/inclusion standard is desirable, non-target consumers who get an inclusion framed brand rejection have higher brand desire than those who get an exclusion framed brand rejection. This study uses comparable framings with the same length and format, which rules out the alternative explanation that the positive effect of IF is because participants in the IF condition read more information than those in the EF condition in Study 1, 2, 3 and 4.
Meta-Analysis

To detect the interaction effect between brand rejection framing and perceived attainability on non-target consumers’ brand desire, a post-hoc power analysis for each study were conducted (Table 1). Individual studies indicate different statistical power (i.e., Study 2, 0.58; Study 3, 0.54; Study 4, 0.98; Study 5, 0.70; Study 6, 0.87). A meta-analysis helps improve precision and statistical power of an effect by combining small independent studies (Ellis, 2010). Accordingly, a meta-analysis was used to examine the proposed interaction effect based on the results of the six studies.

We summarized the N (sample size), M (mean), and SD (standard deviation) of brand desire in each condition of study 2-6, and input the data in the meta-analysis module in Jamovi 1.0, a sufficient statistic tool. The result of the meta-analysis indicates that the interaction effect between brand rejection framing and perceived attainability on non-target consumers’ brand desire is significant \((\beta = .678, SE = .155, p < .001, 95\%\ CI [.375, .982])\). Also, the heterogeneity of these studies is low \(\left(\tau^2 = 0, I^2 = 0\%ight)\), meaning that the results of all the studies are consistent with a high statistical power (Button et al., 2013) (see Figure 7).

Chapter IV: General Discussion

Conclusion

According to Chapter four, six studies examined and supported our hypotheses (see Table 1). Study 1 shows the different effects of inclusion and exclusion framing. Studies 2 to 6 show the interaction effect of market segmentation framing and perceived attainability on brand desire for
non-target consumers. Also, Studies 3, 4 and 6 test the mediation effect of brand aspiration. Study 5 and 6 rule out the alternative explanation that the positive effect of inclusion framing comes from using more words to provide clarity about brand positioning.

Insert Table 1 about here

This research suggests that the way market segmentation is communicated to non-target consumers influences their brand desire. The six studies in Chapter four also show results that are consistent with previous research (e.g., Ward and Dahl 2014; Johnson, et al., 2012), namely, when consumers intend to obtain a brand or product which is self-relevant, but are explicitly told or signaled by a brand that they are not valuable or important consumers, they demonstrate a reduced desire towards the rejecting brand.

This paper provides both theoretical and practical contributions. First, our work is one of the first to extend the concept rejection from social exclusion to brand rejection. In social psychology, rejection is one type of interpersonal exclusion (Leary, 1990). Everyone has belonging needs and intend to be accepted by another individual or groups, however, others can decide whether to accept him or her (Leary, 1990). Unlike social exclusion which happens through individuals or groups, brand rejection happens via different brand agents, such as advertising, slogan, brand name, brand personality, sales people or CEO. In a brand-consumer relationship, consumers pursue a brand and desire to join a brand community that expresses their social-identity for belonging needs (Fournier 1998; Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001; White and Argo, 2009; Lovelan, Smeesters, and Mandel, 2010; Reed, 2004). When they fail to access to products and service from
this brand, they would feel rejected by this brand and the brand community. Therefore, brand rejection can produce the social exclusion effect on consumers, but can be communicated in various ways.

Second, our work enriches the existing perspectives on market segmentation by conceptualizing market segmentation as a form of brand rejection. Existing research assumes that companies want to offer the best product or service experience for their target consumers (Dibb and Simkin, 1991), to differentiate their brand, and to make target consumers of the brand feel unique and distinctive. However, what is missing from much of the previous research is the fact that market segmentation and targeting are also about de-selection, i.e., implicitly or explicitly rejecting some consumer segments. How to effectively communicate market segmentation to increase the interest of de-selected consumers and purchase intention is understudied. This paper conceptualizes and differentiates two types of market segmentation communication strategies: inclusion framing and exclusion framing.

Third, our endeavor is one of the first to compare the exclusion and inclusion framing strategies, and to offer a theory about when and why de-selected consumers increase their brand desire even though they feel rejected by the brand. According to prior research, the negative effects of exclusion framing can be lessened if the rejecting brand has certain characteristics such as brand legitimacy (Hu et al., 2018, e.g., Canada Goose) or brand power (Wang and Ding, 2017, e.g., Google), and if the rejecting brand represents the ideal self of an aspiring consumer (Ward and Dahl 2014, e.g., Prada, Louis Vuitton, Gucci). The main implication of this line of research is that if a brand is not idealistic or prestigious (e.g., luxury brands), brand rejection will hurt consumers who connect the brand with their self-concept. That has generated interest in determining how brand rejection should be communicated so that it does not alienate the de-selected consumers who
connect their self-concept with the brand. By using four mock brands—Banyan Tree (Study 1), Parliament Pub (Studies 2 and 3), Dorna Vielly (Studies 4 and 5), and Leadership Institute of Manitoba (Study 6)—we found that, compared to exclusion framing, inclusion framing is a better alternative for brands that do not have pre-existing brand assets in terms of power, status, and prestige.

