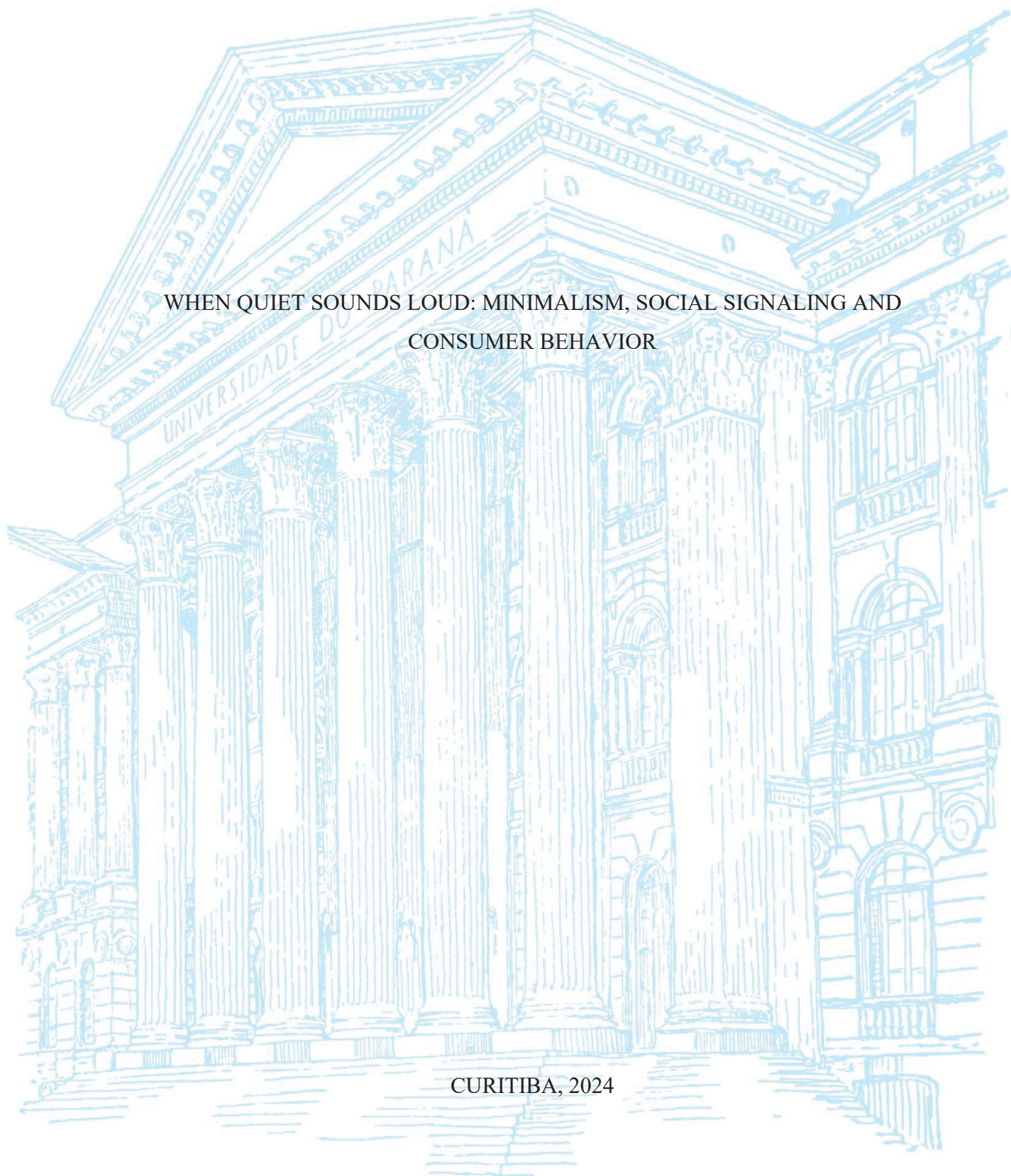


UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ

ÉRICA MARIA CALÍOPE SOBREIRA

WHEN QUIET SOUNDS LOUD: MINIMALISM, SOCIAL SIGNALING AND  
CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

CURITIBA, 2024



ÉRICA MARIA CALÍOPE SOBREIRA

WHEN QUIET SOUNDS LOUD: MINIMALISM, SOCIAL SIGNALING AND  
CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Tese apresentada ao curso de Pós-Graduação  
em Administração, Setor de Ciências Sociais  
Aplicadas, Universidade Federal do Paraná,  
como requisito à obtenção do título de Doutora  
em Administração.

Orientadora: Profa. Dra. Danielle Mantovani  
Lucena da Silva.

CURITIBA, 2024

DADOS INTERNACIONAIS DE CATALOGAÇÃO NA PUBLICAÇÃO (CIP)  
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ  
SISTEMA DE BIBLIOTECAS – BIBLIOTECA DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS APLICADAS

Sobreira, Érica Maria Calíope

*When quiet sounds loud : minimalism, social signaling and consumer behavior* / Érica Maria Calíope Sobreira. – Curitiba, 2024.

1 recurso on-line : PDF.

Tese (Doutorado) – Universidade Federal do Paraná, Setor de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração.

Orientadora: Profa. Dra. Danielle Mantovani Lucena da Silva.

1. Minimalismo. 2. Sinalização - Comunicação na ação social.  
3. Status social. 4. Consumo. 5. Comportamento do consumidor.  
I. Silva, Danielle Mantovani Lucena da. II. Universidade Federal do Paraná. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração.  
III. Título.

Bibliotecária: Maria Lidiane Herculano Graciosa CRB-9/2008



MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO  
SETOR DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS E APLICADAS  
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ  
PRÓ-REITORIA DE PESQUISA E PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO  
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO ADMINISTRAÇÃO -  
40001016025P6

## TERMO DE APROVAÇÃO

Os membros da Banca Examinadora designada pelo Colegiado do Programa de Pós-Graduação ADMINISTRAÇÃO da Universidade Federal do Paraná foram convocados para realizar a arguição da tese de Doutorado de **ÉRICA MARIA CALÍOPE SOBREIRA** intitulada: **WHEN QUIET SOUNDS LOUD: MINIMALISM, SOCIAL SIGNALING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**, sob orientação da Profa. Dra. DANIELLE MANTOVANI LUCENA DA SILVA, que após terem inquirido a aluna e realizada a avaliação do trabalho, são de parecer pela sua APROVAÇÃO no rito de defesa.

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Curitiba, 27 de Fevereiro de 2024.

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04/07/2024 09:58:56.0  
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05/07/2024 06:07:23.0  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

À Deus.

Ao meu avô, José Calíope, que sempre contribuiu para minha educação e que, com quase 98 anos, mostra o que é ser forte, sobretudo em alma, e como a vontade de viver sempre veio em primeiro lugar, apesar de todas as adversidades e dissabores que a vida trouxe ao longo do caminho. Agradeço, amo e sinto orgulho de ser sua neta.

Aos meus pais, Magda e Ivan, que, mesmo distantes fisicamente, nunca deixaram de estar presentes nos meus dias em uma cidade até então desconhecida. Me acompanharam durante toda essa jornada e seguem me acompanhando, mesmo de longe. Educação para eles sempre veio em primeiro lugar. Independentemente de como tenham se sentido diante da decisão da única filha de sair de casa para morar sozinha em outro estado e cursar o doutorado, agradeço e fico feliz por terem me apoiado. Me deixaram voar e continuaram apoiando o voo até quando ele não era dos melhores, quando eu caía no chão, ou quando machucava a asa. Agradeço a liberdade, o amor e o apoio. Amo e sinto orgulho de ser filha de vocês.

Aos amigos, também companheiros de jornada acadêmica. Franciele Manosso, um dos presentes que o Paraná me deu, amiga querida, sempre disposta a ajudar e compartilhar dos momentos mais “tranquilos” aos mais “tensos” do processo de desenvolver uma tese. Também é a incrível companheira de passeios gastronômicos e terapêuticos. Elielton dos Santos, amigo querido, de amizade construída, sobretudo, nos momentos “desgastantes” do processo. Tantas chamadas de vídeo para compartilhar as risadas, nervosas ou não, as dores e os aprendizados, sejam estatísticos ou não. Depois dos sig dos estudos, veio o sig representando como essa amizade deu certo – e isso foi *Loud*, tá? Rafael Demczuk, amigo que a Fran me apresentou, por todo o apoio durante a jornada, e por ter tirado tantas dúvidas.

Aos maravilhosos amigos que fiz no Paraná, ainda que não sejam nada paranaenses: Jorge Aquino e Barbara Garcia. Vocês não têm ideia de como foram importantes na jornada, e muito além da acadêmica, com certeza. Aos maravilhosos amigos existentes: Aline Ribeiro, Juliana Rodrigues, Hyane Correia, Clayton Silva e Cindy Lima, por se manterem na minha vida mesmo com a distância física e a correria do cotidiano. Em especial, à Aline, por quase 7 anos de uma amizade que vai muito além da vida acadêmica em comum, mas envolve parcerias, conversas, risadas, momentos terapêuticos, passeios e alguns drinks. E, em especial, à Ju, a amizade mais improvável que já fiz na vida, sem relação alguma com a vida acadêmica, mas, com certeza, uma das mais fortes e sólidas. Posso contar nos dedos quantas vezes nos vimos presencialmente, não deve chegar a cinco, mas nós nos fazemos presentes na vida uma da outra quase todos os dias e isso tem muito valor para mim. Obrigada, Clayton, por tê-la levado na

pizzaria naquele dia e, obrigada Ju, por termos dado o nosso número de *whatsapp* uma para outra naquele dia.

A quem, infelizmente, não está mais aqui nesse mundo: meu tio preferido, Marcos Calíope. Acho que ele sabia disso. Sempre foi alguém que dizia “Ah, a Érica consegue. Ah, a Érica vai passar no doutorado. Ah, a Érica vai para o Paraná e não volta.” Não sei quanto à última frase, mas, pode ter certeza, eu amei esse lugar, com todos os altos e baixos do caminho.

Aos presentes em forma de gente que a vida me deu e eu não poderia imaginar que iria receber em Curitiba: Cleusa e Lauro Marchioro. Pessoas maravilhosas que me acolheram, não só como inquilina, se tornaram parte da minha história neste período de doutorado, e que tenho como uma segunda família. Não poderia esquecer também de falar da querida Raquel Marchioro, outro presente. Ela me lembra e traz o calor humano e a alegria de Fortaleza nesta terra distante.

A você, que eu não poderia esquecer: Jeferson Finardi. Compartilhei tantos momentos com você ao longo dos anos, falei várias vezes sobre minha tese, a vida acadêmica, o que eu gostava ou não, buscando relaxar, desabafar ou só conversar e passar um pouco do meu mundo para você entender como funcionava e te incluir de alguma maneira. Nunca poderia falar do Paraná ou da minha vida no Paraná sem falar ou lembrar de você. Nessa terrinha chuvosa, você coloriu e trouxe sol para muito dos meus dias. E, mesmo com os momentos mais cinzentos, essas cores e o sol ainda estão aqui comigo.

Agradeço a minha orientadora Danielle Mantovani, por me orientar nesse processo de doutoramento. Agradeço por ter me compreendido enquanto pesquisadora e ter me apresentado o artigo sobre minimalismo que disparou todo o processo de criação e construção desta tese. Lembro bem do dia: “Dê uma olhada neste *paper*, é no estilo dos temas que você gosta de pesquisar”. Você estava certa, profa.

Aos professores participantes da banca examinadora de qualificação e de defesa, Paulo Prado, Diego Costa Pinto, Cristiane Pizzutti e Elder Semprebon, pelo tempo, pelas valiosas contribuições e sugestões. À Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR) e ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração (PPGADM), pelo suporte acadêmico. À Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), pelo suporte acadêmico e financeiro.

**O presente trabalho foi realizado com apoio da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) - Código de Financiamento 001**

*“Quiet people have the loudest minds.”*

*- Stephen Hawking*

## RESUMO

O minimalismo é um estilo de vida que abrange a aquisição consciente e a propriedade de poucos bens selecionados, com uma preferência estética esparsa. Estudos recentes sugerem que o minimalismo proporciona uma mudança profunda no estilo de vida dos consumidores e a sinalização deste comportamento aos outros. Com base na teoria da sinalização social, este estudo investiga a relação entre o comportamento minimalista e uma das maiores tendências recentes do mercado: o consumo discreto. Através de cinco estudos, demonstramos que os minimalistas são vistos como consumidores que preferem produtos mais discretos (vs. conspícuos) do que os não minimalistas. Além disso, mostramos que as percepções de status explicam este efeito nas inferências dos consumidores e evidenciamos que este efeito é particularmente mais forte para as marcas de luxo, em comparação com as marcas convencionais. Compreender como as pessoas fazem inferências sobre o comportamento minimalista tem implicações importantes para a literatura sobre minimalismo, sinalização social, status, consumo discreto e posicionamento de marca. Como implicações práticas, o minimalismo pode ser usado como um sinal alternativo de status para as pessoas, reduzindo o número de bens, preferindo uma estética esparsa e tomando decisões de compra conscientes. A subtileza incorporada na sinalização das preferências de consumo dos minimalistas pode encorajar outros consumidores a recorrerem ao minimalismo como uma estratégia de sinalização positiva (sendo vistos como "minimalistas"): pessoas de elevado estatuto, mas que não gostam de se exhibir, e preferem o consumo de produtos de alta qualidade e de aparência discreta. Além disso, as marcas de luxo que pretendam induzir percepções de status mais elevadas e prosseguir uma estratégia silenciosa podem beneficiar da utilização do minimalismo como símbolo de status nas suas comunicações focadas em produtos discretos.

Palavras-chave: minimalismo; sinalização social; status; consumo inconspícuo; inferências do consumidor.



## ABSTRACT

Minimalism is a lifestyle that embraces the mindful acquisition and ownership of few, curated possessions, with a sparse aesthetic preference. Recent studies suggest that minimalism provides a profound change in consumers' lifestyle and the signaling of this behavior to others. Building on social signaling theory, this study investigates the relationship between minimalist behavior and one of the recent biggest trends in the market: inconspicuous consumption. Across five studies, we demonstrate that minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists. Additionally, we show that status perceptions explain this effect on consumer inferences and evidence that this effect is particularly stronger for luxury brands, compared to mainstream brands. Understanding how people form inferences about minimalist behavior has important implications for the literature on minimalism, social signaling, status, inconspicuous consumption, and brand positioning. As practical implications, minimalism can be used as an alternative signal of status for people by reducing their number of goods, preferring a sparse aesthetic, and making mindful purchasing decisions. The subtlety embedded in the signaling of minimalists' consumption preferences may encourage other consumers to turn to minimalism as a positive signaling strategy (being seen as a "minimalist"): people of high status, but who don't like to show off, and prefer the consumption of high-end products discreet in appearance. Furthermore, luxury brands that may want to induce higher status perceptions and pursue a quiet strategy can benefit from using minimalism as a status symbol in their communications focused on inconspicuous products.

**Keywords:** minimalism; social signaling; status; inconspicuous consumption; consumer inferences; brand positioning.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Minimalism as a low-consumption lifestyle (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022) has stood out in recent years among consumers and society (Chen et al., 2024; Chen & Liu, 2023; Duong et al., 2023; Gong et al., 2023; Kang et al., 2021; Malik & Ishaq, 2023; Mendonca et al., 2021; Meissner, 2019; Shafqat et al., 2023). Minimalists start to own fewer possessions, reducing excessive consumption and clutter, preferring sparse aesthetic, more quality in products and conscious consumption not because of financial constraints, but because they intentionally seek reduce consumption to focus on quality of life and well-being (Lloyd & Pennington, 2020; Pangarkar et al., 2021; Sandlin & Wallin, 2022; Ugglä, 2019; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022).

Previous studies on minimalism investigate who the minimalists are, what is the process people go through to become minimalists (Lloyd & Pennington, 2020; Mendonca et al., 2021), and how people engage in minimalist consumption (Chen et al., 2024; Gong et al., 2023). However, there is a lack of studies focusing on the social implications of minimalism in consumption, specifically how minimalism is perceived by others. This is particularly important because recent studies show that initiatives of consumption reduction can both trigger positive (Rajapaksa et al, 2019; Soule & Sekhon, 2022) but also negative social signaling (De Nardo et al. 2017; Maior & Mantovani, 2023).

Minimalism may be related to social signaling, as recent studies suggest that it provides a profound change in minimalists' lifestyle and the signaling of this behavior to others (Jain, 2022; Kang et al., 2021; Pangarkar et al., 2021). In this perspective, consumers have been finding new ways to signal status as luxury goods and conspicuous consumption have become more mainstream (Bellezza, 2023; Berger & Ward, 2010; Rosendo-Rios & Shukla, 2023; Wu et al., 2017). These new alternative signals of status take different forms, such as vintage consumption, sustainable luxury, or inconspicuous consumption (Bellezza, 2023).



Building on social signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Gambetta, 2009; McAndrew, 2021; Spence, 1973), this research shows that minimalism may function as an alternative signal of status for people, leading to inferences of high status and specific consumption preferences. Specifically, we show that minimalists are perceived as more likely to prefer products marked by inconspicuousness (i.e., marked by quiet signals) compared to non-minimalists. We also find evidence that this effect is particularly stronger for luxury brands, compared to mainstream brands.

People might infer that inconspicuousness is prevalent in minimalists' consumption-reducing behavior preferences. This is because inconspicuous forms of consumption often attract consumers who appreciate aesthetics, high-quality and function (Eastman et al, 2022; Wu et al., 2017), like minimalists (Błoński & Witek, 2019; Dopierała, 2017; Mendonca et al., 2021; Ugglä, 2019), and minimalism may function as an alternative signal of status in terms of few possessions, mindful purchasing decisions and preference for sparse aesthetic (Bellezza, 2023; Lee, 2021; Pangarkar et al., 2021; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022).

Formally, we aim to test **the effect of minimalist behavior on inferences about minimalists' preferences for inconspicuous products**. Therefore, while some might say that "*quiet is the new loud*" in luxury consumption (Chitrakorn, 2021; Eckhardt et al., 2015; Wang, 2022), in this research we show "*when quiet sounds loud*": when consumers infer that preferences for inconspicuous products are behavioral signs of people who adopt a minimalist lifestyle, the so-called minimalists.

