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## Connecting Hedonic Emotions, Perceived Quality, and Product Interest with Perceived Status Symbol and Repurchase Intention: The Moderating Roles of Individualism and War Animosity

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### ARTICLE INFO

**Article type:**  
Research Article

**Article History:**  
Received 23 November 2024  
Revised 04 April 2025  
Accepted 06 April 2025  
Published Online 04 September 2025

**Keywords:**  
War animosity,  
Individualism,  
Hedonic emotions,  
Perceived status symbol.

### ABSTRACT

Do individuals perceive any status associated with the quality of decorative rope lights? This study addresses the antecedents of this perceived status. It further examines how animosity and individualism affect their intention to repurchase foreign products in an emerging Asian market. Surveys were conducted on Indian consumers' animosity toward Chinese products. The methodologies of structural equation modeling analyzed the measurement and the structural models, while the process model tested the moderation effect. Product interest, quality, and hedonic emotions jointly act as stimuli in building an individual's perception of status. The interaction effect of low individualism with high individualism is prominent in the context of low war animosity, where re-purchase intention increases with an increase in the perceived status. The research contributes to the literature by combining the effects of hedonic emotions, product interest, and product quality for LED rope lights in studying consumers' status symbols from the perspective of the SOR model, in the context of changing war animosity and individualism, which provides valuable insights into the field of international marketing and consumer behaviour. The SOR model has been enhanced by incorporating the moderation effects.

**Cite this article:** Verma, P. & Sharma, V. (2025). Connecting Hedonic Emotions, Perceived Quality, and Product Interest with Perceived Status Symbol and Repurchase Intention: The Moderating Roles of Individualism and War Animosity. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Management Studies (IJMS)*, 18 (4), 807-819. <http://doi.org/10.22059/ijms.2025.385818.677182>



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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/ijms.2025.385818.677182>

## Introduction

How does one achieve status? Can materialistic goods be a proxy for status? Status is a psychological state of mind (Adler et al., 2000; Kimbu et al., 2023). It is communicated through several images (Axsen & Long, 2022) and materialistic possessions (Vidal & Wissow, 2023). Wealth and ownership of expensive goods denote status (Wang, 2022). It can also be achieved through the consumption of fashion products (Mohr et al., 2022). Can it be realized by displaying decorative LED rope lights, which are both low in price and in involvement. The illumination of selected areas highlights these spaces and augments their status. The illumination of designated areas serves as a socially acceptable equivalent of status. Lighting has a physiological (Pattison et al., 2018) and psychological (Figuerola et al., 2019; Kakitsuba, 2020) effect on individuals. This psychological effect produces hedonic emotions (HE) within the individual (McRae & Gross, 2020; Molenda et al., 2023), emotionally bestowing him with a perception of status (Gao et al., 2023; Hermawan, 2023) and prosperity (Westphal, 2023). Status can likewise be achieved through product quality (PQ) (Mulay & Khanna, 2020). This hedonic emotional outcome of perceived status is also the result of the perceived quality (PQ) of the product and the individual's interest in the product.

However, a concern arises regarding the product's perception if the products originate from a hostile source. Sino-Indian relationships are strained due to the past wars and skirmishes. Product interest (PI), accompanied by hedonic emotion and garnished by perceived quality raises the perceived status symbol (PSS) of an individual. Perceived product quality helps uplift an individual's social status (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Product interest and hedonic emotions are strongly associated (Lin et al., 2012) and this association makes the consumption of rope lights more pleasurable and fun (Morgan & Townsend, 2022). Positional goods provide opportunities for perceived status enhancement (Boardman et al., 2016) through their design elements (Zhang, et al., 2025). People will pay more to enhance their social status (Yeeun Huh & Kim, 2024). This perceived status would act as an organism to the stimuli of product interest, perceived quality, and hedonic emotions as it is a psychological state of mind (Adler et al., 2000; Kimbu et al., 2023). Perceived status is an internal evaluation and, therefore, an organism. Individuals self-evaluate whether the stimuli will lead to a higher status, as this signifies prosperity. Based on the internal evaluations, customers are likely to act or respond through repeat purchases.