Fourth, we adopt a new perspective to look into the alternative process of the brand rejection effect—the concept of brand aspiration—and discover that the mediating role of brand aspiration is conditional upon whether the brand is self-relevant and whether the rejecting brand is seen as attainable. Aspirations are goals and motivations (Ansoff, 1979). We enrich the brand rejection literature by showing a potential positive consequence of brand rejection, which is to activate the goal and motivation of pursuing a brand. We also enrich the brand aspiration literature by suggesting an antecedent (market segmentation via inclusion framing) to create the aspirational effect of a brand.

Last but not least, our work suggests a solution to the managerial dilemma marketers face as they deal with the tradeoff between the desire to increase market size from future potential consumers and the desire to maximize the satisfaction of core existing consumers’ psychological needs (e.g., being unique and special). Our work provides novel insights and directions indicating how these two goals can be achieved simultaneously. When the targeting strategy is communicated via a subtle manifestation of desired target consumer characteristics (via the inclusion framing strategy), brands can achieve the perception of exclusion without creating negative backlash effects.
Implications

Consumers can perceive a brand's target consumers via public or private announcements or its "advertisements, personal selling, shows, packaging, price, etc." (Crawford, 1985, p. 244). The research reported here suggests that market segmentation—selecting some segments as target consumers and de-selecting others as non-target consumers—is a form of brand rejection. There are two types of non-target consumers: those who have no interest in the product or the brand, and those who are motivated to have the product or the brand but are not able to possess it. The former will not react to brand rejection because they do not desire the brand, while the latter feel rejected and react to the rejection because their desire for the product has been challenged. Thus, brand rejection occurs only when consumers have an interest in a brand. Beyond that basic point, we also demonstrate that negative effect of exclusion framing or inclusion framing becomes evident only when a brand is self-relevant.

The research results suggest that when marketing managers use market segmentation and targeting strategies, they should (1) utilize an inclusion framing approach to increase consumer interest in the brand, and (2) ensure that de-selected consumers perceive the brand to be attainable. These are the contingent conditions where the positive effects of brand rejection that are created by inclusion framing will be evident.

A growth strategy requires companies to either expand their product lines or expand their market to other segments, or both (Crane, et al., 2017). It is therefore necessary to communicate with non-target consumers without offending them. Our research suggests that inclusion framing is a solution to this dilemma. For example, the Club of United Business, is an Australian private and exclusive business club, whose website provides information about some club members such as the CEOs or founders of local companies. The information creates an exclusive standard for
target consumers, which potentially increases the aspiration level of other business owners to join the club.

When conveying an exclusive standard for target consumers, marketers must make sure that consumers perceive that the rejecting brand is still attainable. For example, some exclusive clubs indicate their expectations for the members, and the detailed instruction of how to achieve membership. With such instruction, people can set clear goals about what to do, which increases their chance of succeeding. Luxury brands reject consumers subtly, and the exclusive standard for target consumers is one’s financial ability. However, to make them affordable and accessible, some luxury brands allow consumers to pay by instalments (e.g., BMW, Rolex, Hermes). Statistics from a luxury retailer shows that the average order value of consumers who buy luxury products on instalment is 103.6% more than that of consumers who do not (DiNunzio, 2017).

**Limitation and Direction for Future Research**

One missing element of brand rejection research is the effect of brand rejection on *existing* target consumers. When selecting target consumers and rejecting non-target consumers helps to build up brand image, the brand rejection strategy may make existing customers feel more unique and special. Blatant rejection can be a tool to fire up and engage the in-group target consumers, resulting in their having a stronger sense of identity and satisfaction with the exclusive service because they keep out the out-group members. For example, eHarmony, an online dating website, rejects 20% of the applicants who are not looking for long-term relationship, therefore, the members of eHarmony can get the best possibility of finding a long-term partner (Brad, 2009). Future research will investigate the potential “consumer polarization” effect of blatant rejection,
decreasing the brand desire of non-target consumers but increasing the brand loyalty of the existing consumers.

The findings of our research are applicable for brands with socially desirable exclusive standards for target consumers (e.g., being slim, wealthy, successful, etc.). But will these effects apply for other brands that have exclusive standards that are not socially desirable (e.g., plus-size clothing)? For example, being slim is desirable (e.g., McKinley et al., 2005), but what if a customer is rejected by a plus-size clothing store? When the rejection is essentially a compliment, recipients may feel better about themselves rather than feeling threatened.

