

The Impact of Perceived Brand Mass Prestige on Brand Advocacy: The Sequential Mediating Roles of Brand Perception and Brand Happiness

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy within the framework of the sequential mediating roles of brand perception and brand happiness. In today's competitive markets, brands influence consumer behavior by offering symbolic and emotional values beyond functional utility. In this context, brand mass prestige stands out as a significant element combining accessibility with perceived status. The research is based on the cognitive-emotional behavioral hierarchy approach and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm. Data were collected through surveys from 963 participants and analyzed using SPSS 26 with PROCESS Macro 3.4 (Model 6). The findings show that perceived brand mass prestige significantly and positively influences brand perception and brand happiness. Furthermore, it was determined that brand perception has a strong influence on brand happiness, and brand happiness has a strong influence on brand advocacy. In contrast, the direct impact of brand mass prestige on brand advocacy is not significant. The results reveal that the effect occurs only indirectly and through a sequential mediation mechanism. This highlights the decisive role of emotional processes in consumer behavior.

Key words: Brand Perception, Brand Mass Prestige, Brand Advocacy, Brand Happiness

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1. Introduction

In today's markets, where global competition is rapidly increasing and digitalization is leading to radical transformations in consumer behavior, brands must redefine the nature of their relationship with consumers. With the rise of digital ecosystems, the brand-consumer relationship has evolved from one-way communication to a reciprocal, interactive, and emotional structure. Social media platforms, online communities, and user-generated content have led to brands positioning themselves not only as economic actors providing functional benefits, but also as social symbols offering identity, status, and emotional experiences (Saibaba, 2021; Figueiredo et al., 2025). This transformation has created a market structure where brand perception is shaped collectively, emotional evaluations can spread rapidly, and brand interaction is intertwined with consumer psychology.

One concept that has become noteworthy in this context is the *masstige* approach, which represents the democratization of luxury. Brand *masstige* strategies aim to position a brand with a high-status image while simultaneously making it accessible to a wide audience (Baek et al., 2010). This allows consumers to meet both their symbolic status expectations and their economic accessibility needs at the same time (Yapraklı and Keser, 2017). This hybrid structure significantly shapes how the brand is perceived, the emotional connection consumers form with the brand, and the resulting behavioral responses.

In recent years, studies addressing the role of emotions in consumer behavior have particularly highlighted the concept of brand happiness. Brand happiness is defined as the intensified state of positive emotions arising from a consumer's interaction with a brand; it represents a deeper and more subjective form of affect that goes beyond mere satisfaction (Khandai, 2025; Dai et al., 2020; Mansoor and Paul, 2022; Purohit et al., 2024). Such emotions contribute to the consumer finding the brand experience more valuable and strengthening the psychological bond they have with the brand (Veenhoven, 2012). One of the most effective outcomes of happiness in terms of behavioral outcomes is brand advocacy. Advocacy encompasses highly committed behaviors such as consumers actively praising, recommending, supporting, and even defending a brand when it is under attack. In the digital context, advocacy has become an element that increases brand accessibility, strengthens reputation, and creates a competitive advantage.

However, a review of the existing literature reveals a significant lack of comprehensive models explaining how brand prestige influences brand perception, brand happiness, and brand advocacy. Much of the research focuses on the perceptual outcomes of brand mass prestige or the behavioral consequences of brand happiness (Han ve Choi, 2019; Schnebelen and Bruhn, 2018; Nobre et al., 2022); however, it lacks a holistic framework that explains how these processes are interconnected, particularly how cognitive evaluation translates into emotional response, and emotional response into behavioral intentions. The absence of studies specifically addressing how the effects of mass-market brands on consumer psychology operate within a framework of sequential cognitive-emotional-behavioral processes constitutes a significant research gap in the literature.

