



COULD TELECOMMUTING BOOST INNOVATION?

Each 10-kilometer increase in an inventor's commute is associated with a 5% decrease in patents filed and a 7% decrease in patent quality—and the higher-performing the inventor, the steeper the declines. “Commuting and Innovation: Are Closer Inventors More Productive?” by Hongyu Xiao, Andy Wu, and Jaeho Kim

In five subsequent experiments involving both well-known and fictitious brands, the researchers confirmed the superior performance of feminine names and explored the reasons for it. Across products ranging from sneakers to hand sanitizer to YouTube channels, participants favored those with a feminine-sounding name (Nimilia, say) over more-masculine ones (Nimeld). They saw the feminine names as conveying warmth, which inspired more-positive attitudes toward the brand and made them more inclined to choose it.

There were exceptions, of course. When a product was aimed at a male audience, the researchers found, masculine and feminine brand names were equally well-liked. And although participants displayed a clear preference for feminine brand names when contemplating a hedonic purchase, such as chocolate, they preferred masculine names for strictly functional products, such as bathroom scales.

These results have obvious implications for naming new products and could also be deployed in service of the tried-and-true. “Brands...may be ill-advised to discard a well-established masculine name,” the researchers caution. “However, it may be possible to imbue masculine brand names with warmth via feminine sub-brands, brand extensions, or logos. For instance, Fiesta is a linguistically feminine sub-brand of Ford that could add warmth to the masculine corporate brand.”

ABOUT THE RESEARCH “Is Nestlé a Lady? The Feminine Brand Name Advantage,” by Ruth Pogacar et al. (Journal of Marketing, forthcoming)

SUSTAINABILITY

Why Luxury Items Can Be Good for the Planet

With concerns about sustainable consumption on the rise, the fashion industry has come under harsh criticism. Experts estimate that it is one of the world's worst polluters, accounting for 10% of global carbon emissions and 20% of global wastewater. A new study finds a surprising way to reduce the damage: by encouraging consumers to buy high-end goods.

The research team began by scraping data on sales of over 4,600 new and used shoes and purses from online retailers. It found that high-end products were more prevalent than mass-market ones in secondhand outlets, supporting its hypothesis that they have a longer life span—an important marker of sustainability. A subsequent study showed that consumers engage in more-sustainable behavior with luxury goods: They keep them longer and are likely to donate or resell them rather than discard them

when they are through. In further studies, participants considering how to spend a fixed amount of money chose multiple ordinary goods instead of one high-end item—but when prompted to think about the durability of the items in question, they opted for the high-end product significantly more often. In fact, when faced with an explicit trade-off between various product attributes, they rated durability as second only to style and just as important as price.

“Luxury brands and government agencies can collaborate to educate consumers about purchasing fewer, better goods that benefit consumers and the environment,” the researchers write. “Whenever possible, marketers of high-end brands should provide concrete estimates of products’ life spans...and promote the durable nature of their goods.”

ABOUT THE RESEARCH “Buy Less, Buy Luxury: Understanding and Overcoming Product Durability Neglect for Sustainable Consumption,” by Jennifer J. Sun, Silvia Bellezza, and Neeru Paharia (Journal of Marketing, 2021)