This relationship is relevant to study as it explores how different consumption phenomena related to status signaling (minimalism and inconspicuous consumption) interact from the consumers' perspective. Specifically, this is relevant to study as it shows how exposure to minimalist behaviors has implications for perceptions of higher status and associations with preferences for products with subtle signals (e.g., inconspicuous consumption), which can

benefit both people who may turn to minimalism as an alternative way of signaling status as well as brands that are interested in pursuing quiet strategies in their products. In this direction, Bellezza (2023) questioned how alternative signals of status can interact with each other, given that they are based on distance from traditional status symbols. This research investigates interactions between these two specific consumption phenomena within the scope of alternative signals of status literature.

Thus, this research seeks to contribute to the literature on minimalism (Chen et al., 2024; Chen & Liu, 2023; Gong et al., 2023; Pangarkar et al., 2021; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022), social signaling theory (Berger & Heath, 2007; Dubois et al., 2012; Dunham, 2011; Grossman, 2015; Howlett et al., 2013; Johnson & Chattaraman, 2019; McAndrew, 2021; Schulz et al., 2015; Skyrms, 2010; Spence, 1973), status (Bellezza & Berger, 2020; Bellezza, 2023; Brooks & Wilson, 2015; Dubois et al., 2012; Soule & Sekhon, 2022), inconspicuous consumption (Brandão & Barbedo, 2023; Eastman et al., 2022; Ho & Wong, 2023; Jiang et al. 2021; Makkar & Yap, 2018a; 2018b; Wu et al., 2017) and brand positioning (da Luz et al., 2020; Kotler & Armstrong, 2020; Moreau et al., 2020; Saqib, 2020).

Empirically, the robustness of the effect of minimalist behavior (vs. non-minimalist) on inferences about a target's preference for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products is examined across five studies, using different products and types of inconspicuousness. Besides that, we also show that status perceptions might explain this effect on consumer inferences (Studies 3 and 4). We also find that brand positioning moderates the relationship between minimalist behavior and inferences of preference for inconspicuous products, with this effect being stronger for luxury brands than for mainstream brands (Study 4).

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section, we present the theoretical background on minimalism within the scope of studies on social signaling. Next, we discuss the relationship between minimalist behavior and consumer inferences and develop the hypotheses of this research.

### 2.1 Minimalist Behavior and Social Signaling

Minimalism as a lifestyle can come from a response to societal trends, the desire for freedom from excessive consumption, or control over consumption, greater environmental concerns, the search for a better quality of life, well-being, and personal growth (Dopierala, 2017; Kang et al., 2021; Lee, 2019; Lloyd & Pennington, 2020; Malik & Ishaq, 2023; Martin-Woodhead, 2021; Shafqat et al., 2023; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022), among other motivations.

Based on this, it is possible to say that minimalism is a lifestyle that may involve various self-related motives or social goals for its adoption. This lifestyle also reflects intentional choices and behaviors not motivated by financial constraints, being adopted by individuals who intentionally choose to consume less (Dopierala, 2017; Kropfeld et al., 2018; Kang et al., 2021; Kropfeld, 2022; Kuanr et al., 2020; Pangarkar et al., 2021).

Even with this understanding, several definitions are still offered by the current literature on minimalism (Pangarkar et al., 2021). For some authors, minimalism is one of the many forms of anti-consumption (Lee, 2022; Oral & Thurner, 2019). Shafqat et al. (2023, p. 1) state that "minimalism is a sustainable lifestyle choice and helps people in achieving consumer well-being and life satisfaction, focus on what matters the most in life and where to devote their energies", which helps to change consumer behavior. However, although concern for the environment may lead some consumers to embrace minimalism, it is not a necessary aspect for consumer minimalism (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022).

The notion of minimalism as a lifestyle is reinforced by most of the definitions, as well as the one based on consumption reduction behavior. Minimalism is a low-consumption lifestyle that focuses less on material possessions (Bellezza, 2023; Chen & Wei, 2022), being associated with the middle and upper classes (Dopierala, 2017). Others claim that minimalism as a low-consumption lifestyle offers a way to reduce financial burden, enhance the opportunity for more meaningful pursuits, and personal well-being (Kang et al., 2021; Lloyd & Pennington, 2020).

It is important to clarify that, while materialists associate possessions with happiness (Richins, 2004), for minimalists' possessions are not central to an individual's happiness, but only add joy to their lives the few and intentional possessions they currently own and acquire (Lloyd & Pennington, 2020). Therefore, the existence and valuation of a *low quantity of possessions* is the key point for minimalists, not a mere valuation of *one's possessions* (Eckmann & Landwehr, 2020), which occurs for materialism.

No clear or concise conceptualization of minimalism in consumption had been proposed until the study of Wilson and Bellezza (2022). They discarded categories that could be interpreted as motivations or consequences of minimalism, rather than necessary features or core dimensions of the construct itself. At the end of the process, the authors obtained three dimensions (number of possessions, sparse aesthetic, mindfully curated consumption) that consisted of this concept in consumer behavior. Thus, minimalism "*embraces the mindful acquisition and ownership of few, curated possessions, with a sparse aesthetic preference*" (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022, p. 48). Each of these dimensions has been an attraction factor for consumers interested in becoming more minimalist.

We argue that theoretically working minimalism under the dimensions proposed by Wilson and Bellezza (2022) helps to better unify and define minimalism as lifestyle in consumption, and to guide the development of empirical research. Therefore, this study follows these authors' definition of minimalism. Since minimalism is defined as a lifestyle in

consumption, it may generate specific perceptions and consumer inferences about what might be minimalist's preferences for products.

Overall, signaling theory has been used to interpret signaling among consumers (Schulz et al., 2015). On one side, people can signal values, occupation, status, identity, among other attributes using brands and products, or through behaviors and lifestyles (Berger & Heath, 2007; Dubois et al., 2012; Howlett et al., 2013; Richins, 1994; Townsend & Sood, 2012). On the other side, observers use multiple cues or signals simultaneously to make inferences about others (Bellezza & Berger, 2020). Additionally, the costly signaling theory suggests that individuals signal useful information about themselves to others by engaging in behaviors that are costly (i.e., involve significant amounts of economic or social resources, energy, risk, or time) (Berger, 2019; Bird & Smith, 2005; Griskevicius et al., 2007; McAndrew, 2002; Spence, 1973).

Recent studies with people who adopted minimalism suggest that minimalism changes their lifestyle, how they feel about themselves and their well-being, furthermore their behavior is signaled to others (Jain, 2022; Kang et al., 2021; Ugglä, 2019). What minimalist lifestyle signals compared to non-minimalists may affect inferences about minimalists as consumers. Thus, within the scope of studies on social signaling, we propose that *minimalist behavior involves the signals that this lifestyle can convey to observers, based on its practices and characteristics in consumption.*

Minimalist practices take different forms (Gong et al., 2023). Kang et al. (2021) propose the main behavioral representations of minimalism: clutter removal, cautious shopping, longevity, and self-sufficiency. Minimalists value the longevity of material possessions, "preferring well-designed, multi-purpose, and space-saving objects and avoiding cheap, low-quality goods that cannot stand the test of time" (Kang et al. 2021, p. 805). They often focus on acquiring products that have more quality and durability (Błoński & Witek, 2019; Dopierała, 2017; Mendonca et al., 2021; Ugglä, 2019).

Minimalists also seek personal growth (Kang et al., 2021), which is considered an intrinsic value (Kasser, 2015) and a source of meaning through consumption (Hopkinson & Pujari, 1999; Weingarten & Goodman, 2021). Furthermore, intentionally reduced possessions fulfill a role for minimalists: they have to add meaning to their lives (Boeckermann et al., 2019; Millburn & Nicodemus, 2015). Intrinsic motivations, pursue of meaning, and quality are also related, since intrinsically motivated consumers tend to purchase luxury products for superior quality (Truong & McColl, 2011), as high-quality products last longer (Sun et al., 2021). Therefore, minimalists pursue meaning through reducing-consumption behavior, but when they consume, they give preference for high-end products (Błoński & Witek, 2019), because these products are associated with higher quality and durability, which increases the meaning of their possessions.

Thus, because minimalists are very selective and attribute a special meaning to their possessions and consumption practices, they might signal that they are more likely to prefer consuming luxury goods compared to non-minimalists.

Minimalists also seem to prioritize neutral and monochromatic colors, simple and sparse aesthetics, often discreet in appearance (Gong et al., 2023; Lee, 2021; Minasian & Gudkova, 2022; Pangarkar et al., 2021; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022). For instance, some figures usually have their images associated with minimalism, signaling characteristics that are perceived as minimalist (Martin-Woodhead, 2021).

Among the striking examples are the minimalists, Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus, from the website 'The Minimalists.com'. The use of monochromatic colors, with an emphasis on black and white, the simplicity and practicality of dressing, in addition to spaces with few things, uncluttered spaces, are present in the photos on their website (Millburn & Nicodemus, 2015; 2020). Steve Jobs' way of dressing was often talked about at minimalist gatherings (Derwanz & Strebing, 2021). Jobs wore jeans and a black turtleneck pullover



which he is said to have had hundreds of (Becraft, 2017). He embraced this look for its simplicity and even his home wasn't particularly huge (Cashmore, 2011).

In line with these discussions, recent studies suggest that minimalism helps people make more conscious consumption decisions, reducing their material belongings by way of their more intentional and curated acquisition behavior (Kang et al., 2021; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022). Minimalists make careful choices of what to buy (Gong et al., 2023), focus not only on prudence and rationality by avoiding excess and accumulation of goods (Pangarkar et al., 2021) but on the need for balance and order in life (Xie, 2021). Thus, minimalists are reflective about eliminating excesses and unnecessary purchases (Dopierala, 2017), setting firm limits on their consumption, focusing on essentials, and practicing cautious shopping (Hagen et al., 2021; Kang et al., 2021; Mendonca et al., 2021).

Furthermore, minimalists must be able, efficient and successful to seek alternatives to reduce consumption or even to abstain from consuming (e.g., avoid recurring purchases) (Mendonca et al., 2021). For example, by reducing their consumption, they may seem to manage and invest their resources to recognize, select and make purchases of goods that have higher quality and durability, which helps to delay or prevent having to purchase the same thing again (Błoński & Witek, 2019). In this sense, they carry out a series of practices based on intentional consumption: the use of fewer existing resources, and, sometimes, acquiring sustainably sourced or high-quality products, which enhances the useful life of the product (Derwanz & Strebing, 2021; Martin-Woodhead, 2021).

## **2.2 Minimalist Behavior and Consumer Inferences**

In the next topics, we propose some inferences that people make about minimalists from minimalist behaviors. This discussion will be presented below, as well as the development of the hypotheses.

### ***2.2.1 Inconspicuous (vs. Conspicuous) consumption, Quiet and Loud signals***

The use of products as status markers is characteristic of conspicuous consumption and signaling (Dubois et al., 2012; Griskevicius et al., 2007). Conspicuous consumption is a strategy of social signaling (Bird & Smith, 2005), in which people convey information about themselves "by engaging in behaviors that reveal one's traits and preferences to observers" (Bennett & Chakravarti, 2008, p. 1). The acquisition and display of expensive goods that have greater symbolic value, or other opulent leisure activities can be examples of this strategy to signal high status and wealth (Brooks & Wilson, 2015; O'cass & Frost, 2002; Trigg, 2001; Veblen, 1899).

Previous studies show that higher status can be perceived when contextual information indicates conspicuity (such as a brand label) in consumption (Soule & Sekhon, 2022). For instance, observers perceive an actor as having more status when wearing a Gucci t-shirt (i.e., luxury product with a conspicuous sign) than an actor wearing a t-shirt with no brand indication (Cannon & Rucker, 2018). Regarding the latter, could we say that by not indicating a brand on the product, would it still have a signaling function? Yes. Status in this case can be perceived by a smaller or specific group of consumers who can decode its meaning, not by consumers in general (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2021).

In this perspective, luxury consumption is not necessarily conspicuous, as it can be consumed in private, but when it comes to explicitly displaying these products on public, most of the literature conceives luxury as conspicuous (Kumar et al., 2022). Nonetheless, luxury consumption has been taking on new forms that imply another type of signaling in public, marked by discreet, subtle or quiet signals, through (in)conspicuous consumption (Brandão & Barbedo, 2023; Eastman et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

Inconspicuous luxury consumption is "the use of subtle signals that are unidentifiable by the mainstream but instantly observable to those with the needed connoisseurship to decode their meanings" (Makkar & Yap, 2018b, p. 130). Others conceptualize inconspicuous

consumption as luxury consumer maturity (Ho & Wong, 2023). In this sense, Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. (2018) show that preference for quiet luxury brands over conspicuous ones is driven by factors such as values, culture and lifestyle, that is, going beyond income.

The absence and presence of brand signal is used to assess inconspicuity (vs. conspicuity) through brand prominence in a product (Lee et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2019a; 2019b). However, there are other ways of assessing inconspicuousness through prominence, such as degrees of visibility, size, and position of the logo (Meyer & Manika, 2017). For instance, Raimondo et al. (2022) progressively varied the prominence of a sweatshirt logo, which had versions with different logo positions (bottom left or center) and sizes (large or small).

Therefore, past literature has been dedicated to studying inconspicuousness in luxury products through brand prominence (Wang, 2022), which “refers to the different degrees of conspicuousness of a brand's logo - loud (or conspicuous) or quiet (discreet or inconspicuous)” (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018, p. 74). That is, high brand prominence (big and very visible logos) approaches the notion of conspicuity (loud signals) while low brand prominence (small and unnoticeable logos) approaches inconspicuity (quiet signals) (Pino et al., 2019).

Despite that, it is also questioned that consumers' luxury consumption (inconspicuous or not) is based on brand prominence alone (Aw et al., 2021). In this perspective, other aspects deserve attention, such as color since influences visual information processing, preferences, and choices across different realities (individual or group, social and cultural) (Adaval et al., 2019; Durrani & Niinimäki, 2021; Kumar, 2017). For instance, color has recently been considered by Jiang et al. (2021) when studying inconspicuousness to avoid the bias that respondents would choose based on the color palette of the product, thus, they used versions of Gucci T-shirts only in black and white.

### *2.2.1.1 Minimalism and inconspicuousness: Quiet signals in consumption*

This research proposes that inconspicuousness is perceived as prevalent in minimalists' consumption-reducing behavior preferences, as they signal that they do not need to show high status to others in general, which does not mean that they are not perceived as having high status (more discussion on this will be presented in hypothesis 2). Therefore, observers infer that minimalists prefer products with subtle signals, that is, inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products, compared to non-minimalists.

Inconspicuous forms of consumption attract consumers who appreciate aesthetics, quality and function, prefer not to provoke envy and/or anger in others and avoid ostentatious status symbols (Eastman et al, 2022; Wu et al., 2017), like minimalists (Dopierała, 2017; Mendonca et al., 2021). Also, minimalists prefer space aesthetics, simple and discreet colors (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022), a tendency associated with the rise of inconspicuous consumption, which signals a preference for not standing out as ostentatious (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Eastman et al, 2022) and often functions "as a dematerialized signal of social status" (Thompson & Kumar, 2020, p. 555). Pangarkar et al. (2021) suggest that minimalists will prefer goods with subtle signals that run counter to conspicuity rather than boycotting products.

Inconspicuous products also offer simple designs with less ostentatious visual patterns (Shao et al., 2019b). However, according to Greenberg et al. (2020), even an inconspicuous product (e.g., with a small logo or no logo), can still be perceived with a loud signal. For example, when the product has more extravagant design and, therefore, is louder (Greenberg et al., 2020). From this perspective, visual complexity represents the degree or number of patterns and detail in an object's visual components (Baek et al., 2023; Pieters et al., 2010). Accordingly, minimalists may also signal that they dislike design extravagance and prefer less visual complexity (e.g., few colors, few patterns, less extravagance), which can help consumers to

infer that they appreciate inconspicuousness and prefer inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products compared to non-minimalists.

In addition, color cannot be a neglected attribute when studying the preference for inconspicuous products or given its importance when it comes to minimalism (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022), and, consequently, the signaling of minimalists. Often inconspicuousness is closer to monochrome (i.e., shades of just one color) while conspicuity is close to polychromatic (i.e., colorful, having different colors). Previous research suggests that minimalists value simplicity in design, limited ornamentation, and monochromatic colors (Lee, 2021; Minasian & Gudkova, 2022; Pangarkar et al., 2021; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022). For instance, black is associated with sophistication and being discreet compared to other colors (Casas & Chinoperekweyi, 2019), and sophisticated offerings are increasingly being used by inconspicuous luxury brands to target consumers who can understand and appreciate them (Eastman et al, 2022). In this sense, Chanel incorporates recurring colors of black and white as a sign of sophistication in its products and marketing (Kim & Sullivan, 2019).

Based on these discussions, minimalism and inconspicuous consumption can be associated in terms of quiet signals. However, it is not possible to state that inconspicuous consumption is always associated with minimalism, since this consumption deals with intentional signaling, aimed at a small group of people capable of identifying it (Makkar & Yap, 2018b). In this sense, this research does not study what minimalists intend to show to others, but rather how they are perceived based on their behaviors and what people infer in terms of consumption preferences from this. Formally, this research presents the following hypothesis:

***H1: Minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists.***

### ***2.2.2 Status perceptions and inconspicuousness***

People can signal status through consumption. This can occur when they acquire status-laden products and brands (O’Cass & Frost, 2002), which have potential for status signaling (Bellezza & Berger, 2020; Han et al., 2010; Sekhon & Soule, 2020). Since social signaling involves conveying information about oneself by engaging in behaviors that signal one's traits and preferences (Bennett & Chakravarti, 2008), people who signal high status are generally perceived as having the following traits: high status, prestigious, elite, upper class, and prominent (Cannon & Rucker, 2018).

Additionally, literature on conspicuous luxury has associated this type of consumption with the pursuit of status and status signals (Eastman et al, 2022). However, the more luxury consumption moves away from conspicuous towards inconspicuous luxury, the more the view of luxury is disconnected economic capital and wealth (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al. 2010), but not from status and social class. Therefore, consumption signal status often for conspicuous brands. However, for minimalists, status can be perceived as more associated with discretion and thus, a preference for inconspicuous consumption.