Given this gap, it becomes important to examine how brand mass prestige shapes brand advocacy not only through brand perception or behavioral outcomes, but also through emotional processes such as brand happiness. Brand perception functions as a critical cognitive gateway in the transformation of prestige into an emotional outcome, while brand happiness acts as an emotional catalyst that enables this cognitive evaluation to be reflected in behavioral responses. Therefore, examining the sequential psychological processes progressing as mass prestige → brand perception → brand happiness → brand advocacy has the potential to produce remarkable results, both theoretically and practically.

This study examines the impact of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy and tests the sequential mediating role of brand perception and brand happiness in this relationship. The research aims to fill a significant theoretical gap in the literature by addressing the effects of brand mass prestige strategies on consumer behavior through a holistic and sequential model encompassing cognitive (brand perception), emotional (brand happiness), and behavioral (brand advocacy) responses. In this respect, the study presents a more comprehensive theoretical framework, demonstrating that brand mass prestige is not limited to perceptual outcomes but also produces a multi-layered mechanism of influence encompassing emotional and behavioral consequences. In particular, placing brand happiness at the center of the sequential mediation model, despite its relatively limited treatment in the literature, provides an important perspective on the role of emotional processes in consumer behavior. Furthermore, by explaining how brand advocacy emerges within the context of mass prestige, the study offers strategic insights into brands' emotional value management, communication strategies, and digital community building processes. Furthermore, by treating brand advocacy, rather than brand loyalty, as the dependent variable, the study contributes to the reinterpretation of consumer-brand relationships in line with current digital dynamics. Thanks to this holistic approach, the study both contributes theoretically to the brand management literature and provides a guiding framework for practitioners to develop emotionally value-based competitive strategies.

2. Literature Review

Brand prestige is an evaluation judgment formed by high or low status based on life experience, knowledge, and level of relationship with competing brands (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002). This definition shows that prestige is based on subjective comparison processes. Prestige evaluation is shaped in the consumer's mind by associations of social status, power, and privilege. Indeed, the prestige structure of a brand is influenced by personal and impersonal perceptions of the brand (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Personal perceptions are linked to the individual's self-concept and identity construction, while impersonal perceptions include more objective indicators such as quality, price, and rarity. In this context, brand prestige is a multidimensional structure that can be evaluated within the framework of social identity theory and the symbolic consumption approach.

Masstige is a strategic blend of prestige and mass market appeal, targeting the middle class aiming to achieve high goals (Roy et al., 2025: 27). The concept

of masstige transforms the traditional structure of luxury, which previously catered only to an elite minority, making it accessible to broader consumer segments. It moves beyond the traditional concept of mass prestige, where consumers purchased and consumed luxury goods to enhance their pleasure and create positive emotions, thus moving beyond the limitations of luxury being exclusive to the wealthiest individuals within a certain upper income bracket. In this respect, masstige represents the democratization of luxury and responds to both the symbolic and pleasure-based expectations of consumers.

Mass Prestige is a marketing term based on the fundamentals of market entry and brand positioning strategy for accessible brands (Paul, 2019). The success of masstige brands lies in their ability to create value that is perceived as aligned with consumers' identities and desires (Armutlu, 2025: 66). Identity alignment contributes to the establishment of an emotional bond between the brand and the consumer. Masstige brands demonstrate the balance between maintaining prestige and expanding accessibility, and these brands guide consumers towards a perception of prestigious luxury through their official accounts on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube (Nobre et al., 2022).