Any product originating from a hostile country is bound to cause discomfort to the status of the individual. However, every individual will not exhibit the same level of discomfort as it is balanced by their individualism (Han, 2017; Han et al., 2021). Therefore, the relationship path between the organism (PSS) and response (RPI) would be influenced by their animus feelings and individualism. Individualism has moderated the food purchase relationship (Ali et al., 2020). Multiple studies have examined the moderating role of information technology (Rabiyah et al. 2024), protective personality (Ahmed, 2025), habit, and content availability (Kareem et al. 2024). Prior research has urged the necessity to research the antecedents of social status (Wang, 2022).

What factors explain how individual consumption choices impact the purchase intention (Czarnecka & Schivinski, 2022)? This research has two objectives. The first objective is to identify the factors that affect the perceived status symbol. The second objective is to examine the moderating effects of individualism and war animosity upon the PSS and RPI path. This research provides a new understanding regarding the role of individual variation in sensing and interpreting status symbols by identifying the antecedents and consequences of perceived status symbols.

## Literature Review

### Stimulus Organism Response Theory

The stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) paradigm from environmental psychology indicates that the organism (the consumer's evaluation/internal behaviour) generates a response based on the stimulus from environmental cues (knowledge) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Hedonic Emotions (HE), Product Interest (PI), and Product Quality (PQ) are the stimuli. An organism comprises internal structures and processes bridging between stimuli and final responses (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020). Perceived Status Symbol (PSS) bridges the stimuli and the response (RPI). The environmental psychology theory contends that there are two responses to the stimulus approach and avoidance (Jacoby, 2002). An environmental stimulus affects the customer's emotional state (Choi et al., 2020),

which is usually a positive response (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). A conditional stimulus, such as hedonic emotions, when paired with stimuli such as product interest and perceived quality, results in approach behaviour (Razran, 1938). This study proposes a model that incorporates a perceived status symbol and an approach response to the stimulus, leading to an intention to repurchase. The S-O-R model was also applied to gain insights into the dynamic process of brand loyalty in both purchasing and repurchasing home appliances (Uzir et al., 2025).

### **Perceived Status Symbol**

Luxury goods are losing their appeal as a symbol of status, wealth, or power to others; consequently, individuals are searching for alternative status symbols (Siepmann et al., 2022). Research establishes that it can be achieved through daily work (Yan et al., 2022), low-value products (Su et al., 2019), and even fake products (Elsantil & Bedair, 2022). Status considerations have been linked to prosocial behaviours (Luomala et al., 2020) as they indicate a prosperous future (Westphal, 2023). This is achieved through the consumer's product interest and societal approval derived from the associated fun experiences (Aksen & Long, 2022). Reducing emotionality in brand communications supports increased perceived brand status (Lee, 2021). The relationship between the need for status and purchase intentions is well-established for products such as fur coats (Shin & Jin, 2021) and vehicles (Aksen & Long, 2022; Xia et al., 2022). Research indicates that the association between apparel greenness and purchase intention is mediated by perceived status (Huh & Kim, 2024). A study on cycling culture in Ghana, West Africa, identified the perceived status symbol of the bike as one of the contributing factors (Acheampong & Siiba, 2018).

### **Hedonic Emotions**

A research study underscored the fact that hedonic motivation, as a moderator, may boost the success of the social commerce industry (Kumaran et al., 2024). Consumers develop hedonic emotions during the consumption experience of the brand (Shahzad et al., 2019). Hedonic emotion is associated with a neural mechanism of trust (Casado-Aranda et al., 2022) and driven by the affective aspect of buying (Liu et al., 2022). Hedonic emotions, associated with a product, act as stimuli for an individual and have been considered accordingly in this research. Individuals with lower socioeconomic status are more sensitive in associating their status with the hedonic values of a product (Chen et al., 2019). Similarly, the hedonic aspect of mundane activities, such as daily diary design, gives a sense of social status to the designer (Yan et al., 2022). A study supports that hedonic emotions play a significant role in the retail environment by influencing retail patronage intentions (Pal et al. 2025). Therefore, it is hypothesised that illumination by a low-priced product, such as a rope light, may bestow an individual with a perceived status symbol.