Past research shows that status has a positive impact on purchase intention of luxury fashion and that, when it comes to status, owning luxury items has pros and cons (Eastman et al., 2018). Among cons, people think you are materialistic, or think you are snobby, while among pros, people think you are consuming high quality products (Eastman et al., 2018). According to Eckhardt et al. (2015, p. 5) this is because “status connotes high quality, luxury and perhaps class”.

People might think that minimalists are prone to luxury consumption when it comes to status signaling and inconspicuousness. First, minimalists are usually associated with the consumption of high-quality and durable products (Błoński & Witek, 2019), which can signal



they have high-status because may involve the consumption of luxury items (high-end products) (Liu et al., 2019; Lloyd & Pennington, 2020; Pangarkar et al., 2021). Second, because status signals can be perceived not only through conspicuous luxury (Eastman et al, 2022), but also through inconspicuous luxury (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2021).

Inconspicuousness has been associated with the necessary knowledge to fully experience luxury and can be seen as a process in which consumers exhibit maturity in consumption (Eastman et al, 2022; Ho & Wong, 2023; Makkar & Yap, 2018a; 2018b). In this sense, status perceptions could fit into a preference for inconspicuous items, since inconspicuous luxury consumption manifests as a preference for inconspicuous luxury goods that have signaling ability, but less than conspicuous ones (Ho & Wong, 2023).

In this perspective, consumer minimalism may function as an alternative signal of status in terms of quantity (few possessions), mindful purchasing decisions and preference for sparse aesthetic (Bellezza, 2023; Lee, 2021; Pangarkar et al., 2021; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022), which could have implications for consumer inferences.

For observers, the subtlety and discretion embedded in the signaling of minimalism (Minasian & Gudkova, 2022) could help encourage associations with high status and inferences of preference for inconspicuous products. The perception that minimalism signals more status and preference for inconspicuous products may also be related to variables such as the attribution of sophistication (Pinto et al., 2019) to the minimalist consumer compared to the non-minimalist. In this direction, previous studies suggest that inconspicuous consumers have good taste, sophistication and knowledge of luxury brands (Makkar & Yap, 2018b).

Minimalists can also manage resources and make decisions that favor the acquisition and maintenance of products with these features in limited quantity, not for financial constraints but for intentional reasons (Błoński & Witek, 2019; Carrier et al., 2014; Lloyd & Pennington, 2020; Ugglä, 2019), what can signal they have high status. They also focus on intrinsic benefits such

as personal growth (Kasser, 2015; Kang et al., 2021), like inconspicuous luxury consumers (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009; Dweck & Yeager, 2019).

Thus, we propose that status perceptions might explain the effect of minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior on inferences about minimalist preferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products. Formally:

***H2: The effect of minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior on consumer inferences about minimalist preferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products is mediated by status perceptions.***

### ***2.2.3 The moderating role of brand positioning***

Saqib (2020, p. 144) states that "the basic approach of positioning is to manipulate what's already up there in the mind of consumers, to retie the connections that already exist". Thus, positioning deals with consumer perceptions of a marketable object and brand, and how marketers communicate to the mind of the customers in this context (Azmat & Lakhani, 2015; Kotler & Armstrong, 2020; Moreau et al., 2020; Ries & Trout, 1986).

For instance, luxury brand positioning deals with brands that are highly desirable and function a symbolic signal of high-status, sophistication, prestige, wealth, competence, high-quality, and upper classes (Bellezza & Berger, 2020; Chan & Northey, 2021; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; McNeil & Riello, 2016; Pinto et al., 2019; Romaniuk & Huang, 2020), such as Louis Vuitton (Chan & Northey, 2021).

On the other hand, a mainstream brand positioning seeks to offer a wide range of products appealing to most consumers (Ke et al., 2022). An example of a brand with this positioning is H&M, a high street shop that mass produce products for a larger segment (Rosendo-Rios & Shukla, 2023). Thus, when compared to luxury, mainstream brands offer

lower-cost products because they are mass-market, with market offerings accessible and affordable to most consumers (da Luz et al., 2020; Fuchs et al., 2013).

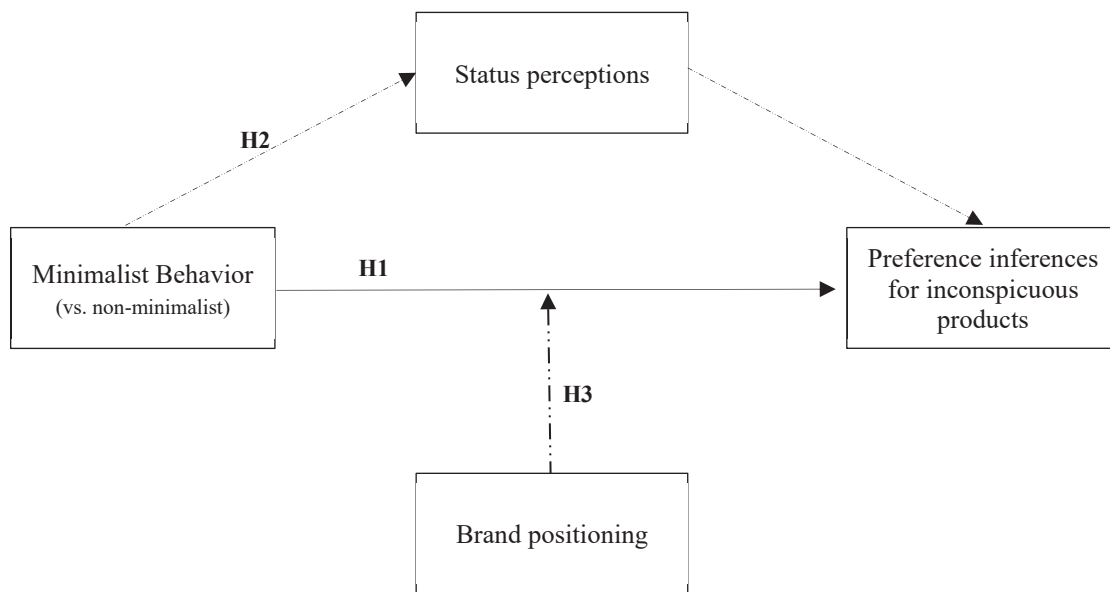
We argue that brand positioning may influence how consumers make connections between minimalism and consumption preferences. More specifically, when minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior interacts with brand positioning in the view of observers, more inferences of preference for products with quiet (vs. loud) signals are perceived in both luxury brands as in mainstream brands. Furthermore, we propose this effect is stronger for luxury brands.

In other words, consumers' perception of luxury brands leads them to associate minimalism more with products with subtle signs in these brands than with products with subtle signs in mainstream brands. This is because minimalist behavior is associated to the search for high-end products (Dopierala, 2017; Mendonca et al., 2021), competence (Błoński & Witek, 2019; Carrier et al., 2014; Lloyd & Pennington, 2020; Ugglä, 2019), and preference for simple, sparse aesthetic (Lee, 2021; Pangarkar et al., 2021; Minasian & Gudkova, 2022), which can be linked to sophistication, high-quality and upper class (Bellezza & Berger, 2020; Cannon & Rucker, 2018; Pinto et al., 2019), features associated with inconspicuously branded products (Ho & Wong, 2023). Accordingly, this may lead to greater associations between minimalism and inconspicuous consumption (e.g., quiet signals) in luxury brands.

Furthermore, minimalism appears to evoke greater perceptions of status, which may manifest itself through a preference for inconspicuousness in products. In this direction, inconspicuous consumption has been extensively examined in luxury brands (Eastman et al., 2022; Eckhardt et al., 2015; Ho & Wong, 2023; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Makkar & Yap, 2018a; Wang, 2022), which may strengthen this effect in brands with this positioning. Formally, we propose the moderating role of brand positioning:

***H3: Brand positioning moderates the relationship between minimalist behavior and inferences of the minimalist's preference for inconspicuous products: this effect is stronger for luxury brands than for mainstream brands.***

In light of these discussions, since minimalism is characterized by specific behaviors and practices, these consumers might signal to others that they also have particular preferences in consumption. Specifically, this research proposes that *minimalists signal they prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists (H1), this effect is mediated by status perceptions (H2) and moderated by brand positioning (H3)* (see Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model

Additionally, we place this study among previous research on minimalism (see Table 1). Specifically, we show the key findings and study designs used in each of the recent research on minimalism in consumption. Finally, we show the contributions of this work to the literature.

**Table 1 – Previous studies on Minimalism and current study**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Key findings</b>	<b>Study Design</b>
Kang et al. (2021)	The main behavioral representations of minimalism and its contributions to emotional well-being.	Survey
Pangarkar et al. (2021)	Provide a typology of minimalist consumers, and a framework of brand engagement strategies for each type.	Theoretical
Chen & Wei (2022)	When marketing capsule hotels to tourists, competent hotel brands benefit from using egoistic minimalistic lifestyle (EML) (enhancing personal happiness) appeals, whereas sincere hotel brands benefit from biospheric minimalistic lifestyle (BML) (preventing pollution) appeals.	Experimental
Wilson & Bellezza (2022)	Provide a conceptual definition of consumer minimalism and develop the twelve-item Minimalist Consumer Scale to measure the construct.	Survey/ Experimental
Shafqat et al. (2023)	Minimalism helps people achieve consumer well-being and life satisfaction. Minimalists with high control over their consumption desire further strengthen this relationship.	Survey
Gong et al. (2023)	Consumers engage in minimalistic consumption as a compensatory strategy to cope with their experience of chaos when they shop in a crowded environment. This effect is driven by their psychological need for order.	Experimental
Chen & Liu (2023)	Consumers with lower socioeconomic status have less favorable evaluations of brands that adopt minimalist appeals, because these consumers tend to prefer quantity over quality in consumption. Considerations of product-usage frequency moderates this effect.	Experimental
Duong et al. (2023)	Minimalistic value enables consumers to fulfill their aspiration for transcendence. Moral identity and descriptive norms explain why and when consumers are motivated to reach this aspiration.	Survey
Chen et al. (2024)	Consumers who make downward (vs. upward) social comparisons are more (vs. less) likely to engage in minimalist consumption. Status (vs. affiliation) motives mediate this effect, which is strengthened among consumers with strong (vs. weak) spending-implies-wealth (SIW) beliefs.	Experimental
<b>Contributions to the literature</b>		
<b>Current study</b>	<i>Minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists. This effect is driven by status perceptions and moderated by brand positioning.</i>	<i>Experimental</i>

Source: By the author (2024).

In this perspective, as shown in table 1, most studies addressing minimalism involved benefits related to consumers' adoption of minimalism (improvements in emotional and financial well-being, and aspiration for transcendence), implications of minimalism for the literature on sustainable consumption, brand personality and strategies. Furthermore, they show how consumers engage in minimalistic consumption as a form of compensatory consumer behavior or a reaction to socially crowded environment. The current study, however, contributes to the literature on the social implications of minimalism in consumption, the literature on alternative signals of status and on branding strategies that work with inconspicuous consumption. In this sense, we show that minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists, this effect is driven by status perceptions and moderated by brand positioning.

### 3 OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

In this section, we show an overview of the studies in this research. Five studies were conducted to examine our predictions. In Study 1A, we showed initial evidence that minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists (H1) by using a unisex product with a quiet (vs. loud) signal. Study 1B replicates this effect and shows that familiarity with the brand did not influence the pattern of results. In Study 2, the robustness of the effect of minimalist behavior (vs. non-minimalist) on inferences about a target's preference for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) according to the type of inconspicuousness in products was examined using another product with a quiet (vs. loud) signal. Study 3 investigated the mediating influence of status perceptions (H2). Ultimately, Study 4 demonstrated the consistency of the proposed mediator and the moderating role of brand positioning on this effect (H3). All studies were pre-registered. This project was approved by the research ethics committee of the Federal University of Paraná (APPENDIX A).

#### STUDY 1A: MINIMALIST BEHAVIOR AND PREFERENCES FOR INCONSPICUOUS PRODUCTS

Study 1A aimed to examine our prediction that minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists (H1), using a unisex product.

##### 3.1 Study 1A

**Participants and Design.** This study employed a single factor (behavior: minimalist vs. non-minimalist) between-subjects experimental design. The sample was composed by one hundred twenty-three participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk,  $M_{age} = 35.76$ ,  $SD = 11.348$ ; 37.9% female) in exchange for monetary payment. This study was pre-registered



([https://aspredicted.org/G6K\\_8ZK](https://aspredicted.org/G6K_8ZK)). Following pre-registration, data collection would, in principle, start with two types of unisex products (Gucci t-shirt and Adidas sneakers). However, we chose to suspend data collection of the sneaker case early on because we identified some confounds associated with the manipulation procedures. Thus, the data collection was carried out just for the T-shirt.

**Procedure.** We informed participants that this study was about perceptions of people's lifestyle. Whereas minimalism does not have an existing manipulation from previous studies that could be used in the study, we proposed a manipulation for signaling minimalist behavior based on the characteristics portrayed in the dimensions of Minimalist Consumer Scale (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022) (number of possessions, sparse aesthetics preference and mindfully curated consumption). From this, we created scenarios in which observers read descriptions that could reflect behaviors considered minimalist and non-minimalist.

Thus, participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions in which we manipulated target behavior, whether as minimalist or non-minimalist. They viewed information about the behavior of a target named Emma. First, they read an identical text across conditions about how the practice of a lifestyle may give clues about a person's behavior. Next, in each condition participants read a text with details about Emma's lifestyle.

In the minimalist condition, participants read, "Emma is a young adult who seeks to live with *fewer* possessions, *thoughtfully* and *intentionally* selecting and acquiring them. She tends to keep *uncluttered* spaces, usually filled with *few* things. She also values *simple* designs and aesthetics. She's all about being a minimalist." In the non-minimalist condition, participants read that "Emma is a young adult who seeks to live with *many* possessions, selecting and acquiring them *without being thoughtful or intentional*. She places a *high value on having possessions* and tends to keep spaces with *a lot* of things" (see APPENDIX B).

As manipulation check, we asked participants to rate their agreement with the twelve items of Minimalist Consumer Scale (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022), from 1 (= strongly disagree) to 7 (= strongly agree). We used this well-established and validated scale (Malik & Ishaq, 2023; Gong et al., 2023) to measure Consumer Minimalism. As our research focus was to measure and check manipulation for minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior, we adapted all items for participants to rate their perceptions of the target. For instance, "*I avoid accumulating lots of stuff*" was adapted to "*Emma avoids accumulating lots of stuff.*" Thus, participants first read "*Emma's lifestyle makes me think that...*". Then, they rated each statement.

After that, participants moved to the second stage of the study. They read that they were going to rate what they thought Emma would prefer in certain consumption situations. Then, participants were exposed to images of two t-shirts. They were told that the t-shirts were from the same brand and had equivalent prices. Next, they responded a question about preference inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products, which we measured with an indicator based on Shao et al. (2019a; 2019b). The indicator ranged on a scale from 1= "definitely prefer option A" to 7= "definitely prefer option B", in which participants indicated what they thought the target would prefer considering the two options (APPENDIX C).

Option A represented the inconspicuous t-shirt (quiet signal) while option B represented the conspicuous one (loud signal) (see APPENDIX D). Therefore, we expected that, the lower the mean, the greater the preference for the inconspicuous option, while the higher the mean, the greater the preference for the conspicuous option. Another dependent variable measured choice inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products with a choice question related to the options. Participants were also presented to the two options and chose which one they judged would be Emma's choice (option A or option B). The order presentation of the two options (right and left side) was randomly assigned. Finally, participants answered demographic questions.

## Results

**Manipulation check.** We conducted an independent samples t-test to check if minimalist behavior manipulation worked. Minimalist behavior was the independent variable and the Consumer Minimalism scale (adapted from Wilson & Bellezza, 2022) was the dependent variable. Results showed a significant difference between minimalist vs. non-minimalist behavior, across dimensions and average of the items of Consumer Minimalism ( $\alpha=.952$ ). As expected, the manipulation showed that, in the minimalist condition, people rated Emma's behavior as more minimalist compared to the non-minimalist condition ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ;  $t(121) = 4.423$ ;  $p < .01$ ) (see Table 2).

*Table 2. Results of Manipulation Check - Study 1A (N = 123)*

Measure	Minimalist Behavior			
	Minimalist	Non-Minimalist	$t(121)$	$p\text{-value}$
	(n=60)	(n=63)		
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$		
Number of Possessions	5.66 (0.84)	4.59 (1.59)	4.699	$p < .01$
Sparse Aesthetics	5.39 (0.86)	4.48 (1.53)	4.137	$p < .01$
Mindfully Curated Consumption	5.41 (0.98)	4.67 (1.36)	3.462	$p < .01$
Consumer Minimalism Scale ( $\alpha=.952$ )	5.48 (0.90)	4.58 (1.40)	4.423	$p < .01$

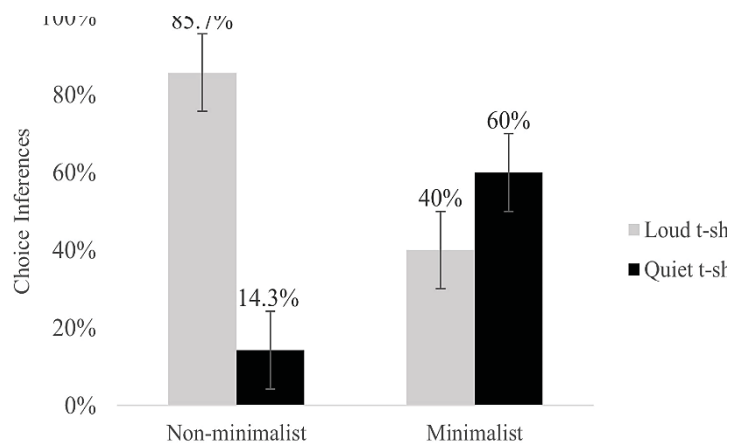
**Preference inferences.** We conducted an independent samples t-test using minimalist behavior (independent variable) and the indicator of preference inferences (dependent variable), which ranged from 1= “definitely prefer option A” to 7= “definitely prefer option B”. Results showed a statistically significant difference between behavior conditions ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 2.20$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 5.84$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ;  $t(121) = -4.416$ ;  $p = .000$ ).