The radical changes in the structure of brand perception brought about by technological advancements are forcing both luxury brands and brands with mass prestige to restructure their strategic orientations (Pietrzak, 2019). Digital transformation has shifted consumer-brand interaction from one-way communication to a reciprocal and dynamic relationship; this has led to brands moving from being structures that only offer functional benefits to actors that generate symbolic value. The collective construction of brand perception, particularly through social media and digital platforms, has necessitated a re-evaluation of the concept of prestige. In this context, considering that brand mass prestige plays a decisive role in shaping consumers' brand perception, the first hypothesis of this study, H1: Perceived brand mass prestige positively influences brand perception, comes to the forefront. Brand mass prestige is a hybrid construct that determines how accessible a consumer finds a brand and the extent to which they perceive symbolic value behind that accessibility. Social identity theory emphasizes that individuals gravitate towards symbolic elements that enhance their group status (He et al., 2012:651). Because masstige brands can meet consumers' status needs within a more accessible framework, perceptions of the brand's perceived quality, reliability, and symbolic performance are strengthened (Wang and Qiao, 2020). Therefore, the rise in mass prestige directly and positively impacts the brand's mental representation. In this context, the masstige strategy is considered a value-building mechanism that improves brand perception.

Emotional evaluation theory suggests that consumers' emotional responses to brands are fueled by cognitive evaluations of the brand. When a consumer perceives a brand as trustworthy, high-quality, and supportive of their sense of self, this perception naturally translates into positive affect. Brand happiness is the most intense and satisfying form of this positive affect. Therefore, a positive brand perception elevates the consumer's experience with the brand to a more pleasurable and positive, emotionally fulfilling level. Brand perception is the degree to which consumers prefer a particular brand among similar products in the market (Hellier

et al., 2003). Brand perception is a strategic relationship between the brand, the business, and its customers (Goodman, 2006: 20). Prestige is expected to initiate a cognitive evaluation process in the consumer in the first stage. This cognitive evaluation is represented by brand perception. Brand perception includes cognitive elements such as the consumer's overall evaluation of the brand, quality inference, and value attribution. Paul's (2019) masstige model reveals that the perception of prestige creates positive schemas in the consumer's mind regarding the brand, and that this is a precursor to behavioral outcomes.

Following the cognitive process, the emotional mechanism is involved in the second stage of the model. Schnebelen and Bruhn (2018) define brand happiness as a lasting and positive emotional state arising from the consumer's interaction with the brand, and state that this feeling is decisive in establishing a strong bond with the brand. Accordingly, it is predicted that positive brand perception will increase brand happiness. Brand perception refers to consumers' tendencies to like or dislike a brand, acquired through learning, and their opinions about the brand in their minds. In this context, the literature shows that brand perception shapes consumers' emotional responses; therefore, hypothesis H2: Brand perception positively affects brand happiness is consistent from the perspective of consumer psychology.

Brand advocacy encompasses behaviors such as consumers not only praising the brand but also demonstrating a social persuasion effort around the focus brand by disparaging competing brands (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013). In addition, advocacy includes strong indicators of commitment, such as actively defending the brand when it is under attack (Wilk et al., 2020). Khamwon and Nantasunk (2020) found that online customer experience influences brand advocacy through brand loyalty; Khamwon and Masri (2020) found that brand experience supports advocacy through brand love. Similarly, Sari and Dal (2025) state that positive experiences strengthen brand advocacy in the automotive sector.

Social media allows for the continuous reproduction of the prestige narrative and enables consumers to participate in this narrative. Brand advocacy is the way consumers influence other consumers with positive recommendations and praise for a brand (Cakmak Ekinici, 2025: 159). Brand advocacy, which refers to positive communication about a brand with other consumers through word-of-mouth marketing, recommending the brand to others, or brand advocacy, is a positive outcome of strong relationships between consumers and brands (Wilk et al., 2018, p. 100) and is the highest level of brand advocacy (Walz and Celuch, 2010). The relationships established with the brand emotionally affect consumers and strongly encourage them to engage in brand advocacy. At this point, considering that brand happiness is an emotional state that fuels advocacy, hypothesis H3: Brand happiness positively influences brand advocacy becomes a natural extension of this literature. Emotional commitment models show that high positive emotions, such as happiness, have the potential to trigger voluntary behaviors toward a brand. Happiness is an emotional state in which the consumer feels satisfied with their relationship with the brand and believes that the brand experience contributes to their personal well-being. This positive emotional state motivates the consumer to support the brand on both rational and emotional levels. Therefore, brand happiness is a fundamental psychological resource that strengthens brand advocacy.