**H1:** Hedonic emotions positively influence an individual with a perceived status symbol.

### **Product Interest**

A consumer's interest in specific attributes of the product is called product interest, which is enhanced by effective marketing communications (Can et al., 2020). The attitude toward purchasing rope light is another way to understand product interest (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007) which influences purchase intention (Lv et al., 2022). Product interest arises from consumers' evaluative ability regarding product attributes, which has implications on their social status (Ubilava et al., 2010). Individuals follow a media influencer due to their interest in the product, the allied prestige, and the social status associated with the group (Yuan & Lou, 2020). An and Yoo (2025) proposed a method of disclosing sentiment fluctuations and product interest shifts. Therefore, individuals interested in rope lights associate it with their social status

**H2:** Product interest positively influences an individual with the perceived status symbol.

### **Perceived Quality**

A product's perceived quality provides valuable financial information to buyers (Cao & Xu, 2022), and represents the average belief about the product (van Ewijk et al., 2022) or cognitive evaluation. It is well understood that the quality of luxury products imparts status (Pino et al., 2019); however,

research establishes that if the quality of the counterfeit product is acceptable, then it will convey status to the consumer (Elsantil & Bedair, 2022). The quality of low-priced services such as resorts signals status (Su et al., 2019) and also stimulates the consumer. A study on health insurance indicated that perceived quality acted as a mediator in the relationship between trust and customer satisfaction (Gün & Söyük, 2025). Therefore, the quality of low-priced rope light bestows an individual with the sagacity of a status symbol.

**H3:** Perceived quality positively influences an individual with the perceived status symbol.

**H4:** Perceived status symbol positively influences the repurchase intention of an individual.

### Individualism

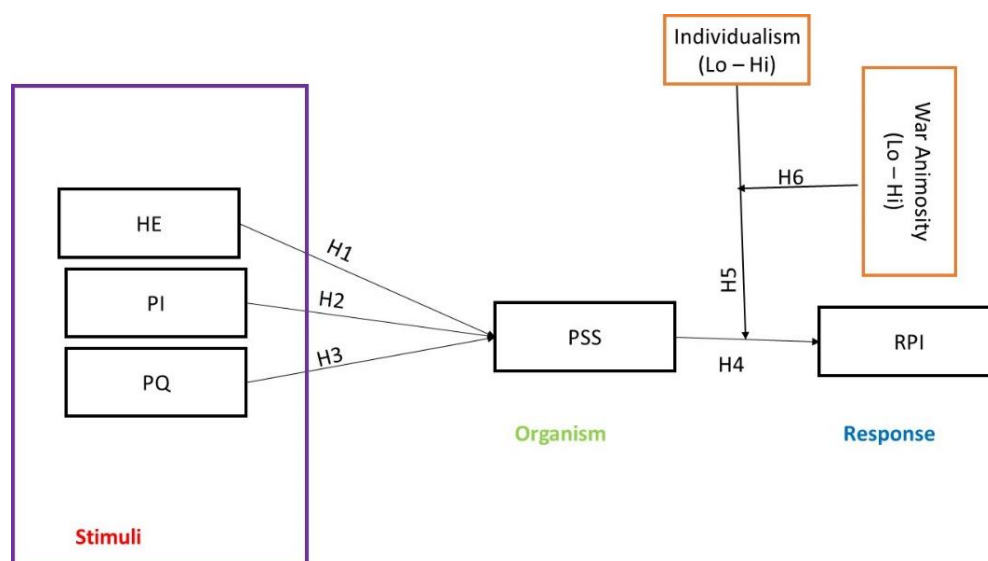
Highly individualistic people would value independence, self-esteem, personal initiative, and success, while the opposite would favour social conformity and the acceptance of hierarchical norms (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1997). It refers to personal freedom and achievement (Bian et al., 2022). Individualism moderates animosity's negative effect (Han et al., 2021; Westjohn et al., 2021), the purchase relationship (Ali et al., 2020), as well as the perceived status on social sites (Kitirattarkarn et al., 2019). A study on oral health in Australia identified individualism as one of the contributing factors (Poirier, et al., 2025).