As we mentioned earlier, we expected that, the lower the mean, the greater the preference for the inconspicuous product, while the higher the mean, the greater the preference for the

conspicuous product. Thus, as expected, participants infer that, when Emma was portrayed as minimalist, she prefers the quiet t-shirt more (inconspicuous option) ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 2.20$ ) than when she is portrayed as non-minimalist ( $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 5.84$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ).

**Choice inferences.** We conducted the chi-square test to examine the choice between the two products (inconspicuous vs. conspicuous). We identified a statistically significant difference between signaling behavior conditions regarding the choice inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products ( $X^2 (1, 123) = 27.682$ ;  $p = .000$ ). As expected, participants inferred that minimalists choose more products marked by quiet signals compared to non-minimalists.

Figure 2 shows that 60% of participants infer that the quiet t-shirt option is chosen by Emma when she was portrayed as minimalist compared to 40% that infer that the loud t-shirt is chosen by her in this condition. The non-minimalist condition also showed difference for inferences about Emma's choice of products (85.7% inferences that, when Emma is portrayed as non-minimalist, she chooses the loud t-shirt compared to 14.3% inferences that she chooses the quiet t-shirt in this condition).



**Figure 2 – Choice Inferences (Study 1A)**

## Discussion

This study shows initial evidence that the manipulation for minimalist behavior (vs. non-minimalist) works. Furthermore, it shows supporting evidence for H1, that is, minimalists are

perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists. In the next study, we continued testing Hypothesis 1 using another product.

### **STUDY 1B: MINIMALIST BEHAVIOR, BRAND FAMILIARITY AND PREFERENCES FOR INCONSPICUOUS PRODUCTS**

Study 1B was conducted to test whether familiar (vs. unfamiliar) branded products could influence the results for our prediction that minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists (H1). Brand familiarity is important because some luxury brands are better known to consumers in general (Gucci) than other luxury brands (Jil Sander), for example when they are niche brands (Ho & Wong, 2023), which could influence observers' inferences about the preferences of minimalists.

#### **3.2 Study 1B**

**Participants and Design.** This study employed a 2 (*behavior*: minimalist vs. non-minimalist) x 2 (*brand*: familiar vs. unfamiliar luxury) between-subjects design. The sample was composed by one hundred ninety participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk,  $N = 190$ ,  $M_{age} = 34.69$ ,  $SD = 9.177$ ; 41.9% female) in exchange for monetary payment. This study was pre-registered [https://aspredicted.org/MYL\\_LL2](https://aspredicted.org/MYL_LL2)

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions, with the target named Jennifer. We followed the behavior (minimalist vs. non-minimalist) manipulation from study 1A. For the dependent variable, we also used the same measure (indicator of preference inferences) and product from study 1A.

In each luxury brand condition, we informed the name of the brand, that the options were from the same brand and had equivalent prices. In the familiar condition, participants were presented to two black Gucci t-shirts. In the unfamiliar condition, they were presented to two

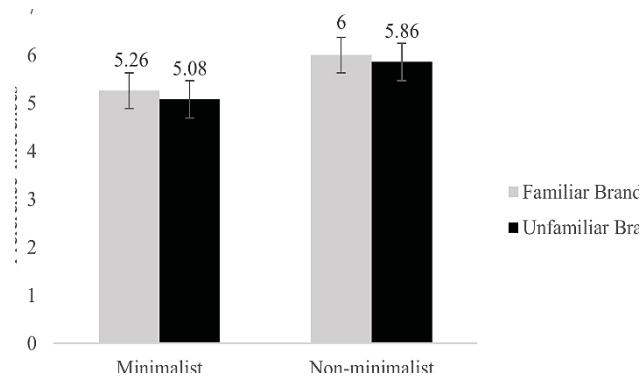
black Jil Sander t-shirts. This luxury brand has been mentioned in recent studies about luxury brands that are more unfamiliar to consumers compared to familiar brands like Gucci (e.g., Ho & Wong, 2023). After that, they answered the indicator between the options from 1= “definitely prefer option A” to 7= “definitely prefer option B”. Option A represented the inconspicuous t-shirt (quiet signal) while option B represented the conspicuous one (loud signal) (APPENDIX D). The manipulation check for brand familiarity followed: “Please indicate how familiar this brand is to you.” (1 = “very unfamiliar to me,” and 7 = “very familiar to me”). As an attention check, we asked which brand(s) had been presented to participants among randomized options. Demographic profile questions were asked at the end.

## Results

**Manipulation checks.** Two 2 (behavior: minimalist vs. non-minimalist) x 2 (luxury brand: familiar vs. unfamiliar) ANOVAs confirmed the effectiveness of the manipulations. As expected, for the average of items capturing consumer minimalism ( $\alpha=.926$ ), the main effect of the behavior was significant. Thus, in the minimalist condition, people rated Jennifer’s behavior as more minimalist compared to the non-minimalist condition ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 4.86$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ;  $F_{(1, 189)} = 27.205$ ,  $p = .000$ ). For the item capturing perceptions of brand familiarity, the main effect of the brand was significant ( $M_{\text{familiar}} = 6.11$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ;  $M_{\text{unfamiliar}} = 5.32$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ;  $F_{(1, 189)} = 17.411$ ,  $p = .000$ ). As expected, in the familiar condition, participants perceived Gucci as a more familiar luxury brand while, in the unfamiliar condition, Jill Sander was perceived as a more unfamiliar luxury brand. Any other effects were insignificant ( $p = .612$ ).

**Preference inferences.** For the dependent variable, we conducted a two-way ANOVA with behavior (minimalist vs. non-minimalist) and types of luxury brand (familiar vs. unfamiliar). The results revealed a significant main effect to the type of behavior on preference inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.16$ ,  $SD = 1.89$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-}}$

minimalist = 5.93, SD = 1.18;  $F_{(1, 189)} = 10.835, p = .001, \eta^2 = .055$ ). As expected, the lower the mean, the greater the preference for the inconspicuous product, while the higher the mean, the greater the preference for the conspicuous product. Thus, participants infer that, when Jennifer was portrayed as minimalist, she prefers the quiet t-shirt more (inconspicuous option) ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.16, SD = 1.89$ ) than when she is portrayed as non-minimalist ( $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 5.93, SD = 1.18$ ). There was no significant main effect of familiarity with the brand on these preference inferences ( $M_{\text{familiar}} = 5.65, SD = 1.52$  vs.  $M_{\text{unfamiliar}} = 5.45, SD = 1.72$ ;  $F_{(1, 189)} = .480, p = .489$ ). Moreover, there was no interaction effect (type of behavior and type of brand) on preference inferences ( $F_{(1, 189)} = .013, p = .908$ ) (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3 – Preference Inferences (Study 1B)**

## Discussion

Study 1B shows once again that the manipulation for minimalist behavior (vs. non-minimalist) works and that the main effect takes place: minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists (H1). As an additional contribution, this study shows that this inference about minimalist's preferences occurs regardless of brand familiarity. Therefore, people infer that minimalists prefer more products with a quiet signal for both well-known (familiar) and lesser-known (unfamiliar) luxury brands compared to non-minimalists.

## STUDY 2: MINIMALIST BEHAVIOR AND PREFERENCES FOR THE TYPE OF INCONSPICUOUSNESS

Study 2 once more tested our prediction that minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists (H1). Past research shows that brands use different forms of inconspicuousness (e.g., brand prominence, color, less ostentatious designs) (Aw et al., 2021; Greenberg et al., 2020; Shao et al., 2019b). Therefore, this study tests H1 with different types of inconspicuousness in products by varying some aspects that can be portrayed in inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products across scenarios of a different product (handbag). We also tested the role of perceived visual complexity in the relationship between minimalist behavior and inferences about minimalist's preferences for inconspicuous products.

### 3.3 Study 2

**Participants and Design.** This study employed a 2 (*minimalist behavior*: minimalist vs. non-minimalist) x 4 (*type of inconspicuousness in products*: combined brand prominence and color vs. brand prominence vs. color vs. prominence of brand type) between-subjects design. The sample was composed by four hundred and fifty-four participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk,  $M_{age} = 37.48$ ,  $SD = 11.049$ ; 49.2% female) in exchange for monetary payment. This study was pre-registered ([https://aspredicted.org/6CP\\_92Y](https://aspredicted.org/6CP_92Y)). All participants were randomly assigned to one of the two minimalist behavior conditions.

Additionally, they were randomly allocated to one of four different scenarios of handbag pairs. Each handbag pair scenario represented a specific type of inconspicuousness in products. For the first scenario ( $N=116$  participants,  $M_{age} = 35.84$ ,  $SD = 8.950$ ; 47.4% female), inconspicuousness was portrayed with combined brand prominence and color (pair 1). For the second scenario ( $N=116$ ,  $M_{age} = 37.01$ ,  $SD = 11.276$ ; 59.5% female), inconspicuousness was



portrayed with brand prominence (pair 2). For the third scenario ( $N=110$ ,  $M_{\text{age}}=40.14$ ,  $SD=12.469$ ; 42.7% female), inconspicuousness focused exclusively on the color of the product (pair 3).

Finally, the fourth scenario ( $N=112$ ,  $M_{\text{age}}=37.05$ ,  $SD=10.982$ ; 47.3% female) portrayed inconspicuousness with prominence of brand type (pair 4). However, this last scenario presented some confounds, which led to its exclusion from the general analysis of preference inferences. Pair 4 was excluded because of confounding variables that could have interfered with participants' perceptions, that is, variables that go beyond prominence of brand type as a marker of inconspicuousness. For example, preference inferences because of the luxury brand being Prada (vs. mainstream Zara), or for the perceived high quality/durability of the luxury brand compared to the mainstream brand (Zara) could help participants infer that the target would prefer the conspicuous option (in this case, the luxury branded bag) over the inconspicuous option (the mainstream branded bag) (APPENDIX D).

Therefore, the final sample used in the analysis consisted of three hundred and forty-two participants from MTurk ( $N=342$ ;  $M_{\text{age}}=37.62$ ,  $SD=11.084$ ; 50% female).

**Procedure.** Minimalist behavior manipulation followed the procedures of Study 1, by randomly allocating participants to one of the two behavior (minimalist vs. non-minimalist) conditions. In this study, the target's name was Diana. After that, participants were exposed to manipulation check. Then, participants answered how much they perceived Diana as someone who prefers less visual complexity in design. We measured Perceived Visual Complexity (PVC) with four items (e.g., “*Diana prefers a product design that has fewer visual elements*”, “*Diana prefers a product design that has less information in visual elements*”) based on previous literature (Pieters et al., 2010; Sgourev & Althuizen, 2017) by asking “Now, please rate the extent to which you agree with these statements about Diana’s preference for product designs” (1 = not at all, 7= very much).

After that, participants moved to the second stage of the study. In the same way as in Study 1, they read that they were going to rate what they thought Diana would prefer in certain consumption situations. Then, participants were exposed to images of two handbags on each scenario. All were told that the handbags were from the same brand and had equivalent prices in three scenarios. Next, they responded questions related to the dependent variable of the study.

Following study 1 procedures, we measured preference inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products with an indicator, now for handbags. Each indicator for a specific handbag pair scenario ranged on a scale from 1= “definitely prefer option A” to 7= “definitely prefer option B” (APPENDIX C). In this sense, participants indicated what they thought the target would prefer considering the two options that represented the indicator extremes. Option A represented the inconspicuous bag (quiet signal) while option B represented the conspicuous one (loud signal) in all scenarios (APPENDIX D). We expected that, the greater the preference for the inconspicuous option, the lower the mean; accordingly, the greater the preference for the conspicuous option, the greater the mean.

The scenarios allowed us to work on inconspicuousness in different ways. For instance, inconspicuousness (vs. conspicuousness) (i.e., quiet vs. loud signals) in brand prominence and color (pair 1), brand prominence (pair 2), and color (black vs. colorful) (pair 3).

Another dependent variable measured choice inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products with a choice question related to the options. Participants were also presented to the two options and chose which one they judged would be Diana’s choice (option A or option B). The order presentation of the two options (right and left side) was randomly assigned. Thus, we performed additional analysis regarding choice inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products with a choice question. At the end, we asked demographic questions.

## Results

**Manipulation check.** We conducted an independent samples t-test with minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior as the independent variable and Consumer Minimalism scale (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022) as the dependent variable. The test revealed a significant difference between minimalist vs. non-minimalist, across dimensions and average of the items of the scale ( $\alpha=.972$ ). As expected, the manipulation showed that, in the minimalist condition, people rated Diana's behavior as more minimalist compared to the non-minimalist condition ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.62$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ;  $t(340) = 11.572$ ;  $p < .01$ ) (Table 3).

*Table 3. Results of Manipulation Check - Study 2 (N = 342)*

Measure	Minimalist Behavior		$t(340)$	$p\text{-value}$
	Minimalist	Non-Minimalist		
	(n=228)	(n=226)		
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$		
Number of Possessions	5.70 (0.95)	3.75 (1.85)	12.165	$p < .01$
Sparse Aesthetics	5.49 (1.06)	3.81 (1.75)	10.718	$p < .01$
Mindfully Curated Consumption	5.67 (1.03)	4.13 (1.70)	10.083	$p < .01$
Consumer Minimalism Scale ( $\alpha=.972$ )	5.62 (0.93)	3.90 (1.70)	11.572	$p < .01$

**Preference inferences.** We measured preference inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products with an indicator for each handbag pair scenario (from 1= “definitely prefer option A” to 7= “definitely prefer option B”). In this way, we conducted an independent samples t-test using minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior (independent variable) and the indicator of each pair (dependent variable). See table 4 for detailed results.

*Table 4. Results of Preference Inferences for Inconspicuous Products (N = 342)*

Measure	N	Minimalist Behavior		<i>t</i> (342)	<i>p</i> -value
		Minimalist <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Non-Minimalist <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		
Indicator. Handbag Pair 1	N=116	4.71 (2.18)	5.28 (1.76)	-1.543	<i>p</i> = .126
Indicator. Handbag Pair 2	N=116	4.10 (2.22)	5.20 (1.69)	-3.004	<i>p</i> < .01
Indicator. Handbag Pair 3	N=110	3.80 (2.20)	5.20 (1.64)	-3.769	<i>p</i> < .01
Preference Inferences Index	N = 342	4.21 (2.22)	5.22 (1.69)	-4.753	<i>p</i> < .01

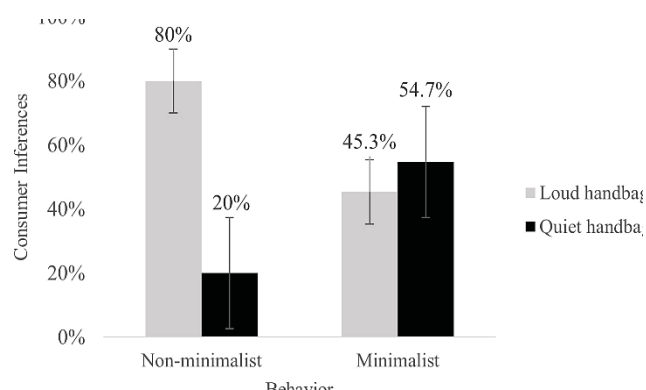
The average of the three remaining indicators composed a general indicator named Preference Inferences Index. Handbag Pair 1 focused on portraying inconspicuousness by highlighting brand prominence and color, but the inference about the preference between minimalists and non-minimalist conditions did not reach statistical significance. Handbag Pair 2 focused only on brand prominence (using similar colors across handbags options) to represent inconspicuousness while Handbag Pair 3 used only color (black vs. colorful) to do the same. Overall, the results of the t-test showed a statistically significant difference between conditions regarding the index ( $N=342$ ,  $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 2.22$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 5.22$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ;  $t(342) = -4.753$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The greater the preference for the inconspicuous option, the lower the mean, and the greater the preference for the conspicuous option, the greater the mean. As expected, participants infer that, when Diana is portrayed as minimalist ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 2.22$ ), she would prefer the quiet (vs. loud) handbag more than when she is a non-minimalist ( $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 5.22$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ).

As an additional analysis, we conducted an independent samples t-test for the effect of minimalist behavior on perceived visual complexity. First, a mean was created by averaging the four items that composed perceived visual complexity scale ( $\alpha=.943$ ). The results showed a statistically significant effect ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.58$  vs  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 3.92$ ;  $t(340) = 10.897$ ;  $p < .01$ ). As expected, participants perceived Diana as someone who prefers less visual complexity

in design when she is presented as minimalist ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.58$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ) than when she is presented as non-minimalist ( $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ).

Minimalists may be perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous products because observers perceive that they prefer less visual complexity in design. This is because minimalist behavior is related to a preference for simplicity and sparse aesthetics (Wilson and Bellezza, 2022), which may signal that they prefer less visual complexity (i.e., less number of patterns and detail in an object's visual components, such as few colors, few patterns) in product's designs (Baek et al., 2023; Pieters et al., 2010), and, thus, preference inferences for inconspicuous products (e.g., discreet in appearance, with simple designs and less ostentatious visual patterns) (Shao et al., 2019b). Therefore, we test this possible explanation.

**Choice inferences.** We conducted additional analysis performing the chi-square test to obtain the results. We identified a statistically significant difference between the inference of choice for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products of the minimalist and non-minimalist behavior conditions in three scenarios. However, as mentioned before, choice inferences for bag pair 4 was not significant ( $X^2(1, 112) = .363$ ;  $p = .547$ ). Therefore, this pair was also excluded from the general analysis using the mean of the new variable representing choice, named "Choice Inferences", which was composed by the results of handbag pair scenarios 1, 2 and 3 (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4 - Choice inferences (Study 2)**

Figure 4 shows that, for the new variable of choice inferences, we find a statistically significant difference ( $X^2 (1, 342) = 43.834; p < .01$ ). Overall, we show that 54.7% of participants infer that the quiet handbag option is chosen by Diana when she is portrayed as minimalist compared to 45.3% of participants that infer that the loud handbag option is chosen by her in this condition.