Brands attempt to create an accessible luxury concept for the maximum number of consumers by maintaining fixed prices for high-value products through perception management, while fostering mass prestige (Paul, 2019). This strategy requires the simultaneous implementation of value-based pricing and perceptual positioning. Mass prestige is a way for brands to create a prestigious image and penetrate a market by maintaining perceived high quality at an affordable price, thereby creating an attractive position in the minds of the masses (Singh, 2024). Therefore, masstige is a hybrid brand strategy that offers both economic and psychological accessibility simultaneously. Consumers are more interested in prestigious brands compared to other brands, tend to pay more premiums, and believe that consuming or using prestigious brands provides social status, wealth, and power (Hwang & Hyun, 2012). This shows that perceived prestige can trigger purchase intention and voluntary behaviors such as brand advocacy. In this context, the theoretical basis for hypothesis H4: Perceived brand prestige positively influences brand advocacy, which assumes that prestige strengthens not only perception but also advocacy behavior, becomes clearer. Prestige is a symbolic resource that allows consumers to send status signals within their social circles. When a consumer identifies with a prestigious brand, they view recommending or defending the brand to others not merely as a preference, but as an identity-enhancing behavior. Masstige brands' offering of accessible luxury makes this advocacy behavior visible among broader user groups (Tynan et al., 2017; Vickers et al., 2003; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Therefore, as mass prestige increases, the behavior of positively conveying the brand to others also strengthens.

Brand perception is the sum of consumers' mental images and emotional responses to a brand. The perception formed towards a brand stems from consumer experiences, the influences of their social environment, and their personal values (Solomon, 2018: 97). Consumers' perception of a brand is a holistic process in which they interpret the brand image, brand culture, and brand value, which they perceive sensorially and cognitively (Liu et al., 2019: 786). Brands that are considered trustworthy create a positive impact on consumers both cognitively and emotionally, and this can shape the happiness the consumer derives from the brand. Mass prestige gives consumers a sense of "accessible luxury" associated with the brand; however, whether this prestige translates into happiness depends on how the consumer mentally evaluates the brand. Elements such as perceived value, perceived quality, symbolic congruence, and perceived trust are cognitive gateways that enable prestige to find an emotional response. Therefore, prestige does not directly create happiness; it first ensures that the brand is perceived positively, and then this positive perception triggers the feeling of happiness. This shows that brand perception plays a natural mediating role.

Brand perception and brand happiness are expected to play a sequential mediating role in the relationship between perceived brand mass prestige and brand advocacy. Perceived brand mass prestige first shapes consumers' cognitive evaluations of the brand by strengthening associations related to quality, value, status, and desirability. These positive cognitive evaluations may then generate favorable emotional responses, particularly brand happiness. Since advocacy behavior requires more than a positive evaluation of the brand, consumers are more

likely to recommend, support, and defend a brand when their cognitive evaluations are accompanied by positive emotional experiences. Therefore, perceived brand mass prestige is expected to influence brand advocacy through a sequential process in which brand perception enhances brand happiness, and brand happiness subsequently leads to brand advocacy. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed: H5: Brand perception and brand happiness sequentially mediate the relationship between perceived brand mass prestige and brand advocacy.

3. Methodology

3.1. Model Development

This research examines the effect of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy within the framework of the sequential mediating roles of brand perception and brand happiness. The model was developed based on the cognitive-emotional-behavioral hierarchy approach and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm.

According to the S-O-R approach, an environmental stimulus influences an individual's internal evaluation processes (organism), leading to a behavioral response (Hochreiter et al., 2023). In this study, perceived brand mass prestige was considered as the stimulus variable. Masstige's literature suggests that mass prestige simultaneously manages both the consumer's status expectations and perception of accessibility, and is therefore a critical element in modern brand positioning (Paul, 2019).