**H5:** Perceived status symbol and repurchase intention is moderated by individualism (Low versus High)

### War Animosity

Derived from sociology, war animosity can be defined as remnants of antipathy (anger), associated with previous or ongoing military events that will affect consumers' purchase behaviour (Klein et al., 1998). War animosity is evident in China-Japan (Li et al., 2021), India-Pakistan (Chaudhry et al., 2021), China-Russia (Yoder, 2020), Russia- Ukraine (Farmaki, 2023), and China-America (Latif et al., 2019), influencing the sales to the animus country (Can et al., 2020; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Lv et al., 2022). Individualism has moderated animosity toward foreign brands in China (Han et al., 2021). Based on the aforementioned findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H6:** War animosity (low versus high) moderates the effects of individualism (low versus high) on the relationship between PSS and Rpi.



**Fig. 1. Proposed Model**

## Research Methodology

A survey instrument was developed by using the well-established constructs for hedonic emotions (Voss et al., 2003), product interest (Kapferer & Laurent, 1985), perceived quality (Yoo & Donthu, 2001), perceived status symbol (Kapferer & Laurent, 1985), RPI (Bian & Forsythe, 2012), individualism (Chen & West, 2008), and war animosity (Klein et al., 1998). A total of 24 items, along with some demographic information, were employed to capture data. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The data were analyzed in two steps. In the first step, the variables were tested for their reliability and validity. Once the variables were established to be in order, the same variables were used in the second step to test the hypothesised paths and the moderation effects.

## Data Analysis

A convenience sampling procedure was applied for data assembly. From a total of 243 effective responses collected, 107 were from females, while 136 belonged to men. The demographic profile of the sample revealed a mean age of 38.47 years, with approximately 84.4% gainfully employed. Of the respondents, 26.4% were single, while 74.6% were married.

## Measurement Model

All the constructs were checked for reliability and validity, as presented in Table 1. Before that, the measurement model was checked for fitness. CMIN/DF was 2.135, lower than the threshold of 3 (Hair et al., 2014). The model fit indices were 0.899 and 0.862 for GFI and AGFI, respectively. CFI was 0.944, while NFI was 0.901. PNFI was 0.751, and RMSEA was 0.068, with a p-close of 0.010. All fit indices exceeded the minimum threshold limits (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Hoelter index was 202 at 5%, signifying that the model fits the data (Byrne, 2010; Hoelter, 1983). Reliability and validity met all the necessary criteria (Hu & Bentler, 1995; Kline, 2015).

**Table 1. Psychometric Properties**

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	PSS	HE	RPI	PQ	PII
<b>PSS</b>	.865	.681	.336	.872	<b>.825</b>				
<b>HE</b>	.856	.603	.167	.882	.409	<b>.776</b>			
<b>RPI</b>	.910	.717	.251	.919	.345	.255	<b>.847</b>		
<b>PQ</b>	.788	.562	.251	.842	.385	.123	.501	<b>.750</b>	
<b>PII</b>	.795	.661	.336	.802	.580	.397	.252	.255	<b>.813</b>

## Structural Model

The structural paths (H1-H4) were tested for their strengths by the principles of SEM. The results indicated that all four hypotheses were strongly positively associated. These paths were tested for the moderated effect of individualism (high versus low). In the path-level analysis, only one path, PSS → RPI, was moderated (the z-score difference of -2.955 was significant at .001 levels). The significant path was moderated by individualism (H5), which was tested using Process model number 1 (Hayes, 2017). War animosity was introduced as the second moderator, and both the moderators (H6) were tested on the same path using Process model number 3 (Hayes, 2017). The structural model suggests that hedonic emotions, product interest, and perceived quality trigger perceived status symbols related to a product. Furthermore, the increased status symbol intensifies purchase intention.

**Table 2. Hypothesis Summary**

	Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
H1	HE → PSS	.279	.075	4.257	***
H2	PII → PSS	.463	.081	5.518	***
H3	PQ → PSS	.325	.072	4.802	***
H4	PSS → RPI	.357	.077	5.009	***
H5	PSS X Individualism → RPI	.871	.364		.017
H6	PSSX Individualism X WA → RPI	.547	.247		.027

### Moderation

The interaction of PSS and Individualism was significant in addition to the moderation effect of individualism. The  $R^2$  change for the highest order unconditional interaction (PSS X Individualism) was 0.0317 ( $F(1, 239) = 8.7005, p = .0035$ ). The conditional effect of PSS was significant for low Individualism ( $\beta = 0.4809, p < .001, BCCI [.3094, .6524]$ ), but insignificant for high Individualism ( $\beta = 0.1271, p = .1249, BCCI [-.0355, .2896]$ ). Diagrammatically, this conditional effect is depicted in Figure 2. Individualism and war animosity have been identified as moderators.