In the non-minimalist condition, we show that 80% of participants infer that the loud handbag is chosen by Diana when she is portrayed as non-minimalist compared to 20% of participants that infer that the quiet handbag option is chosen by her in this condition. Thus, as expected, participants infer that minimalists choose more products marked by quiet (vs. loud) signals compared to non-minimalists.

**Mediation.** We also performed mediation analysis to explore the role of perceived visual complexity on this effect. Thus, the mediation analysis was conducted to investigate how perceptions of less preference for visual complexity would impact the relationship between minimalist behavior and inferences of preference for inconspicuous products. We used the Hayes PROCESS macro on SPSS model number 4 with 10000 bootstrapping samples (Hayes, 2017). Minimalist behavior was coded as 1 and 0 = non-minimalist. Results showed that the total effect in the model was significant ( $\beta = -1.0142; se = .2137; p = .0000$ ) and that the direct effect was significant ( $\beta = -.8813; se = .2484; CI = -1.3699 \text{ to } -.3926$ ). However, the indirect effect was not significant ( $\beta = -.1330; se = .1251; CI = -.3903 \text{ to } .0970$ ). Therefore, although minimalists are perceived as individuals that prefer less visual complexity, this does not explain their perceived preference for inconspicuous products.

## Discussion

Study 2 shows that minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists (H1). We demonstrate that this happens for three scenarios of the type of inconspicuousness in products (combined brand

prominence and color (pair 1); brand prominence (pair 2); color (pair 3)). However, since the Handbag Pair 1 scenario showed a tendency towards the effect, but did not reach statistical significance, in study 3 we will continue testing H1, using the handbag product and representing inconspicuousness through the combination of brand prominence and color. Specifically, we seek to further contrast the color attribute in the next study, to investigate whether it could have influenced the results for the Handbag Pair 1 in this study (see APPENDIX D).

This study also demonstrates that perceived visual complexity does not explain preference inferences for inconspicuous products based on minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior. Minimalist behavior triggers inferences from observers about minimalists' preference for less visual complexity in design compared to non-minimalists. However, perceived visual complexity does not explain why observers view minimalists as consumers who prefer inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products. Therefore, the inferences that minimalists prefer more inconspicuous brands is not driven by the perception that these consumers simply prefer more discreet products and simple aesthetics overall.

### STUDY 3: MEDIATING ROLE OF STATUS PERCEPTIONS

Study 3 continued tested *status perceptions as the mediator* of the main effect (H2), and possible alternative explanations, such as perceived need for status and impression management motives, that could explain this effect.

#### 3.4 Study 3

***Participants and Design.*** This study employed a single factor (behavior: minimalist vs. non-minimalist) between-subjects experimental design. The sample was composed by two hundred and twenty participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk,  $M_{age} = 34.38$ ,  $SD =$

8.938; 41.8% female). This study was pre-registered ([https://aspredicted.org/59R\\_BV4](https://aspredicted.org/59R_BV4)). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions.

**Procedure.** Participants were informed that this study was about perceptions about people's lifestyle. Minimalist behavior manipulation followed the same procedure as described in Studies 1 and 2, but the target's name was changed to Sara. Then, participants moved to the second stage of the study. As in studies 1 and 2, they read that they were going to rate what they thought Sara would prefer in certain consumption situations. After that, participants were exposed to images of two handbags and were told that the handbags were from the same brand and had equivalent prices, as the same procedure used in previous studies on brand prominence (Han et al., 2010; Shao et al., 2019a). Next, they responded questions related to the dependent variables of the study.

Participants were presented with two handbag options. Option A represented the inconspicuous option (quiet signal) while option B represented the conspicuous one (loud signal). After that, they rated their preference for the inconspicuous option by averaging three items related to purchase intention of the product ("*Sara would like to try this handbag*", "*Sara would buy this handbag if she saw it in a store*", "*Sara would actively seek out this handbag to purchase it*") from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree (adapted from Shao et al., 2019a). (see APPENDIX D). Another dependent variable measured choice inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products with a choice question related to the options. Participants were also presented to the two options and chose which one they judged would be Sara's choice (option A or option B). The order presentation of the two options (right and left side) was randomly assigned.

We measured status perceptions by asking, "To what extent do you think Sara has the following traits? (1 = not at all, 7 = very much)" using five items (e.g., "*High status*", "*Elite*", "*Upper class*") (Cannon & Rucker, 2018). We also measured perceived need for status, by



asking “To what extent you agree with these statements about Sara?” (1 = strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree) with five items (e.g., “*Sara would buy a product just because it has status*”, “*Sara would pay more for a product if it had status*”) (Eastman et al., 1999) and impression management motives of the target by asking the following items: “To what extent you agree with these statements about Sara?” (1 = not at all, 7= very much) using three items (e.g., “*Sara is likely to prefer this handbag to impress people*”, “*Sara is likely to prefer this handbag to gain the approval of others*”) (Cannon & Rucker, 2018; Ferraro et al., 2013) (APPENDIX C). Finally, respondents’ demographic data was collected.

## Results

**Manipulation check.** To check for the impact of the minimalist behavior manipulation, we conducted an independent samples t-test with the behavior as the independent variable and the Consumer Minimalism scale as the dependent variable. Results showed a significant difference between minimalist vs. non-minimalist signaling behavior, across dimensions and average of the items of Consumer Minimalism ( $\alpha=.912$ ). As expected, the manipulation showed that, in the minimalist condition, people rated Sara’s behavior as more minimalist compared to the non-minimalist condition ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.73$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 4.78$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ;  $t(218) = 8.972$ ;  $p < .01$ ) (see Table 5).

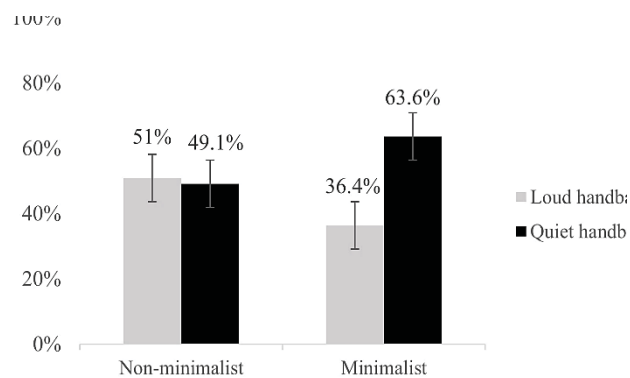
*Table 5. Results of Manipulation Check - Study 3 (N = 220)*

Measure	Minimalist Behavior		$t(218)$	$p\text{-value}$
	Minimalist	Non-Minimalist		
	(n=110)	(n=110)		
	M(SD)	M(SD)		
Number of Possessions	5.77 (0.67)	4.78 (1.04)	8.373	$p < .01$
Sparse Aesthetics	5.53 (0.82)	4.66 (0.96)	8.879	$p < .01$
Mindfully Curated Consumption	5.68 (0.88)	4.91 (0.93)	6.349	$p < .01$

Consumer Minimalism Scale ( $\alpha=.912$ )	5.73 (0.66)	4.78 (0.88)	8.972	$p < .01$
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**Preference inferences.** We conducted an independent samples t-test to obtain the results. The average of three items related to purchase intention of the inconspicuous product ( $\alpha=.839$ ) was used as dependent variable to represent preference inferences and the minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior conditions was the independent variable. Results showed a statistically significant difference between conditions regarding purchase intention ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.70$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 5.12$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ;  $t(218) = 4.139$ ;  $p < .01$ ). As expected, participants infer that, when Sara is portrayed as minimalist, she is more willing to purchase/prefer the quiet handbag (inconspicuous option) than when she is portrayed as a non-minimalist.

**Choice inferences.** To obtain the results related to this dependent variable, the chi-square test was used. We identified a statistically significant difference between the choice inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products of the minimalist and non-minimalist groups ( $X^2(1, 220) = 4.731$ ;  $p = .030$ ). As expected, participants infer that minimalists choose more products marked by quiet signals compared to non-minimalists. The results show that 63.6% of participants infer that the quiet handbag option is chosen by Sara when she is portrayed as minimalist compared to 36.4% that infer that the loud handbag is chosen by her in this condition. The non-minimalist signaling condition showed no difference for inferences about Sara's choice of products with quiet (vs. loud) signals (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5 - Choice inferences (Study 3)**

Additionally, independent samples T-tests revealed that Sara's was perceived as having more status when she was portrayed as minimalist than when she was portrayed as non-minimalist ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.66$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 5.32$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ;  $t(218) = 2.530$ ;  $p = .01$ ). There was no difference on perceived need for status ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 4.92$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 4.77$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ;  $t(218) = 1.232$ ;  $p = .21$ ) nor for perceived impression management motives ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ;  $t(218) = 1.452$ ;  $p = .14$ ). These results are summarized in Table 6.

*Table 6. Results of T-tests for possible mechanisms (N = 220)*

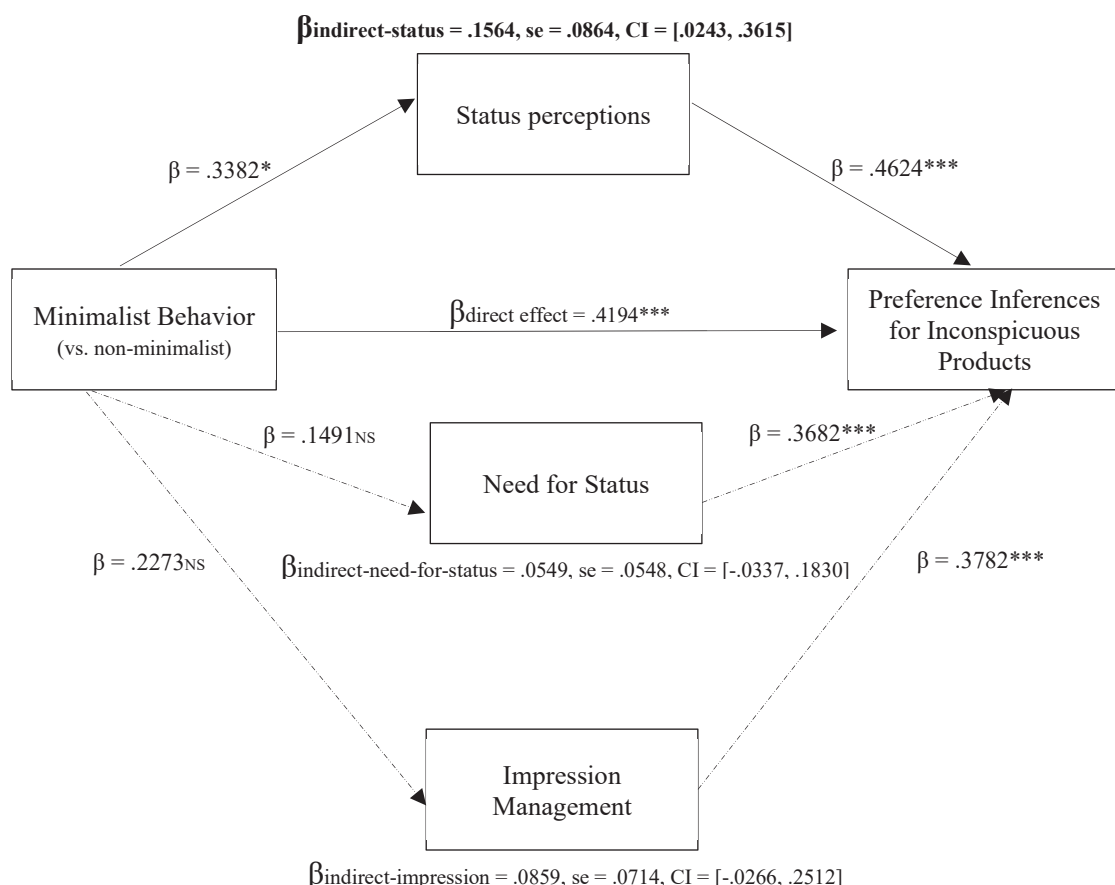
Measure	Minimalist Behavior			
	Minimalist	Non-Minimalist	$t(218)$	$p\text{-value}$
	(n=110)	(n=110)		
	M(SD)	M(SD)		
Status Perceptions ( $\alpha=.878$ )	5.66 (1.14)	5.32 (0.82)	2.530	$p = .01$
Need for Status ( $\alpha=.684$ )	4.92 (1.07)	4.77 (0.68)	1.232	$p = .21$
Impression Management Motives ( $\alpha=.844$ )	5.48 (1.40)	5.26 (0.86)	1.452	$p = .14$

**Mediation.** Mediation analyses was performed to test for the mediating role of status perceptions (H2). As alternative explanations, perceived need for status and impression management motives were also tested to check for their impact on the relationship between minimalist behavior and preference inferences for inconspicuous products. This is because status consumption should not be confused with people's need for status, as they are different things. While status consumption allows people to signal high status and improve their social standing through the consumption of products that confer and symbolize status (Eastman et al., 1999), need for status refers to a person's need to acquire and express status (Berger et al., 1980) to attain respect, admiration by others (Charles et al., 2009; Magee & Galinsky, 2008;

Ridgeway & Correll, 2006) or to impress others (Eastman et al., 1999; Eastman et al., 2018; Ferraro et al., 2013; Wang & Wallendorf, 2006).

We used the Hayes PROCESS macro on SPSS (model 4; 10,000 samples, 95% confidence interval) (Hayes, 2017). Minimalist behavior was coded as 1 and 0 = non-minimalist.

Results showed that the total effect in the model was significant for status perceptions as the mediator ( $\beta = .5758$ ;  $se = .1391$ ;  $p = .0000$ ). Minimalist behavior influenced status perceptions ( $\beta = .3382$ ,  $CI = .0747$  to  $.6017$ ), and minimalist behavior was significantly associated with preference inferences for inconspicuous products ( $\beta = .4194$ ,  $CI = .1697$  to  $.6691$ ). Status perception was significantly associated with preference inferences for inconspicuous products ( $\beta = .4624$ ,  $CI = .3377$  to  $.5871$ ). As expected, the indirect effect of the mediation of status perceptions was significant ( $\beta_{\text{status}} = .1564$ ,  $se = .0864$ ,  $CI = .0243$  to  $.3615$ ), supporting Hypothesis 2. For perceived need for status as mediator, the indirect effect was not significant ( $\beta_{\text{need-for-status}} = .0549$ ,  $se = .0548$ ,  $CI = -.0337$  to  $.1830$ ). The indirect effect was also not significant for perceived impression management motives ( $\beta_{\text{impression}} = .0859$ ,  $se = .0714$ ,  $CI = -.0266$  to  $.2512$ ). See Figure 6 for the results of the mediation model in this study.



**Figure 6.** Mediation Model - Results for Study 3 (N = 220).

Note. CI = confidence interval. \* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; NS = no sig.

## Discussion

Study 3 provides additional support for hypothesis H1 and initial evidence for the mediating role of status perceptions on the effect of minimalist behavior on preference inferences for inconspicuous products (H2). Results showed that consumers infer that minimalists intend to purchase/prefer more inconspicuous products than non-minimalists. They also infer that minimalists choose more those products than non-minimalists. Mediation analysis showed that minimalists signal high status and that this explains why others infer that they prefer more inconspicuous products compared to non-minimalists. Mediation analyses also showed that this effect is not mediated by need for status nor for impression management.

## STUDY 4: MODERATING ROLE OF BRAND POSITIONING

Study 4 aims to test the consistency of status perceptions as a mediator (H2) and the moderating role of brand positioning (H3). We provide evidence to answer the question: do people infer that minimalists prefer products marked by quiet signals exclusively when they are from luxury brands or does this apply to products from more mainstream brands as well? Thus, this study investigates whether this effect is attributed and stronger only to luxury brands or to mainstream brands in the view of the observers.

### 3.5 Study 4

**Participants and Design.** This study employed a 2 (Behavior: minimalist vs. non-minimalist) x 2 (Brand positioning: luxury vs. mainstream) between-subjects experimental design, by randomly assigning participants to one of the four conditions. The sample was composed by two hundred and seventy-two participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk

(MTurk,  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.74$ ,  $SD = 9.610$ ; 54.9% female) in exchange for monetary payment. This study was pre-registered [https://aspredicted.org/89R\\_HJ4](https://aspredicted.org/89R_HJ4)

**Procedure.** Participants were informed that this study was about perceptions of people's behavior and lifestyle, and their preferences on how to display the brand on products. First, they were randomly assigned to one of two minimalist behavior conditions (minimalist vs. non-minimalist), in which they were introduced to Ana, the target of this study, following the similar procedure for Minimalist behavior manipulation as described in Studies 1A, 1B, 2 and 3. However, in this study we changed this manipulation so that it did not involve the sparse aesthetics dimension of consumer minimalism, but only dimensions of reducing possessions and making mindful purchasing decisions (Chen et al., 2024; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022), aiming to assess whether this dimension could impact consumers' inferences of minimalist's preferences for quiet signals in products (see APPENDIX B).

After that, they moved to the second stage of the study. Participants were asked to indicate how they perceived the target in terms of status perceptions: "To what extent do you think Ana has the following traits? (1 = not at all, 7 = very much)" using five items (e.g., "*High status*", "*Elite*", "*Upper class*") (Cannon & Rucker, 2018).

In the next stage, participants were randomly assigned to one of the two brand positioning conditions (Luxury vs. Mainstream). Then, read that they were going to rate what they thought Ana would prefer in certain consumption situations. In the luxury brand condition, following similar procedures of Raimondo et al. (2022), we measured preference inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products varying progressively the prominence of a luxury brand's logo (CHANEL), thus forming a 5-point scale (1 = Definitely prefer more subtle logo; 5 = Definitely prefer more evident logo).

Participants were presented to this brand and informed that Ana was evaluating some versions of sweatshirts to buy online and that all versions were the same color and the same

brand, but with variations in the display of the brand's logo. Then, they were asked to indicate what they thought Ana would prefer among five alternative versions of a sweatshirt from this brand (see APPENDIX C and D). Therefore, we expected that the greater the mean, the greater the preference inferences for the conspicuous version of the product (more evident logo), and the lower the mean, the greater the inferences for the inconspicuous version (more subtle logo).