In line with this theoretical framework, the research model is structured as a sequential psychological transition process: perceived brand mass prestige → brand perception → brand happiness → brand advocacy. The model is based on the assumption that prestige influences behavioral outcomes not directly, but through cognitive and emotional mechanisms.

In this study, perceived brand prestige is considered as the independent variable. The dependent variable of the study is brand advocacy. Accordingly, brand perception is positioned as the first mediating variable, and brand happiness as the second mediating variable. In other words, the research model is based on a sequential effect mechanism where perceived brand prestige primarily shapes consumers' perceptions of the brand, positive brand perception increases brand happiness, and brand happiness strengthens brand advocacy behavior. In this context, the study tests a cognitive-emotional-behavioral process progressing as follows: perceived brand prestige → brand perception → brand happiness → brand advocacy.

3.2. Research Method

This research was designed within the framework of a quantitative research method. Research data were collected through an online survey between November 2025 and February 2026. A convenience sampling method was preferred in the study, and the research was conducted only on Apple brand mobile phone users. Data were obtained from 963 Apple users who participated in the research on a voluntary basis. The sample size is considered statistically sufficient for multiple mediation tests.

The main reason for choosing the Apple brand in this research is that it strongly represents the brand's mass prestige strategy. Apple is one of the brands that offers high quality, innovation, design, and prestige perception in an accessible framework for a wide range of consumers. The brand creates a prestigious image through its products and promotion strategies while maintaining its ability to appeal to a broad user base. In this respect, Apple is considered a suitable example of a mass prestige approach that combines high price and prestige perception with accessibility. Therefore, Apple users were determined as the sample group for the research in order to test the relationships between perceived brand mass prestige, brand perception, brand happiness, and brand advocacy.

3.3. Scales and Measurement Tools

The first section of the survey form included questions aimed at determining the demographic characteristics of the participants. In this context, information regarding the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the participants was obtained. The second section of the survey used scale statements to measure the variables included in the research model. These scale statements were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). To measure brand mass prestige, the Masstige Model and Measure scale developed by Paul (2019) was used. This scale aims to measure the prestige-accessibility balance and overall brand evaluation in the consumer's mind. Brand happiness was measured using the scale developed by Schnebelen and Bruhn (2018). This scale evaluates the positive emotional state experienced by the consumer as a result of interacting with the brand. Brand advocacy was measured with a five-statement scale. This scale was adapted from the study by Matzler et al. (2007). This scale measures the consumer's tendency to defend the brand, recommend it to others, and engage in voluntary communication in favor of the brand. During the adaptation process of the scales into Turkish, semantic equivalence was ensured; validity and reliability analyses were also performed.

3.4. Data Analysis

SPSS 26 software package was used for data analysis. First, descriptive statistics, reliability, and factor analyses were performed. The relationships between variables were examined using correlation analysis.

Hayes Model 6 (PROCESS Macro 3.4) was used to test the hypotheses and analyze the mediating effect. The significance of indirect effects was tested using the bootstrap method, and 95% confidence intervals were calculated. If the confidence interval did not include zero, the mediating effect was considered significant.

4. Findings

This section presents the descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation results, model outputs, and hypothesis tests of the research. All analyses were performed using SPSS 26 and PROCESS Macro 3.4.

4.1. Sample Characteristics

The research was conducted with 963 participants. 62.1% of the participants were female and 37.9% were male. In terms of age distribution, the 18-25 age range constituted the largest group with 74.4%. 79.5% of the participants were single, 57.4% were university graduates, and 61.9% had an income at or below the minimum wage. This sample structure predominantly reflects young consumers.

4.2. Reliability, Validity, and Descriptive Statistics

The overall reliability coefficient of the measurement instrument was high (Cronbach's Alpha = .941). KMO values range from .593 to .953, and Bartlett's sphericity tests are significant ($p < .001$).