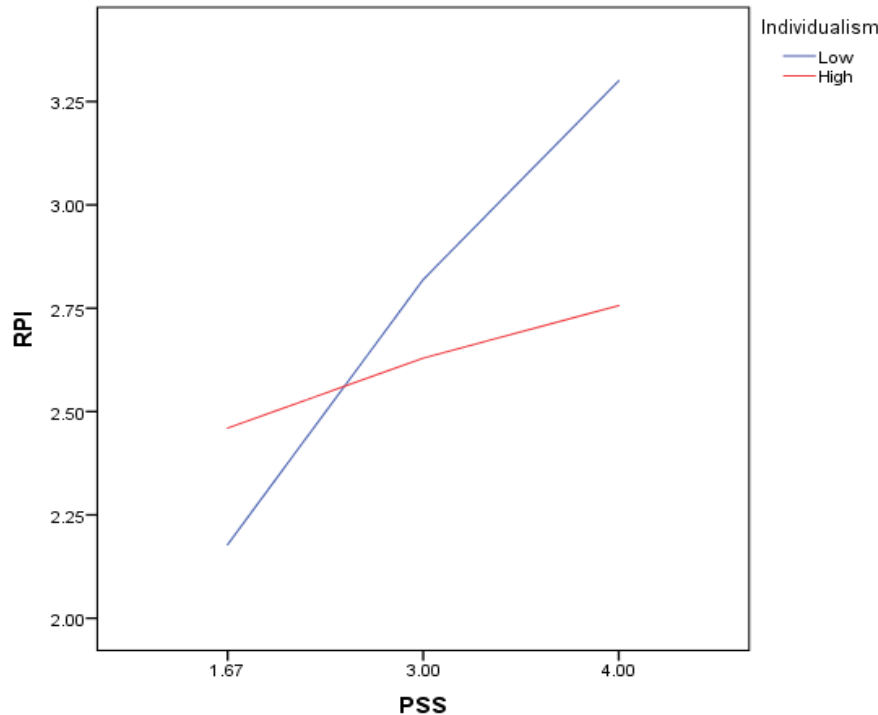


Fig. 2. Individualism Moderated

### Moderated Moderation

The model was also tested using process model number 3 (Hayes, 2017). All direct and interaction effects were significant. The  $R^2$  change for the highest order unconditional interaction (PSS X Individualism X WA) was 0.0178 ( $F(1,235) = 4.9212, p = .0275$ ). The conditional interaction (PSS X Individualism) was significant for low WA ( $F(1,235) = 12.3743, p = .0005$ ), but insignificant for high WA ( $F(1,235) = .0487, p = .8255$ ). The interaction of high individualism and low war animosity was also insignificant ( $\beta = 0.0364, p = .7376, BCCI [-.1774, .2502]$ ). Diagrammatically, all these permutations are depicted in Figure 3.

Table 3. Moderated Moderation

(DV=RPI)	Coef	SE	P	LLCI	ULCI	F
Constant (Model 1)	.5053	.5930	.3950	-.6628	1.6735	$F(3,239) = 11.7695$ $R^2 = .1287$
PSS	.8347	.1927	<.0001	.4551	1.2142	
PSS X Individualism	.8714	.3639	.0174	.1546	1.5882	
Constant (Model 3)	-3.3822	1.8389	.0671	-7.0050	.2407	$F(7,235) = 5.9491$ $R^2 = .1505$
PSS	2.0611	.6221	.0011	.8354	3.2868	
Individualism	3.4053	1.1173	.0026	1.2041	5.6065	
PSS X Individualism	-1.1345	.3801	.0031	-1.8834	-.3857	
War Animosity	2.7617	1.2391	.0268	.3206	5.2029	
PSS x WA	-.8501	.3982	.0338	-1.6346	-.0655	
Individualism x WA	-1.8127	.7570	.0174	-3.3040	-.3213	
PSS X Individualism X WA	.5472	.2467	.0275	.0612	1.0332	