In the mainstream brand positioning condition, this same procedure was applied using the same target (Ana). The difference was exclusively in the brand of the sweatshirt, which changed from luxury to mainstream (H&M). The manipulation check for perceived brand positioning followed: "How would you describe the brand presented to you in this study?" (1 = "mainstream," and 7 = "luxury") (Moreau et al., 2020). As an attention check, we asked which brand(s) had been presented to participants among randomized options. Finally, respondents reported their age and gender.

## Results

**Manipulation checks.** Two 2 (behavior: minimalist vs. non-minimalist) x 2 (brand: luxury vs. mainstream) ANOVAs confirmed the effectiveness of the manipulations. As expected, for the average of items capturing consumer minimalism ( $\alpha=.938$ ), the main effect of the behavior was significant. Thus, in the minimalist condition, people rated Ana's behavior as more minimalist compared to the non-minimalist condition ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 5.44$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ;  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 4.77$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ;  $F_{(1, 271)} = 32.068$ ,  $p = .000$ ). For the item capturing perceptions of brand positioning, the main effect of the brand was significant ( $M_{\text{luxury}} = 5.91$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ;  $M_{\text{mainstream}} = 2.80$ ,  $SD = 2.18$ ;  $F_{(1, 271)} = 185.809$ ,  $p = .000$ ). As expected, in the luxury condition, participants perceived Channel as a more luxury brand while, in the mainstream condition, H&M was perceived as a more mainstream brand.

**Preference inferences.** For the dependent variable, we conducted a two-way ANOVA with behavior (minimalist vs. non-minimalist) and types of brand positioning (luxury vs.

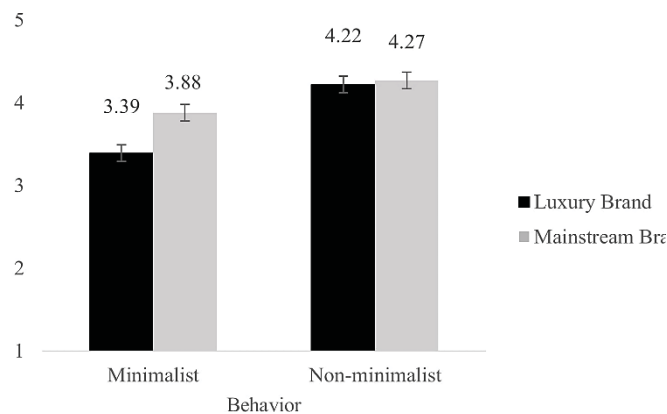
mainstream). The results revealed a significant main effect to the type of behavior on preference inferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products ( $F_{(1, 271)} = 30.752, p = .000, \eta^2 = .103$ ). There was also a significant main effect of perceived brand positioning on these preference inferences ( $F_{(1, 271)} = 6.111, p = .014, \eta^2 = .022$ ). Furthermore, there was a interaction effect (type of behavior and type of brand positioning) on preference inferences ( $F_{(1, 271)} = 3.754, p = .05, \eta^2 = .014$ ).

The lower the mean, the greater the preference for the inconspicuous product, while the higher the mean, the greater the preference for the conspicuous product. As expected, participants infer that, when Ana was portrayed as minimalist, she prefers the quiet t-shirt more (inconspicuous option) than when she is portrayed as non-minimalist.

Specifically, these results show that in the luxury brand condition, people infer that minimalists prefer the more inconspicuous sweatshirt option than non-minimalists ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 3.39, SD = 1.02$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 4.22, SD = 0.78; F_{(1, 271)} = 27.998, p = .000, \eta^2 = .095$ ). Likewise in the mainstream brand condition, people perceive that minimalists also prefer more the inconspicuous sweatshirt option than non-minimalists ( $M_{\text{minimalist}} = 3.88, SD = 0.98$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-minimalist}} = 4.27, SD = 0.80; F_{(1, 271)} = 6.508, p = .011, \eta^2 = .024$ ).

In the minimalist behavior condition, people infer that minimalists prefer more inconspicuous products, that is, with quiet signals, more in luxury brands than in mainstream brands ( $M_{\text{luxury}} = 3.39, SD = 1.02$  vs.  $M_{\text{mainstream}} = 3.88, SD = 0.98; F_{(1, 271)} = 9.723, p = .002, \eta^2 = .035$ ), supporting hypothesis 3. However, in the non-minimalist condition, the results were not statistically significant ( $F_{(1, 271)} = .143, p = .706$ ) (see Figure 7).





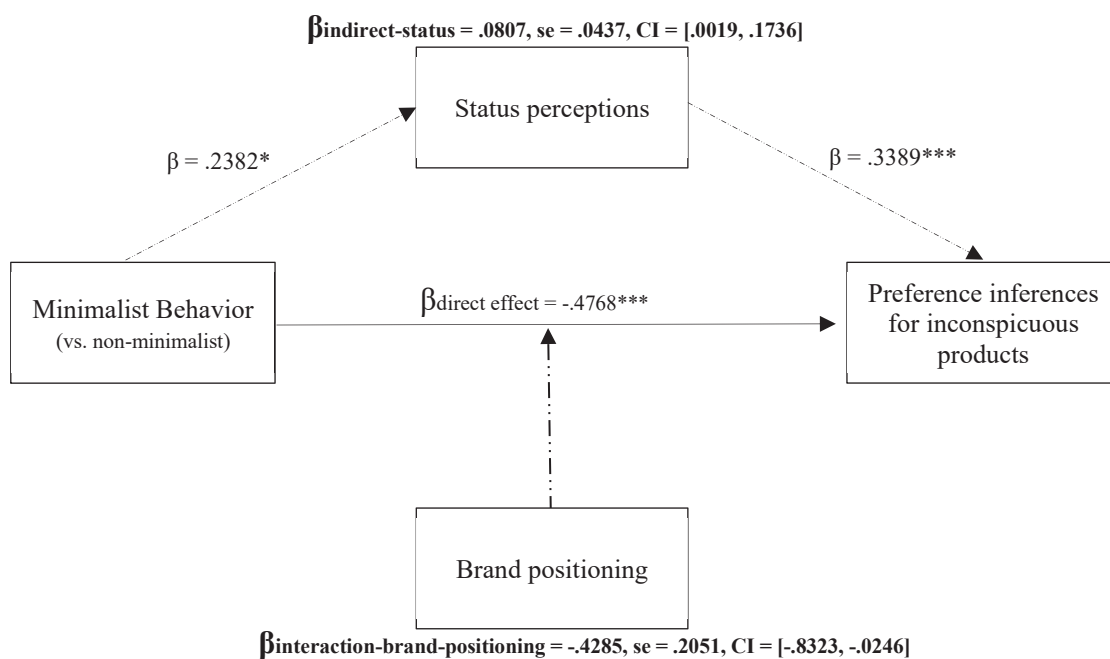
**Figure 7 – Preference Inferences (Study 4)**

Overall, these results demonstrate that participants infer that minimalists prefer more inconspicuous products, in this study represented with more subtle brand logos, when the brand positioning is luxury compared to the mainstream.

**Mediation and moderation.** We used the Hayes PROCESS macro on SPSS (model 5; 10,000 samples, 95% confidence interval) (Hayes, 2017) to test the indirect effect of minimalist (non-minimalist) behavior on preferences inferences for inconspicuous products via status perceptions as the mediator (H2). Additionally, we tested the direct effect of minimalist behavior on preferences inferences moderated by brand positioning as the proposed moderating variable (H3). Minimalist behavior was coded as 1 and 0 = non-minimalist. Brand positioning was coded as 1 for luxury brand and 0 for mainstream brand.

Results showed that minimalist behavior influenced status perceptions ( $\beta = .2382$ ,  $CI = .0043$  to  $.4722$ ;  $p = .046$ ), and minimalist behavior was significantly associated with preference inferences for inconspicuous products ( $\beta = -.4768$ ,  $CI = -.7634$  to  $-.1902$ ;  $p = .001$ ). Status perceptions was significantly associated with preference inferences for inconspicuous products ( $\beta = .3389$ ,  $CI = .2355$  to  $.4423$ ;  $p = .000$ ). As expected, the indirect effect of the mediation of status perceptions was significant ( $\beta_{\text{indirect-status}} = .0807$ ,  $se = .0437$ ,  $CI = .0019$  to  $.1736$ ), supporting Hypothesis 2.

Thus, minimalists signal more status than non-minimalists. Furthermore, there was a statistical significance for the interaction representing the expected moderating effect of brand positioning on the relationship between minimalist behavior and preference inferences for inconspicuous products ( $\beta_{\text{interaction-brand-positioning}} = -.4285$ ,  $se = .2051$ ,  $CI = [-.8323, -.0246]$ ;  $p = .037$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3. See Figure 8 for the results of the mediation and moderation in this study.



**Figure 8.** Mediation and Moderation - Results for Study 4 (N=272).

Note. CI = confidence interval. \* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; NS = no sig.

## Discussion

Study 4 shows that the effect of minimalist behavior is consistent in our prediction that minimalists are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products than non-minimalists (H1), as in previous studies. Specifically, we demonstrate that these inferences are driven by status perceptions (H2), that is, minimalists signal more status than non-minimalists. We also show that people infer that minimalists prefer quiet signals more for luxury brands than for mainstream brands, which supports our prediction about the

moderating role of brand positioning (H3) on the relationship between minimalist behavior and preferences inferences for inconspicuous products.

## 4 GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research shows that minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior impacts consumer's inferences about minimalists' preferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products (H1). Across five studies supporting Hypothesis 1, we show that, when individuals are portrayed as minimalists, they are perceived as consumers who prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products compared to when they are portrayed as non-minimalists.

We also investigated the type of representation of inconspicuousness that could be considered by minimalists. Going beyond brand prominence alone (Aw et al., 2021), we portrayed inconspicuousness through color and brand prominence, as well as a combination of both (Jiang et al., 2021; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022). In this sense, we suggest that inferences about minimalists' preference for inconspicuous products took into account aspects such as color (i.e., the black/neutral bag was more preferred than the colored bag) (Study 2), the t-shirt and bag with less brand prominence were more preferred than the one with more prominence (Study 1 and 2), and the bag with less brand prominence and more neutral color was more preferred than the one with more prominence and less discreet color (Studies 2 and 3).

Furthermore, we show that status perceptions shape these inferences (Hypothesis 2) (Studies 3 and 4). Minimalism functions as an alternative signal of status. Thus, minimalists may signal they have more status through a series of consumption behaviors and characteristics. Whether because they reduce their number of possessions, buying more consciously and opting for more sparse aesthetics (Bellezza, 2023; Wilson & Bellezza, 2022) or because they can be seen as more sophisticated consumers, who prefer high-end products within the field of luxury consumption (Eastman et al., 2018; Eastman et al., 2022; Ho & Wong, 2023; Makkar & Yap, 2018a; 2018b). This could lead to inferences about their preference for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products compared to non-minimalists. Thus, they could signal high status and

manifest status through a preference for inconspicuousness in products in the observers' perceptions.

Alternative mechanisms were also tested as possible explanations for this signaling behavior effect on consumer inferences: perceived visual complexity, perceived need for status and impression management motives. Although results show that minimalist behavior leads to the perception that they prefer less visual complexity in design (Baek et al., 2023; Pieters et al., 2010; Sgourev & Althuizen, 2017), perceived visual complexity does not explain why observers infer that minimalists prefer inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products compared to non-minimalists. More important, these results rule out the possible alternative explanation that minimalists preference for inconspicuous products is simply driven by the fact that minimalists prefer products with simple aesthetics and design.

This study also showed that the perceived need for status and impression management motives do not explain H1. This means that minimalists are perceived as "*elite/upper class/high status*" people (Cannon & Rucker, 2018), but that they are not necessarily perceived as people who have a greater need for status or who are perceived to be motivated by impression management (Berger et al., 1980; Eastman et al., 1999; Eastman et al., 2018; Ferraro et al., 2013; Wang & Wallendorf, 2006).

Additionally, we show the moderating effect of brand positioning on the relationship between minimalist behavior and preference inferences for inconspicuous products (Study 4). Specifically, we show that people infer that minimalists prefer more inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products from both luxury and mainstream brands compared to non-minimalists. However, this effect is stronger for luxury brands, supporting Hypothesis 3.

#### **4.1 Theoretical contributions**

This research has several theoretical contributions. It is the first to (a) study minimalism through the lens of social signaling; (b) show that minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) behavior

impacts inferences about minimalists' preferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products; (c) show that minimalism can function as an alternative signal of status; (d) demonstrate that status perceptions mediate how minimalist behavior influences observers' inferences about minimalists' consumption preferences; (e) and that, although this effect occurs both for the positioning of luxury and for mainstream brands, it is stronger for luxury brands.

Minimalism deserves special attention, since the study of its implications for people and consumption has increased significantly in academic literature (Gong et al., 2023; Malik & Ishaq, 2023; Pangarkar et al., 2021; Shafqat et al., 2023). Previous studies show why it is valuable to incorporate minimalism as a lifestyle, the benefits to the well-being of those who adopt minimalism (Dopierala, 2017; Kang et al., 2021; Lloyd and Pennington, 2020; Mendonca et al., 2021; Malik & Ishaq, 2023), for promoting low-consumption lifestyles and sustainable consumption (Derwanz & Strebing, 2021; Kang et al., 2021; Shafqat et al., 2023) and how social comparisons affect minimalist consumption (Chen et al., 2024).

This research advances towards and builds the literature on the social implications of minimalism in consumption by investigating perceptions about minimalists and their lifestyles. Thus, we add to the literature on social signaling ((Dunham, 2011; Grossman, 2015; Johnson & Chattaraman, 2019; McAndrew, 2021) by exploring how minimalism is perceived by others.

This research provides evidence that minimalism drives higher status perceptions and inferences of preference for inconspicuous products. Therefore, we add to status literature (Bellezza, 2023; Brooks & Wilson, 2015; Bellezza & Berger, 2020; Dubois et al., 2012; O'cass & Frost, 2002; Soule & Sekhon, 2022) by showing that minimalism can function as an alternative signal of status and the relevance of studying the relationship between status and preference for inconspicuous products. This is because most studies address status signaling related to conspicuous brands (Cannon & Rucker, 2018; Eastman et al, 2022; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Trigg, 2001; Veblen, 1899). In this study, we show that status perceptions come the

other way, through inferences about what minimalist behavior signals, and manifest itself in observers' perceptions of minimalists' preference for inconspicuous products.

We show that minimalism is a predictor of inferences of preference for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products. Thus, this research contributes to the inconspicuous consumption literature (Berger & Ward, 2010; Brandão & Barbedo, 2023; Eastman et al., 2022; Eckhardt et al., 2015; Ho & Wong, 2023; Makkar & Yap, 2018a; 2018b; Wang et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2017) by showing preferences for inconspicuous products as inferences that consumers make from the behavior of minimalists.

Within the inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) consumption studies, the focus is on brand prominence as a marker of conspicuity and inconspicuity in products (Aw et al., 2021; Greenberg et al., 2020; Han et al., 2010; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Meyer & Manika, 2017; Pino et al., 2019; Raimondo et al., 2022; Shao et al. 2019a; 2019b; Zhang & Liu, 2022). In this study, we also explore other markers of inconspicuousness (e.g., more explicit or subtle color, combination of color and brand prominence, among others) that may be taken into account by minimalists and affect others' perceptions of them as consumers.

Ultimately, we add to the literature on minimalism and its benefits within the scope of branding and marketing strategies (Chen & Wei, 2022; Gong et al., 2023; Pangarkar et al., 2021), by showing that the influence of brand positioning on the relationship between minimalism and inferences of preference for inconspicuous products occurs both for luxury and for mainstream brands, but it is stronger for luxury brands.

## **4.2 Practical implications**

Society has been increasingly exposed to minimalism in recent years. There is a profusion of content spread about minimalism on Instagram accounts focusing on this topic, podcasts, books and documentaries, such as the Netflix documentary, "The Minimalists: Less Is Now"

with Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus, from the website "TheMinimalists.com" (Millburn & Nicodemus, 2015). There is also a growing proliferation of minimalist behaviors in the market (e.g., buying tiny houses, making curated wardrobes) (Mathras & Hayes, 2019), as well as brand strategies focusing on using minimalism in marketing appeals (Chen & Wei, 2022; Chen & Liu, 2023).

Despite that, there is a lack of studies investigating how people perceive consumer minimalism. Thus, as practical implications, studying the social implications of minimalism is important because minimalism has been increasingly discussed in the market and in the media, in addition to being sought after by consumers interested in consuming less and brands that are interested in benefiting from using minimalistic appeals.

Our findings suggest that minimalism can be used as an alternative signal of status for people in terms of reducing the number of goods, preferring a sparse aesthetic, and making mindful purchasing decisions (Wilson & Bellezza, 2022). This alternative signal means high status for minimalists, but, at the same time, the perception that they have no need to show status nor are motivated by impression management. This could be seen in a particularly positive light for other consumers, who may resort to minimalism as a positive signaling strategy to be seen as a "minimalist".

'Quiet luxury' is increasing in the market compared with conspicuous luxury consumption (Jiang et al. 2021). In addition, more luxury brands are choosing to adhere to inconspicuous product signs (e.g., Bottega Veneta has shifted its brand strategy to quiet luxury; Louis Vuitton charges more for handbags without any obvious branding) (Barbieri, 2022).

Thus, this research also provides practical implications for managers and marketers who are looking for ways to understand and induce subsequent reactions from their audiences when exposed to minimalist behaviors. According to our findings, this is particularly beneficial for luxury brands pursuing a quiet strategy. Firstly, because minimalism can function as an



alternative way of signaling more status. Secondly, because this high status can lead people to make associations with the consumption of products marked by subtle signals after being introduced to minimalist behaviors.

In this sense, we show that, in the minds of consumers, minimalism is perceived as linked to more status and preferences for inconspicuous products. Once minimalism is perceived in this way, managers interested in inducing higher status symbols in their communications and promoting inconspicuous products may strive to evoke minimalist behaviors in their campaigns, for example, by having consumers to exhibit such behaviors or establishing partnerships with minimalist influencers. In this sense, appeals in advertisements (e.g., showing a woman saying that "I live by the motto of less is more, consuming consciously, and seeking sparse and simple aesthetics") can serve as a prime for minimalist behaviors and subsequent associations of status and product preference with subtle signs.