Since the data were collected through a cross-sectional self-report survey, common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test. All measurement items were loaded into an unrotated exploratory factor analysis with a single-factor solution. The results indicated that the first factor explained 45.613% of the total variance, which is below the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. Therefore, common method bias does not constitute a problem in this study.

The average values for the variables used in the study were calculated as follows: 3.32 for mass brand prestige, 3.27 for brand perception, 2.87 for brand happiness, and 2.54 for brand advocacy. These findings indicate that participants' evaluations of mass brand prestige and brand perception are above average. However, it can be stated that the averages for brand happiness and brand advocacy are relatively lower.

4.3. Findings Related to the Research Model and Hypothesis Testing

Table 1. Correlation Analysis Results for the Variables

Variables	BMP	BP	BH	BA
BMP	1			
BP	,711**	1		
BH	,651**	,649**	1	
BA	,512**	,533**	,778**	1

According to the Pearson correlation analysis results, there are positive and statistically significant relationships between the research variables. The strongest relationship was found between brand happiness and brand advocacy ($r = 0.778$; $p < 0.01$). In addition, a strong positive relationship was detected between mass brand prestige and brand perception ($r = 0.711$; $p < 0.01$). Overall, these findings support the relationships between the variables predicted in the research model.

Table 2. Direct Effects of the Structural Model

Predictor → Outcome	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
BMP → BP	.731	.023	31.31	<.001	[.686, .777]

BP → BH	.456	.040	11.51	<.001	[.379, .534]
BMP → BH	.481	.041	11.78	<.001	[.401, .561]
BH → BA	.783	.030	26.47	<.001	[.725, .841]
BMP → BA (direct)	-.028	.040	-.70	.485	[-.107, .051]

$$R^2 (BA) = .607$$

According to Table 2, perceived brand mass prestige positively influences brand perception ($B = .731, p < .001$). Brand perception positively influences brand happiness ($B = .456, p < .001$), and perceived brand mass prestige also has a positive effect on brand happiness ($B = .481, p < .001$). Furthermore, brand happiness positively influences brand advocacy ($B = .783, p < .001$). However, the direct effect of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy is not statistically significant when the mediating variables are included in the model ($B = -.028, p = .485$). Therefore, the effect of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy appears to operate through indirect mechanisms rather than through a direct path.

Table 3. Indirect and Sequential Mediation Effects (PROCESS Model 6)

Indirect Path	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Result
BMP → BP → BA	.055	.029	-.002	.113	Not significant
BMP → BH → BA	.376	.036	.307	.447	Significant
BMP → BP → BH → BA	.261	.028	.208	.316	Significant
Total Indirect Effect	.693	.041	.612	.771	Significant

According to Table 3, the indirect effect of brand mass prestige on brand advocacy through brand perception alone was not statistically significant (Effect = .055; 95% CI [-.002, .113]). However, the indirect effect through brand happiness was significant (Effect = .376; 95% CI [.307, .447]). In addition, the sequential indirect effect of brand mass prestige on brand advocacy through brand perception and brand happiness was also significant (Effect = .261; 95% CI [.208, .316]). These findings indicate that cognitive and emotional processes operate sequentially in explaining consumer advocacy behavior. Perceived brand mass prestige first contributes to a positive brand perception, which in turn enhances brand happiness, and this emotional response leads to brand advocacy. The insignificant indirect effect through brand perception alone suggests that brand perception does not directly translate into advocacy behavior unless it is accompanied by brand happiness. Furthermore, the model explains 60.7% of the variance in brand advocacy, indicating a strong explanatory power. One of the most notable findings is the strong and significant effect of brand happiness on brand advocacy ($B = .783$), suggesting that consumers' emotional experiences play a key role in shaping advocacy behavior. In addition, age, gender, income, education level, and marital

status were included in the PROCESS Model 6 analysis as covariates to control for their potential confounding effects. The inclusion of these covariates did not change the direction or significance of the main relationships in the model. Moreover, the indirect effects remained significant, as the bootstrap confidence intervals did not include zero. Therefore, the sequential mediation mechanism remained robust after controlling for demographic characteristics.