Table 4. Conditional Effects

Individualism	WA	Effect size	se	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
Low	Low	.6237	.1269	4.9165	.0000	.3738	.8737
	High	.3209	.1284	2.4992	.0131	.0679	.5738
High	Low	.0364	.1085	.3355	.7376	-.1774	.2502
	High	.2808	.1284	2.1867	.0298	.0278	.5338

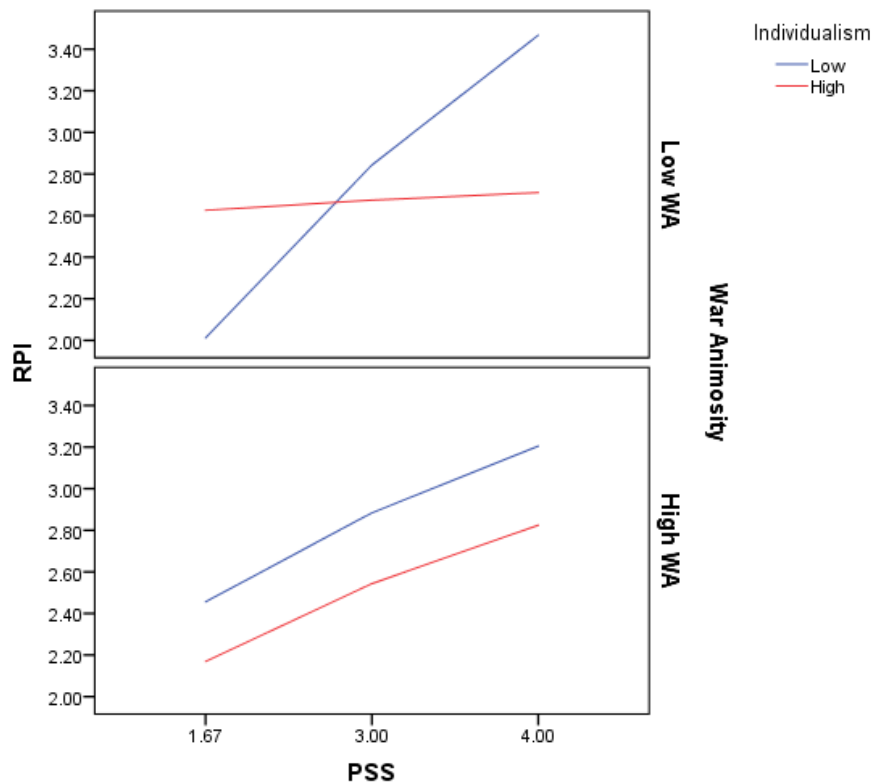


Fig. 3. Interaction of Individualism and War Animosity

## Discussion

Hedonic emotions significantly influencing PSS, as stated in H1, have been attributed to mundane activities (Yan et al., 2022) and low-priced products (Chen et al., 2019). Product Interest significantly influences PSS and is comparable to the followers of the product category (Yuan & Lou, 2020) and experts (Ubilava et al., 2010). Product interest has influenced the status of individuals in different studies (Ubilava et al. 2010; Yuan & Lou, 2020) in support of H2. Product quality influencing PSS (H3) is supported by studies on apparel (Dhir et al., 2021), airline (Moslehpour et al., 2021), and a low-priced food package (Lacoste-Badie et al., 2020). The affirmation of these three hypotheses addresses the first objective.