#### **4.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research**

This research has several limitations. The target presented in the behavior manipulation (minimalist vs. non-minimalist) was female in all studies. Further research could examine these effects for minimalism using male targets. In this sense, it could be studied whether it is a lay belief (Mead & Williams, 2022) that men are more naturally minimalist consumers than women and how this belief could affect inferences about their consumption behavior.

Study 4 did replicate the results of Study 3 for the mediation of status perceptions. However, recent studies show that consumers' responses to minimalism in consumption may depend on a few factors (Chen & Liu, 2023). Thus, it is possible that inferences of minimalist's higher status and preference for inconspicuous products (quiet signals) could be influenced by some characteristics of observers, such as their (high) socioeconomic status (Chen & Liu, 2023), (downward) social comparisons (Chen et al., 2024), in addition to (high) inconspicuous luxury motivations (Eastman et al., 2022).

Furthermore, cultural aspects can influence perceptions about consumption phenomena (Hofstede, 2001), such as minimalism. In this study, the data collected were from American participants. Thus, future studies could investigate how minimalism is perceived in more individualistic vs. collectivists societies (e.g., USA vs. Japan) (Triandis et al., 1988) and how this affects consumer inferences.

Since this research does not study what minimalists intend to show to others, but rather how they are perceived based on their behaviors, future studies could investigate what, in fact, minimalists expect to signal by engaging in minimalist consumption. Therefore, a survey could be able to assess whether they behave in a similar or different way to what they are perceived by others and if there are social costs related to their consumption preferences.

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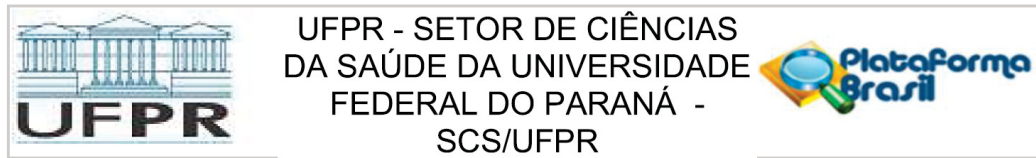
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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A – Ethical Committee Statement



#### PARECER CONSUBSTANCIADO DO CEP

##### DADOS DO PROJETO DE PESQUISA

**Título da Pesquisa:** Sinalizações de comportamentos minimalistas e inferências dos consumidores: ser minimalista parece ser uma coisa boa?

**Pesquisador:** Danielle Mantovani Lucena da Silva

**Área Temática:**

**Versão:** 2

**CAAE:** 64753922.0.0000.0102

**Instituição Proponente:** Departamento de Administração Geral e Aplicada

**Patrocinador Principal:** Financiamento Próprio

##### DADOS DO PARECER

**Número do Parecer:** 5.789.647

##### Apresentação do Projeto:

Projeto de doutorado que visa pesquisar o fenômeno denominado anticonsumo que tem sido responsável por um número crescente de indivíduos que intencionalmente optam por consumir menos, mas não por restrições financeiras. Dentre suas diversas formas, uma tem se destacado nos últimos anos entre os consumidores: o minimalismo. Os minimalistas adotam esse estilo de vida e se concentram em possuir menos, reduzindo o consumo excessivo, preferindo estética esparsa e buscando qualidade de vida ao não se entregarem ao consumismo. O presente estudo tem como objetivo compreender quais inferências podem ser feitas pelos consumidores sobre escolhas e preferências de consumo de minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) como consequência da sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) de uma pessoa. Mais especificamente, pretende-se demonstrar que a sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) leva a inferências específicas sobre preferências de consumo dos minimalistas, como a preferência por experiências público hedônicas sozinhas e por produtos inconspícuos. Nessa perspectiva, esta pesquisa sugere que os minimalistas são percebidos como mais socialmente independentes, pois sinalizam serem pessoas mais autônomas e independentes, mais focadas em si mesmas do que nos outros devido à busca pelo crescimento pessoal. Portanto, eles sinalizam que podem se sentir mais confortáveis ao se envolver em atividades que geralmente não

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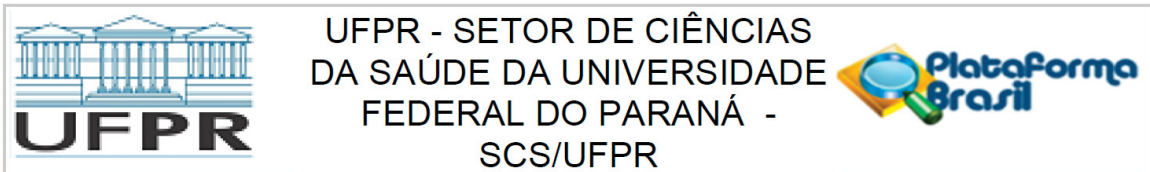
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Continuação do Parecer: 5.789.647

são muito confortáveis para a maioria dos consumidores, como se envolver em atividades público-hedônicas sozinho (ou seja, ir ao cinema ou jantar sozinho em um restaurante) e desfrutar de experiências de consumo mais individuais (ou seja, viajar sozinho). Além disso, os minimalistas podem não ser percebidos com maior necessidade de status, pois sinalizam que não pretendem impressionar os outros ou se destacar como consumidores conspícuos, mas sim consumidores que preferem focar na simplicidade, redução de consumo e crescimento pessoal. Essa menor necessidade de status pode estar associada a uma preferência por produtos mais discretos/inconspícuos (ou seja, produtos de aparência discreta ou com sinais sutis de marca, como uma bolsa com um logotipo sutil), em comparação com não minimalistas.

#### **Objetivo da Pesquisa:**

##### **1.1 Objetivo Geral**

O objetivo geral da presente pesquisa é compreender quais inferências podem ser feitas pelos consumidores sobre escolhas e preferências de consumo de minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) como consequência da sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) de uma pessoa.

##### **1.2 Objetivos Específicos**

Mais especificamente, com esta pesquisa, pretende-se demonstrar que a sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) leva a inferências específicas sobre preferências de consumo dos minimalistas. Desse modo, define-se os objetivos específicos a seguir:

- a) Investigar se há diferença na percepção dos consumidores em relação a sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas versus não-minimalistas de uma pessoa.
- b) Investigar se a sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) de uma pessoa leva os consumidores a perceberem os minimalistas como pessoas mais socialmente independentes do que os não-minimalistas.
- c) Demonstrar que a sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) de uma pessoa leva os consumidores a perceberem os minimalistas como pessoas que se sentem mais confortáveis em se engajar em atividades público-hedônicas sozinhas do que os não-minimalistas.
- d) Investigar se a sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) de uma pessoa leva os consumidores a perceberem os minimalistas como pessoas com menor necessidade

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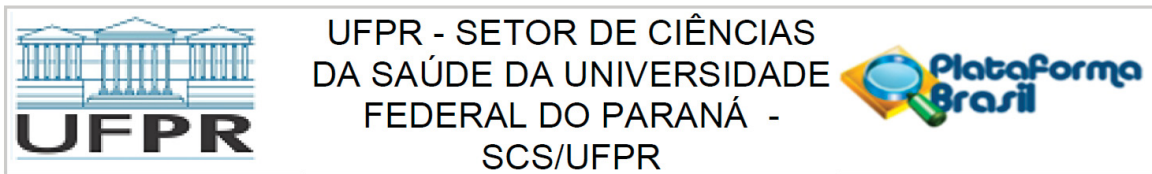
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de status do que os não-minimalistas.

e) Demonstrar que a sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) de uma pessoa leva os consumidores a perceberem os minimalistas como pessoas que preferem produtos mais discretos/inconspícuos (vs. conspícuos) do que os não-minimalistas.

#### **Avaliação dos Riscos e Benefícios:**

8.2 Quais os riscos inerentes ou decorrentes da pesquisa?

Para a manipulação do indivíduo, vamos expô-lo a uma situação de sinalização de comportamentos minimalistas (vs. não-minimalistas) de uma pessoa. A princípio, com essa manipulação, os desconfortos que o indivíduo participante pode sentir são mínimos uma vez que, a partir da manipulação, o objetivo será compreender suas percepções sobre quais seriam as preferências de consumo de uma outra pessoa, nesse caso, o minimalista em comparação ao não-minimalista. Os riscos para a participação na pesquisa são mínimos. Em termos de desconforto, a participação na pesquisa poderá levar um desconforto mínimo, relativo à possibilidade de algum cansaço decorrente da duração de tempo para responder a pesquisa como um todo.

8.3 Qual a possibilidade da ocorrência dos possíveis riscos apontados?

A possibilidade de ocorrência de algo nesse sentido é baixa, uma vez que cenários de manipulação baseados nas sinalizações de uma terceira pessoa já foram utilizados por pesquisas anteriores na área de consumo e comportamento do consumidor (e.g., BERGER; WARD, 2010) que também passaram pelo crivo de um comitê de ética. Desse modo, não manipularemos o participante do estudo para estar na condição proposta (nesse caso, na condição de minimalista) e, sim, apenas para ele entrar em contato com um cenário de manipulação que o permita avaliar o que uma terceira pessoa nesta condição, de minimalista, sinaliza para ele.

8.4 Quais as medidas para sua minimização e proteção do participante da pesquisa?

Fornecer ao participante informações sobre o objetivo da pesquisa com o objetivo de interpretar eventuais desconfortos que possam ter surgido durante o desenvolvimento da pesquisa. Além disso, fornecer um contato para sanar quaisquer dúvidas e direcionar o participante (caso necessário) para um psicólogo.

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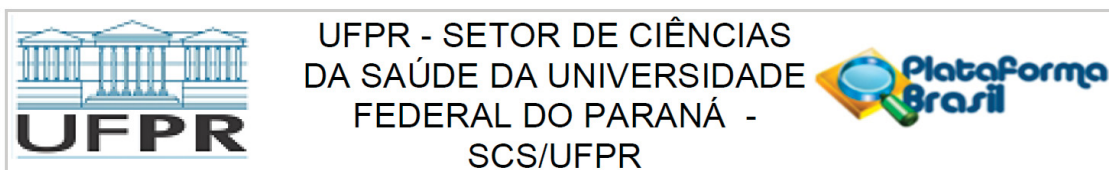
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**Comentários e Considerações sobre a Pesquisa:**

Projeto de grande importância na área em que se envolve, pois possibilitará esclarecimentos necessários, tanto para o público alvo, como para o mercado que o atende.

**Considerações sobre os Termos de apresentação obrigatória:**

Todos os termos foram apresentados.

**Recomendações:**

Não há.

**Conclusões ou Pendências e Lista de Inadequações:**

Projeto bem construído e adequado aos critérios de aprovação, no entanto há necessidade de substituir INDIVÍDUO POR PARTICIPANTES, conforme preconiza a Resol. 466/12.

Atendida.

**Considerações Finais a critério do CEP:**

Conforme verificou-se o devido atendimento à pendência o projeto está aprovado.

Solicitamos que sejam apresentados a este CEP, relatórios semestrais e final, a cada seis meses da primeira aprovação de seu protocolo, sobre o andamento da pesquisa, bem como informações relativas às modificações do protocolo, cancelamento, encerramento e destino dos conhecimentos obtidos, através da Plataforma Brasil - no modo: NOTIFICAÇÃO. Demais alterações e prorrogação de prazo devem ser enviadas no modo EMENDA. Lembrando que o cronograma de execução da pesquisa deve ser atualizado no sistema Plataforma Brasil antes de enviar solicitação de prorrogação de prazo. Emenda – ver modelo de carta em nossa página: [www.cometica.ufpr.br](http://www.cometica.ufpr.br) (obrigatório envio)

Favor inserir em seu TCLE e TALE o número do CAAE e o número deste Parecer de aprovação, para que possa aplicar aos participantes de sua pesquisa, conforme decisão da Coordenação do CEP/SD de 13 de julho de 2020.

**Este parecer foi elaborado baseado nos documentos abaixo relacionados:**

Tipo Documento	Arquivo	Postagem	Autor	Situação
Informações	PB_INFORMAÇÕES_BÁSICAS_DO_P	30/11/2022		Aceito

**Endereço:** Rua Padre Camargo, 285 - 1º andar

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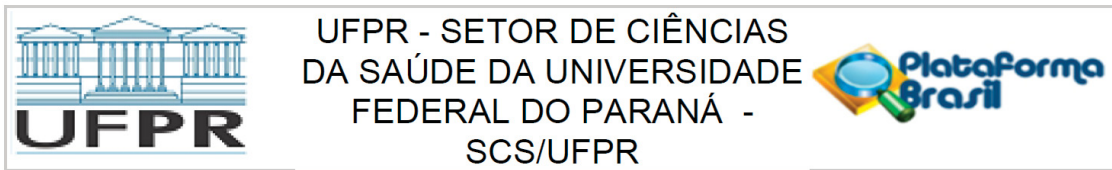
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Continuação do Parecer: 5.789.647

Básicas do Projeto	ETO_2034709.pdf	18:08:33		Aceito
Outros	Carta_Comite_Com_Alteracoes.docx	30/11/2022 18:08:03	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Outros	Projeto_Detalhado_Alteracoes.docx	30/11/2022 18:07:10	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Folha de Rosto	Folha_De_Rosto.pdf	01/11/2022 21:28:36	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Outros	Check_List_documental.pdf	01/11/2022 01:19:36	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Outros	Ata_de_Aprovacao.pdf	01/11/2022 01:17:54	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Outros	Analise_de_merito.pdf	01/11/2022 01:17:01	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Outros	Carta_de_Encaminhamento.pdf	01/11/2022 01:16:35	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Declaração de Pesquisadores	Declaracao_Compromissos_Equipe.pdf	01/11/2022 01:12:35	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Declaração de concordância	Concordancia_dos_Servicos_Envolvidos DANIELE assinado.pdf	01/11/2022 01:10:44	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
TCLE / Termos de Assentimento / Justificativa de Ausência	TCLE.docx	01/11/2022 01:10:16	Érica Sobreira	Aceito
Projeto Detalhado / Brochura Investigador	Projeto_Detalhado.docx	01/11/2022 01:09:46	Érica Sobreira	Aceito

**Situação do Parecer:**

Aprovado

**Necessita Apreciação da CONEP:**

Não

CURITIBA, 02 de Dezembro de 2022

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Assinado por:  
**IDA CRISTINA GUBERT**  
(Coordenador(a))

## APPENDIX B – Consent, Manipulations - Studies 1A, 1B, 2, 3 and 4

### Study 1A / 1B/ 2 / 3 / 4

#### CONSENT

Welcome to the research study!

**The following information is provided to you as part of the university's program for ensuring that academic research is conducted in a safe and ethical manner. Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.**

#### **Purpose of the research study:**

This study aims to assess your perceptions about people's lifestyle and consumption behavior.

#### **What you will be asked to do in the study:**

You will be answering questions about your perceptions of people's lifestyle and consumption behavior in specific situations.

#### **Time required:**

The study will last about 8 minutes.

#### **Risks:**

We do not anticipate any risks associated with your participation. You are free to withdraw from further participation at any stage of the survey.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Your identity will be kept confidential as required by law. Your name will be separated from your data, and all data will be reported in aggregate form (e.g., averages). Your name or code will not be used in any report.

#### **Voluntary participation:**

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

#### **Right to withdraw from the study:**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

#### **Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:**

Érica Maria Calíope Sobreira. Business Department. Federal University of Parana. 632, Lothario Meissner Ave. 2nd floor, room 226. Curitiba – PR – Brazil – 80.240.210  
E-mail: erica.mcs21@gmail.com

#### **Whom to contact about your rights in the study:**

Graduate Program in Business. Business Department. Federal University of Parana. 632, Lothario Meissner Ave. 2nd floor. Curitiba – PR – Brazil – 80.240.210

**By clicking the button Next, you are affirming that you have read the informed consent statement presented above and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure.**

- I consent, begin the study.

- I do not consent, I do not wish to participate.

*Behavior manipulations* (by the author based on Wilson & Bellezza, 2022)

#### Minimalist condition

**Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer** is a young adult who seeks to live with *fewer* possessions, *thoughtfully* and *intentionally* selecting and acquiring them. She tends to keep *uncluttered* spaces, usually filled with *few* things. She also values *simple* designs and aesthetics. She's all about being a minimalist.

#### Non-minimalist condition

**Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer** is a young adult who seeks to live with *many* possessions, selecting and acquiring them *without being thoughtful or intentional*. She places a *high value on having possessions* and tends to keep spaces with *a lot of* things.

*Manipulation check* - Consumer Minimalism scale (adapted from Wilson & Bellezza, 2022) (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

### Study 4

#### Minimalist condition

**Ana** is a young adult who seeks to live with *fewer* possessions, *thoughtfully* and *intentionally* selecting and acquiring them. She tends to keep *uncluttered* spaces, usually filled with *few* things. She's all about being a minimalist.

#### Non-minimalist condition

**Ana** is a young adult who seeks to live with *many* possessions, selecting and acquiring them *without being thoughtful or intentional*. She places a *high value on having possessions* and tends to keep spaces with *a lot of* things.

*Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana's lifestyle makes me think that...*

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana avoids accumulating lots of stuff.

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana restricts the number of things she owns.

"Less is more" to Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana when it comes to owning things.

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana actively avoids acquiring excess possessions.

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana is drawn to visually sparse environments.

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana prefers simplicity in design.

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana keeps the aesthetic in her home very sparse.

If you are paying attention to this study, choose option \_\_ on the scale.

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana prefers leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana is mindful of what she owns.

The selection of things that Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana owns has been carefully curated.

If you are paying attention to this study, choose option \_\_ on the scale.

It's important to Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana to be thoughtful about what she chooses to own.

Emma/Diana/Sara/Jennifer/Ana's belongings are mindfully selected.

### *Demographic Profile*

We would also like to know some demographic data.

#### **Gender**

Male

Female

**Age** \_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C – Measures – Studies 1, 2, 3 and 4

### **Study 1A (measures)**

*Preference Inferences - Inconspicuous (Quiet) vs. Conspicuous (Loud) products* (based on Shao et al., 2019a; Shao et al., 2019b)

Imagine that **Emma** needs to buy a **t-shirt**. After a previous analysis, **two options** were left for her to choose from. The two a **t-shirt** are the **same brand** and have **equivalent prices**.