Table 4. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Result
H1	BMP → BP	Supported
H2	BP → BH	Supported
H3	BH → BA	Supported
H4	BMP → BA	Not supported
H5	BMP → BP → BH → BA	Supported

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that most of the proposed relationships in the research model were supported. First, perceived brand mass prestige was found to have a positive and significant effect on brand perception; therefore, H1 was supported. Second, brand perception positively and significantly influenced brand happiness, supporting H2. Third, brand happiness had a positive and significant effect on brand advocacy; thus, H3 was also supported. However, when brand perception and brand happiness were included in the model as mediating variables, the direct effect of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy was not statistically significant. Therefore, H4 was not supported. Finally, the sequential indirect effect of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy through brand perception and brand happiness was statistically significant. Accordingly, H5, which proposed the sequential mediating role of brand perception and brand happiness, was supported. Overall, the findings suggest that perceived brand mass prestige affects brand advocacy not directly, but through a cognitive-emotional mechanism.

5. Conclusions

This research examines the effect of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy within the framework of the sequential mediating roles of brand perception and brand happiness. The findings reveal that brand mass prestige does not directly translate into brand advocacy; rather, its effect operates through cognitive and emotional mechanisms. In this process, perceived prestige first contributes to the formation of a positive brand perception, which subsequently enhances brand happiness and ultimately leads to brand advocacy. Therefore, the results emphasize the decisive role of emotional processes in transforming consumers' brand evaluations into advocacy behaviors.

In this study, the fact that the vast majority of participants are in the minimum wage and below income group necessitates explaining the evaluation of the Apple brand in the context of mass brand prestige from the perspective of the participants' income structure. For low- and middle-income consumers, Apple is

perceived not only as a functional technology product but also as a symbolic brand carrying value in terms of prestige, status, social visibility, and identity expression. For consumers in this income group, the desire to own Apple products can be associated with aspirational consumption and status-oriented brand preferences. However, installment payment options, operator-supported purchase options, campaigns, refurbished products, and second-hand market dynamics allow Apple to be perceived by these consumer groups as an accessible prestigious brand under certain conditions, rather than a completely inaccessible luxury brand. Therefore, the income level of the participants provides an important demographic context explaining why Apple is considered within the scope of mass prestige/accessible luxury rather than pure luxury in this study.

One of the striking findings of the research is that the direct effect of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy is insignificant. This result parallels studies in the literature that show that prestige does not always directly translate into behavioral outcomes. Indeed, Arslandere and Yıldırım (2021) found no significant effect of brand prestige on purchase intention, while showing that quality and utilitarian elements were more decisive. Similarly, the present study shows that prestige alone does not produce behavior; it needs to be interpreted in the consumer's mind and transformed into an emotional experience. Armutlu (2025) notes that the perceptual distinction between luxury and mass prestige brands has blurred in the digital age, and prestige is now positioned as an element of emotional balance rather than a hierarchical symbol. The fact that prestige does not directly influence advocacy in the present study supports the idea that prestige alone is no longer a sufficient behavioral trigger in the digital hybrid brand universe. The findings show that perceived mass prestige strongly influences brand perception.

This result is consistent with studies that reveal the positive effect of prestige on brand value and brand associations (Baek et al., 2010; Paul, 2019; Avcı and Keser, 2020; Singh, 2024). Singh (2024) has shown that mass prestige value significantly contributes to overall brand value and is a strong predictor of brand value. In this context, the present study confirms that prestige is primarily effective at the cognitive evaluation level. However, the fact that brand perception alone does not produce a significant indirect effect on advocacy suggests that cognitive evaluation is not sufficient to generate behavior. This finding is consistent with the masstige literature, which argues that purely symbolic or status-based motivations may not translate into behavioral advocacy (Roy et al., 2025).