Compared with exclusion framing which is explicit and direct, inclusion framing is implicit and indirect, however, explicit/direct or implicit/indirect brand rejection can be expressed by more than one way. For example, a brand can implicitly or indirectly reject a consumer by high price, limited supply, product discontinuation, conflict brand personality, or a condescending attitude from salespeople. Future research will explore various implicit/indirect brand rejection communication ways that may have different effects on non-target consumers with distinct underlying mechanisms. For instance, a brand’s “personality,” which can be expressed by the metaphors in advertisements or by celebrity endorsers (Aaker, 1999; Gao, Wheeler and Shiv, 2008; Batra and Homer, 2004; Ang and Lim, 2006). If we accept the notion that consumers choose brands which represent or enhance their self-identity, a change in a brand’s “personality” may be seen as a rejection to existing consumers. For example, when Nike invited Colin Kaepernick, the controversial NFL quarterback, to be part of its ad campaign, Nike brand lovers boycotted Nike and made their displeasure known on social media (Ferreras, 2018). And when Gillette launched an ad campaign to protest “toxic masculinity,” some existing male customers went on social media
and said that they would never use Gillette products again because Gillette's ads were essentially labeling all men as toxic (King, 2019).

Compared with setting a visible exclusive standard of target consumers (e.g., education background, occupation, body size) we have studied in this paper, Nike and Gillette use subtle rejection by highlighting the invisible values of the target segments (such as courage to pursue one's belief in Nike's case). Neither of them blatantly indicate who are not the target consumers. Instead, from the brand value they present via the TV commercials, existing consumers can perceive the conflict between their own identity and the brand identity. When consumers feel disidentification, they avoid being associated with the brand (Englis and Solomon, 1995). Consequently, brand rejection via changing brand personality leads to brand avoidance of its existing consumers. Interestingly, after the boycott, Nike's online sales increased by 25% and Gillette's sales trend did not change. One possible source of the increased sales is new market segments. Future research is needed to examine when and how a change in brand personality causes existing customers to feel stigmatized and rejected, and when and why it increases the brand desire of new consumers. Marketers must therefore consider both risks and potential opportunities when they communicate with consumers.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Manipulation in Study 1

1) Exclusion framing:

Based on our analysis of your information, unfortunately, you are not the target consumer of Banyan Tree Restaurant & Hotel.

2) Inclusion framing:

The Banyan Tree brand is all about our consumers. The values, images, socio-economic backgrounds of our consumers define what our brand identity. The following are some examples of our target consumers.

Jenny Black

- B.COMM. 2012
- Employer: Boston Consulting Group (The second largest consulting firm in the world)
- Job title: Senior Consultant

Cheng Lee

- B.A. 2011
- Employer: Great-west Life (A life insurance company)
- Job title: Manager of Investment Plan Department

Adam Bello

- B.E. 2008
- Employer: Facebook (A Social Media Service Corporation)
- Job title: Specialist Engineer

Alex Smith

- Ph.D. 2014
- Employer: University of Toronto (A research-intensive post-secondary educational institution)
- Job title: Assistant Professor

3) Control group
Thank you for your information! The internal system is assessing the matching degree of your information with the standard of its target consumers. Please complete the following questionnaire before the result by clicking the NEXT button.

Appendix 2 – Manipulation in Study 2

1) Less attainable exclusion framing:

Based on the information of your occupation, unfortunately, you are not the target consumer of Parliament Pub.

2) More attainable exclusion framing:

Based on the information of your limited volunteer experience for __ Party, unfortunately, you are not the target consumer of Parliament Pub.

3) Less attainable inclusion framing:

The target consumers of Parliament Pub are highly educated academic researchers, doctors, and lawyers, who have contributed to __ community with their passion and wisdom.

   Alex Smith, 29
   • lawyer, New Era Law Office
   • 2-year working experience for __ Party.

   Jenny Black, 34
   • Professor in International Relations
   • 4-year working experience for __ Party.

   Cheng Lee, 38
   • Medical Doctor
   • 5-year working experience for __ Party.

   Adam Bello 45
   • lawyer, Williams Law Liability Partnership
   • 7-year working experience for __ Party.

4) More attainable inclusion framing:

The target consumers of Parliament Pub are the long-term volunteers for the __ community, who have been volunteering for the community with their passion and wisdom.

   Alex Smith, 34
• Company staff
• 4-year volunteer for __ community.

Jenny Black, 28
• Office reception
• 3-year volunteer for __ community.

Cheng Lee, 38
• Engineer
• 5-year volunteer for __ community.

Adam Bello, 45
• Musician
• 7-year volunteer for __ community.

5) Control condition:

Thank you for your information! The internal system of Parliament Pub is assessing the matching degree of your information with the standard of its target consumers. Please complete the following questionnaire before the result by clicking the NEXT button.

**Appendix 3 – Manipulation in Study 5**

1) Exclusion framing:

![Exclusion Framing Image]

2) Inclusion framing:

Dorna Vielly's brand positioning is presented on its label:
### Appendix 4 – Scale of Brand Desire (in Study 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. One day I would like to stay at Banyan Tree Restaurant &amp; Hotel.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I love the idea of staying at Banyan Tree Restaurant &amp; Hotel.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The lifestyle Banyan Tree Restaurant &amp; Hotel presents appeals to me a lot.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I would be happier if I can go to Banyan Tree Restaurant &amp; Hotel.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I hope I can own a membership card of Banyan Tree Restaurant &amp; Hotel.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I hope I can become one of the target consumers of Banyan Tree Restaurant &amp; Hotel.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix 5 – Scale of Brand Aspiration (in Study 3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Joining Parliament Pub makes me stand out from the crowd.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>