PSS has influenced purchase intention directly (Can et al., 2020), thereby supporting H4. A highly individualistic person gives less importance to status acquired due to their emotions, interest in the product, and quality aspects of the product. People with low individualism will have a higher probability of repurchasing, as they associate a higher status with their product. This is in line with another study implying that individualism moderated the PSS and purchase intention relationship (Kitirattarkarn et al., 2019), thereby supporting H5. War animosity moderating individualism (H6) has support from a study on foreign brands in China (Han et al., 2021). While people with higher individualism may not increase their purchase probability in the same proportion as their status enhances, the introduction of the second moderator, WA, leads to an interaction effect in low WA space. Individuals with low animosity due to war but with high individualism do not engage in repeat purchases of products from the hostile country. The study has also recognized the process moderation or the multiple moderation effects (Kareem et al., 2024). The significance of H5 and H6 addresses the second objective of this study.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Emotions lead to status (Nguyen & Ho, 2022), as perceived social status is derived from hedonic emotions. The concepts of perceived status symbols are highly developed and nuanced, reflecting a highly different philosophical context compared to the West. The application of the status symbol as an internal evaluation is appropriate and has rightly been classified as an organism. This empirical study has successfully described a valid and interesting application of S-O-R theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) in a specific case by adding moderators to the organism-response relationship path. This study provides theoretical contributions to the existing body of knowledge of S-O-R in at least two ways. Firstly, this research enhances our theoretical understanding of stimuli: HI, PI, and PQ regarding their intrinsic effects on the organism of PSS, which ultimately culminates in the response of RPI in the context of rope lights. Secondly, this research also contributes by illustrating how PSS is moderated both singularly by individualism and in tandem with war animosity concerning its effect on RPI, which represents a novel contribution to this area of study.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings demonstrate that product interest is an important psychological mechanism underpinning the causal relation for perceived status symbols. A possible interpretation of this finding is that partnering with a product brand can create synergy.

The interest in a product category can be developed into a status for an individual. Backed with their hedonic connection, individuals can be influencers for that product and help develop powerful reviews for low-priced products such as rope lights.

Moreover, these individuals can help manufacturers define what constitutes optimal quality for the product from hostile countries for other buyers. Manufacturers note that consumers derive status even from possession of low-price products if they have a liking for the product category, mastery over product attributes, and are emotionally connected. Influencers, in general, tend to exhibit these three traits.

The conversion rate is higher among individuals with low individualism than among those with high individualism. For example, people who exhibit low individualism, such as those from joint families, should be targeted for these products. Firms need to market these products to individuals who are social, as they tend to shop in groups or with their families. Buyers who exhibit low animosity due to the effects of past wars and low individualism are more likely to repeat their purchase, as their perception of status increases in comparison to individuals with a strong remembrance of past wars or consumers with high individualism. Hence, firms need to target such families or groups who are not hostile towards other countries that have waged wars in the past. They should not market goods manufactured in hostile countries to individualistic or solo shoppers. It has been found that Chinese products are being boycotted more in urban areas than in rural areas. This could be attributed to the fact that more international political discussions happen in urban areas. In other words, places further away from political centers would have lower levels of war animosity. In such hubs, the probability of purchase by joint families could be higher.

### **Conclusion**

The study was conducted to understand the repurchase intention of customers regarding rope lights. The antecedents were observed to be the perceived quality, product interest, and hedonic emotions of the consumers. The perceived status symbol was found to be significant with a moderating effect of Individualism and war animosity for repurchase intention.

According to the study, product interest is the most significant stimulus amongst others to obtain the perceived status symbol. Additionally, the moderating effect of individualism is more effective than the combined moderating effects of both individualism and war animosity.

This study has been able to identify the antecedents and outcomes of perceived status symbols. Consumers repeat their purchases for products that deliver status to them. This status is perceived due to their interest, perceived quality, and hedonic emotions associated with the product. PSS can be achieved even with low-priced products. The repeat purchase intention is aggravated when they know that the source of the product is from a hostile nation. Moreover, this feeling is negated by conditions of low levels of animosity and individualism.



### **Limitations and Future Research**

The consumption of goods is also associated with status. Therefore, in future research, the role of conspicuous consumption in defining status can be added to this type of study. Similarly, utilitarian values are important for a product and should be included in future research. A longitudinal study will be noteworthy for the interaction effects with the changing perceptions of individualism and war animosity. Convenience sampling is always a constraint on the generalization of the findings. Additionally, this research can be directed toward understanding how religious values can shape customers' intentions to repurchase (Zidehsaraei et al, 2024). Finally, one can examine the influence of consumers' construal-level personality qualities on their willingness to repurchase (Fikouie et al, 2022).

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