The strongest finding of the study is the high impact of brand happiness on advocacy. This result largely coincides with the Masstige-based model presented by Mansoor (2022). Mansoor (2022) showed that mass prestige and brand perception are transformed into brand advocacy through brand happiness. In the present study, the fact that the path prestige → perception → happiness → advocacy is meaningful and strong confirms that brand happiness is a fundamental psychological mechanism.

Roy et al. (2025) emphasizes that masstige consumption cannot be explained solely by the pursuit of external status, and that internal self-actualization and psychological satisfaction processes must be considered. This study empirically

supports this theoretical expansion by showing that advocacy behavior is shaped by emotional experience rather than status.

The findings indicate that the effect of perceived brand mass prestige on brand advocacy emerges primarily through cognitive and emotional mechanisms. This structure is consistent with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm. Within this framework, perceived brand mass prestige can be considered as the stimulus that activates consumers' internal evaluative processes. Brand perception and brand happiness represent the organism component, reflecting cognitive and emotional responses developed in the consumer's mind. Finally, brand advocacy constitutes the response stage, as these internal processes are transformed into favorable behavioral outcomes toward the brand. Thus, the findings suggest that prestige does not directly lead to advocacy; rather, it shapes advocacy behavior through consumers' cognitive evaluations and emotional experiences. This finding also theoretically aligns with Gu's (2025) approach, which explains the impact of luxury brands' efforts to maintain prestige and identity integrity through channel strategies on consumer loyalty. Maintaining prestige only produces sustainable results when it is transformed into a meaningful and emotional experience for the consumer.

This study offers three key contributions to the literature. First, it shows that perceived brand mass prestige does not directly influence brand advocacy; instead, its effect emerges primarily through indirect pathways, particularly those involving emotional mechanisms. Second, it empirically confirms the central role of emotional mechanisms in the context of prestige by demonstrating the importance of brand happiness in transforming prestige-based evaluations into advocacy behavior. Third, it reveals that prestige should not be considered only as a symbolic or status-related brand attribute, but also as a psychological trigger that shapes consumers' cognitive evaluations and emotional experiences.

The research findings reveal important strategic implications for brand managers. Firstly, the lack of a direct impact of perceived mass prestige on brand advocacy demonstrates that prestige alone is insufficient to generate behavioral outcomes. This suggests that prestige communication based solely on status, symbolism, or price may be inadequate. Prestige only generates advocacy behavior when it transforms into a meaningful brand perception in the consumer's mind, followed by an emotional experience. The brand needs to build a strong perception based on elements such as quality, reliability, global presence, social responsibility, and authenticity. Prestige must first be legitimized at the perceptual level. The strongest finding of the research, the high impact of brand happiness on advocacy, highlights the strategic importance of emotional experience. Therefore, brands must make consumers "feel good" rather than "look prestigious."

Finally, the model's high explanation of advocacy shows that measuring brand happiness and tracking it as a performance indicator is critical from a managerial perspective. Brand performance metrics should include not only loyalty and purchase, but also happiness and advocacy indicators.

Like all empirical research, this study has some limitations. The research was conducted using a cross-sectional design. Therefore, the relationships between variables should be interpreted in a limited context of causality. Future research could examine the transformation of prestige over time and the evolution of

emotional processes using longitudinal or experimental designs. Considering the findings regarding how digitalization transforms the perception of prestige (Armutlu, 2025), the mediating or moderating roles of variables such as social media interaction intensity, influencer credibility, or digital brand community membership could be investigated. Overall, this study makes a significant contribution to the masstige and brand advocacy literature by demonstrating that the behavioral consequences of mass prestige occur only through cognitive and especially emotional mechanisms.

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