On a scale ranging from 1 (= Definitely prefer option A) to 7 (= Definitely prefer option B) which t-shirt option do you think Emma would prefer?

(Quiet t-shirt image)

(Loud t-shirt image)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely prefer option A						Definitely prefer option B

Now, please indicate: which of the two t-shirt options you think Emma would choose?

(Quiet t-shirt image)

(Loud t-shirt image)

( )

( )

### Study 1B (measures)

*(Familiar vs. Unfamiliar) Luxury Brand manipulations* (Ho et., 2023)

#### Familiar Luxury brand condition

Imagine that Jennifer is evaluating some **t-shirts** to buy online from luxury brands like Gucci and Louis Vuitton.

She finds a **Gucci t-shirt** that she likes, with **two versions** for her to choose from. The two versions are the **same brand** and have **equivalent prices**.

*Measuring preferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products* (based on Shao et al., 2019a; Shao et al., 2019b)

On a scale ranging from 1 (= Definitely prefer option A) to 7 (= Definitely prefer option B) which t-shirt option do you think Jennifer would prefer?



(Quiet t-shirt image)

(Loud t-shirt image)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely prefer option A						Definitely prefer option B

Unfamiliar Luxury brand condition

Imagine that Jennifer is evaluating some **t-shirts** to buy online from luxury brands like Jil Sander and Ann Demeulemeester.

She finds a **Jil Sander t-shirt** that she likes, with **two versions** for her to choose from. The two versions are the **same brand** and have **equivalent prices**.

*Measuring preferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products* (based on Shao et al., 2019a; Shao et al., 2019b)

On a scale ranging from 1 (= Definitely prefer option A) to 7 (= Definitely prefer option B) which t-shirt option do you think Jennifer would prefer?

(Quiet t-shirt image)

(Loud t-shirt image)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely prefer option A						Definitely prefer option B

*(Manipulation check – Luxury Brand familiarity) (Ho et., 2023; Zhou et al., 2010)*

Now, please indicate how familiar these brands are to you, ranging from 1 (=very unfamiliar to me) to 7 (=very familiar to me).

**Gucci**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This brand is very unfamiliar to me.						This brand is very familiar to me.

### Jil Sander

1 This brand is very unfamiliar to me.	2	3	4	5	6	7 This brand is very familiar to me.
--	---	---	---	---	---	--

### Study 2 (measures)

*Preference Inferences - Inconspicuous (Quiet) vs. Conspicuous (Loud) products* (based on Shao et al., 2019a; Shao et al., 2019b)

Imagine that **Diana** needs to buy a **handbag**. After a previous analysis, **two options** were left for her to choose from. The two handbags are the **same brand** and have **equivalent prices**.

On a scale ranging from 1 (= Definitely prefer option A) to 7 (= Definitely prefer option B) which handbag option do you think Diana would prefer?

(Quiet handbag image)

(Loud handbag image)

1 Definitely prefer option A	2	3	4	5	6	7 Definitely prefer option B
------------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	------------------------------------

*Perceived Visual Complexity in design* (based on Pieters et al., 2010; Sgourev & Althuizen, 2017) (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)

Diana prefers a product design that has fewer visual elements.

Diana prefers a product design that has fewer arrangements of visual elements.

Diana prefers a product design that has less information in visual elements.

Diana prefers a product design that has less visual detail.

### Study 3 (measures)

*Purchase Intention* (adapted from Shao et al., 2019a) (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

Sara would like to try this handbag.

Sara would buy this handbag if she saw it in a store.

Sara would actively seek out this handbag to purchase it.

*Status perceptions* (Cannon & Rucker, 2018) (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)

High status.

Prestigious.

Elite.

Upper class.

Prominent.

*Perceived Need-for-Status* (adapted from Eastman et al., 1999) (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

Sara would buy a product just because it has status.

Sara is interested in new products with status.

Sara would pay more for a product if it had status.

The status of a product is irrelevant to Sara. \*(reverse coded)

A product is more valuable to Sara if it has some snob appeal.

*Perceived Impression management motives* (adapted from Cannon & Rucker, 2018; Ferraro et al., 2013) (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)

Sara is likely to prefer this handbag to...

...impress other people.

...show off.

... gain the approval of others.

### Study 4 (measures)

*Status perceptions* (Cannon & Rucker, 2018) (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)

High status.

Prestigious.

Elite.

Upper class.

Prominent.

#### Luxury brand positioning condition

Ana is evaluating some **versions of sweatshirts** to buy online.

All versions are the **same color** and the **same brand**, named CHANEL.

However, these versions have **variations in the display of the brand's logo**.

*Measuring preferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products* (Raimondo et al., 2022)

On a scale ranging from 1 (= Definitely prefer more subtle logo) to 5 (= Definitely prefer more evident logo) which sweatshirt version do you think Ana would prefer?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely <b>prefer</b> <b>more subtle logo</b>				Definitely <b>prefer</b> <b>more evident logo</b>

#### Mainstream brand positioning condition

Ana is evaluating some **versions of sweatshirts** to buy online.

All versions have **equivalent prices** and are the **same brand**, named H&M.

However, these versions have **variations in the display of the brand's logo**.

*Measuring preferences for inconspicuous (vs. conspicuous) products* (Raimondo et al., 2022)

On a scale ranging from 1 (= Definitely prefer more subtle logo) to 5 (= Definitely prefer more evident logo) which sweatshirt version do you think Ana would prefer?

1 Definitely <b>prefer</b> more subtle logo	2	3	4	5 Definitely <b>prefer</b> more evident logo
---	---	---	---	--

*(Manipulation check - Brand positioning)* (Moreau et al., 2020)

How would you describe the brand presented to you in this study from (1) “mainstream” to (7) “luxury”?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mainstream						Luxury

#### APPENDIX D - Products used in Studies 1A, 1B, 2, 3 and 4

##### Study 1A



( ) Option A



( ) Option B

##### Study 1B

Familiar Luxury brand condition



Unfamiliar Luxury brand condition



**Study 2**

Pair 1 handbag scenario (combined brand prominence and color)



( ) Option A



( ) Option B

Pair 2 handbag scenario (brand prominence) (similar colors)



( ) Option A



( ) Option B

Pair 3 handbag scenario (color)



( ) Option A



( ) Option B

Pair 4 handbag scenario (prominence of brand type) (Zara vs. Prada)



( ) Option A



( ) Option B

**Study 3**



( ) Option A



( ) Option B

#### Study 4

##### Luxury brand condition



##### Mainstream brand condition





## APPENDIX E - Detailed Results (AFE)

### Study 1A - Detailed Results

#### 1. EXPLORATORY FACTORIAL ANALYSIS

##### 1.1. Consumer Minimalism

The twelve items of the Consumer Minimalism scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .388 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .952$ ), explained variance of 65.629%, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .947, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 1187.342, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 1 for details.

Table 1. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Consumer Minimalism (N=123)

Consumer Minimalism	Loadings
...avoids accumulating lots of stuff.	.824
...restricts the number of things she owns.	.852
"Less is more" to ... when it comes to owning things.	.818
...actively avoids acquiring excess possessions.	.841
...is drawn to visually sparse environments.	.802
...prefers simplicity in design.	.849
...keeps the aesthetic in her home very sparse.	.867
...prefers leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.	.796
...is mindful of what she owns.	.752
The selection of things that ... owns has been carefully curated.	.816

It's important to ... be thoughtful about what she chooses to own.	.666
...belongings are mindfully selected.	.817
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>65.629</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.952</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.947</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>1187.342</b>

### Study 1B - Detailed Results

#### 1. EXPLORATORY FACTORIAL ANALYSIS

##### 1.1. Consumer Minimalism

The twelve items of the Consumer Minimalism scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .388 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .926$ ), explained variance of 55.575%, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .939, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 1261.174, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 1 for details.

Table 1. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Consumer Minimalism (N=190)

Consumer Minimalism	Loadings
...avoids accumulating lots of stuff.	.730
...restricts the number of things she owns.	.764
"Less is more" to ... when it comes to owning things.	.690
...actively avoids acquiring excess possessions.	.792

...is drawn to visually sparse environments.	.743
...prefers simplicity in design.	.741
...keeps the aesthetic in her home very sparse.	.756
...prefers leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.	.756
...is mindful of what she owns.	.758
The selection of things that ... owns has been carefully curated.	.792
It's important to ... be thoughtful about what she chooses to own.	.639
...belongings are mindfully selected.	.771
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>55.575</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.926</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.939</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>1261.174</b>

## Study 2 - Detailed Results

### 1. EXPLORATORY FACTORIAL ANALYSIS

#### 1.1. Consumer Minimalism

The twelve items of the Consumer Minimalism scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .694 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .972$ ), explained variance of 76.897%, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .971, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 6125.605, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 1 for details.

Table 1. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Consumer Minimalism (N=342)

Consumer Minimalism	Loadings
...avoids accumulating lots of stuff.	.883
...restricts the number of things she owns.	.895
“Less is more” to ... when it comes to owning things.	.878
...actively avoids acquiring excess possessions.	.884
...is drawn to visually sparse environments.	.861
...prefers simplicity in design.	.886
...keeps the aesthetic in her home very sparse.	.898
...prefers leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.	.877
...is mindful of what she owns.	.860
The selection of things that ... owns has been carefully curated.	.873
It's important to ... be thoughtful about what she chooses to own.	.853
...belongings are mindfully selected.	.874
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>76.897</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.972</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.971</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>6125.605</b>

## 1.2. Perceived Visual Complexity (PVC)

The four items of the Perceived Visual Complexity (PVC) scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .805 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .943$ ), explained variance of 85.771%, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .859, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached

statistical significance ( $X^2 = 1718.576, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 2 for details.

Table 2. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Perceived Visual Complexity (N= 342)

<b>Perceived Visual Complexity</b>	<b>Loadings</b>
...prefers a product design that has fewer visual elements.	.879
...prefers a product design that has fewer arrangements of visual elements.	.859
...prefers a product design that has less information in visual elements.	.844
...prefers a product design that has less visual detail.	.850
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>85.771</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.943</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.859</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>1718.576</b>

### Study 3 - Detailed Results

#### 1. EXPLORATORY FACTORIAL ANALYSIS

##### 1.1. Consumer Minimalism

The twelve items of the Consumer Minimalism scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .290 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .912$ ), explained variance of 51.139%, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .931, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 1240.554, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 1 for details.

Table 1. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Consumer Minimalism (N=220)

Consumer Minimalism	Loadings
...avoids accumulating lots of stuff.	.594
...restricts the number of things she owns.	.730
“Less is more” to ... when it comes to owning things.	.765
...actively avoids acquiring excess possessions.	.620
...is drawn to visually sparse environments.	.742
...prefers simplicity in design.	.754
...keeps the aesthetic in her home very sparse.	.792
...prefers leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.	.772
...is mindful of what she owns.	.729
The selection of things that ... owns has been carefully curated.	.670
It's important to ... be thoughtful about what she chooses to own.	.681
...belongings are mindfully selected.	.703
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>51.139</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.912</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.931</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>1240.554</b>

## 1.2. Status Perceptions

The five items of the Status Perceptions scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .504 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .878$ ), explained variance of 67.363%, Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value was

.873, and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 528.832, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 2 for details.

Table 2. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Status Perceptions (N= 220)

<b>Status Perceptions</b>	<b>Loadings</b>
High status.	.768
Prestigious.	.827
Elite.	.808
Upper class.	.855
Prominent.	.842
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>67.363</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.878</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.873</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>528.832</b>

### 1.3 Need for Status

The five items of the Need for Status scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .503 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .684$ ), explained variance of 58.248%, Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value was .826, and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 416.043, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 3 for details.

Table 3. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Need for Status (N= 220)

<b>Need for Status</b>	<b>Loadings</b>
------------------------	-----------------

...would buy a product just because it has status.	.823
...is interested in new products with status.	.861
...would pay more for a product if it had status.	.877
The status of a product is irrelevant to...	-.369
A product is more valuable to...if it has some snob appeal.	.766
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>58.248</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.684</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.826</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>416.043</b>

#### 1.4 Impression Management Motives

The three items of the Impression Management Motives scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .503 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .844$ ), explained variance of 76.295%, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .728, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 270.146, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 4 for details.

Table 4. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Impression Management Motives (N= 220)

<b>Impression Management Motives</b>	<b>Loadings</b>
...to impress other people.	.880
...to show off.	.864
... to gain the approval of others.	.876



Explained Variance (%)	<b>76.295</b>
Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	<b>.844</b>
KMO	<b>.728</b>
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	<b>270.146</b>

### 1.5 Purchase intention

The three items of the Purchase intention scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .602 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .839$ ), explained variance of 75.745%, Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value was .722, and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 264.213, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 5 for details.

Table 5. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Purchase intention (N= 220)

<b>Purchase intention</b>	<b>Loadings</b>
...would like to try this handbag.	.850
...would buy this handbag if she saw it in a store.	.875
...would actively seek out this handbag to purchase it.	.886
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>75.745</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.839</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.722</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>264.213</b>

### 1.6 Correlations between variables

All items of the variables used on hypotheses tests were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation. Total variance explained of 36.551%, Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value was .920, and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity ( $X^2 = 3988.752, p = .000$ ). Rotated Component matrix loaded two factors. Consumer Minimalism load higher in the first factor and Status Perceptions items load higher in the second factor. See table 6.

Table 6. Rotated Component matrix for Study 3 - Principal Variables items (N= 220)

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
...avoids accumulating lots of stuff.		.433		.701
...restricts the number of things she owns.		.601		
"Less is more" to ... when it comes to owning things.		.706		
...actively avoids acquiring excess possessions.		.631		
...is drawn to visually sparse environments.		.677		
...prefers simplicity in design.		.739		
...keeps the aesthetic in her home very sparse.		.778		
...prefers leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.		.756		
...is mindful of what she owns.		.743		
The selection of things that ... owns has been carefully curated.		.659		
It's important to ... be thoughtful about what she chooses to own.		.707		
...belongings are mindfully selected.		.704		
High status.	.697			.504
Prestigious.	.783			

Elite.	.763		
Upper class.	.776		
Prominent.	.770		
...would buy a product just because it has status.	.724		.449
...is interested in new products with status.	.813		
...would pay more for a product if it had status.	.817		
The status of a product is irrelevant to ...		-.683	
A product is more valuable to ...if it has some snob appeal.	.754		
...to impress other people.	.798		
...to show off.	.803		
...to gain the approval of others.	.805		
...would like to try this handbag.		.598	.581
...would buy this handbag if she saw it in a store.		.703	
...would actively seek out this handbag to purchase it.		.749	
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.			
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.			

## Study 4 - Detailed Results

### 1. EXPLORATORY FACTORIAL ANALYSIS

#### 1.1. Consumer Minimalism

The twelve items of the Consumer Minimalism scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the component matrix correlation revealed loading of .365 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .938$ ), explained variance of 59.914%, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .950, and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached

statistical significance ( $X^2 = 2075.339, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 1 for details.

Table 1. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Consumer Minimalism (N=272)

Consumer Minimalism	Loadings
...avoids accumulating lots of stuff.	.685
...restricts the number of things she owns.	.781
“Less is more” to ... when it comes to owning things.	.710
...actively avoids acquiring excess possessions.	.779
...is drawn to visually sparse environments.	.802
...prefers simplicity in design.	.775
...keeps the aesthetic in her home very sparse.	.807
...prefers leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.	.778
...is mindful of what she owns.	.726
The selection of things that ... owns has been carefully curated.	.790
It's important to ... be thoughtful about what she chooses to own.	.839
...belongings are mindfully selected.	.793
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>59.914</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.938</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.950</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>2075.339</b>

## 1.2. Status Perceptions

The five items of the Status Perceptions scale were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA), using SPSS Version 23. Inspection of the

component matrix correlation revealed loading of .515 and above. Results revealed satisfactory results, reliability ( $\alpha = .882$ ), explained variance of 68.066%, Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value was .865, and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ( $X^2 = 686.400, p = .000$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. See table 2 for details.

Table 2. Varimax Rotation of factor analysis for Status Perceptions (N= 272)

Status Perceptions	Loadings
High status.	.617
Prestigious.	.669
Elite.	.664
Upper class.	.717
Prominent.	.737
<b>Explained Variance (%)</b>	<b>68.066</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>.882</b>
<b>KMO</b>	<b>.865</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>686.400</b>

### 1.3 Correlations between variables

All items of the variables used on hypotheses tests were subjected to Exploratory Factorial analyses with principal components analysis (PCA). Varimax rotation showed a component correlation matrix of maximum .394, between Consumer Minimalism and Status Perceptions. Total variance explained of 48.962%, Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value was .929, and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity ( $X^2 = 2950.217, p = .000$ ). Rotated Component matrix loaded two factors. Consumer Minimalism load higher in the first factor and Status Perceptions items load higher in the second factor. See table 3.

Table 3. Rotated Component matrix for Study 4 - Principal Variables items (N= 272)

	Component	
	1	2
...avoids accumulating lots of stuff.	<b>.639</b>	.242
...restricts the number of things she owns.	<b>.764</b>	.171
“Less is more” to ... when it comes to owning things.	<b>.716</b>	.082
...actively avoids acquiring excess possessions.	<b>.773</b>	.126
...is drawn to visually sparse environments.	<b>.759</b>	.269
...prefers simplicity in design.	<b>.763</b>	.154
...keeps the aesthetic in her home very sparse.	<b>.773</b>	.224
...prefers leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.	<b>.766</b>	.182
...is mindful of what she owns.	<b>.697</b>	.199
The selection of things that ... owns has been carefully curated.	<b>.751</b>	.245
It's important to ... be thoughtful about what she chooses to own.	<b>.802</b>	.250
...belongings are mindfully selected.	<b>.782</b>	.151
High status.	.106	<b>.796</b>
Prestigious.	.272	<b>.766</b>
Elite.	.246	<b>.774</b>
Upper class.	.148	<b>.837</b>
Prominent.	.229	<b>.822</b>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
 a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.