

## Understanding the Masstige Consumption Value on Consumer Purchase Intention of Generation Z

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate relationship between purchase intention of Generation Z towards masstige brands and customer perceived value. A qualitative data collection approach was used through in-depth interview with Generation Z women. In this way, the relationship between individual, functional, social, and financial values as consumption values and purchase intention was examined. According to a thematic analysis of the interviews, experiential, financial, and functional values are the primary determinants of Generation Z's perceptions of masstige consumption. Social media and online reviews are other factors influencing consumers' social value. Consumers' purchase intentions are related to the product's practicality, ease of use, visual appeal, self-reward, and positive emotions. The study's findings offer management insights into creating affordable and socially relevant mass-market brands targeting Generation Z.

**Keywords-** Masstige brands, Generation Z, Consumption value, Purchase intention.

### 1. Introduction

Economic growth and the COVID-19 pandemic have driven expansion and demographic change in the middle-income level in recent years (Kharas, 2010; Wang et al., 2022). The economic and post-pandemic crises have reduced consumers' purchasing power and modify their consumption behavior. This situation has also affected the luxury goods (Dubois et al., 2021). As a result of these developments, luxury brands have begun to focus on middle-class consumers and produce prestige products for the mass market. This has led to an increase in the number of high priced luxury brands on the market (Kumar et al., 2020). Since the 1980s, the definition of luxury has changed, with the concepts of mass market accessibility and widespread availability coming into use in market (Eckhardt et al., 2015). The combination of attractiveness of the luxury market and accessibility to the mass market has increased the importance of masstige brands (Kumar et al., 2020). This change has led to the democratization of luxury brands in three different ways (Boisvert et al., 2023). Downward expansion of luxury brands, which offer affordable products while maintaining a certain level of prestige, status, and high quality within their target market. Premium products can afford which have higher prices, quality, or taste than other products in their category for middle income level (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Consumers prefer these products more for their image rather than their actual products (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Luxury brands are developing sub-brands to help them maintain their market share against increasing competition. Therefore, luxury brands aim to benefit from this market and grow their market share by offering masstige products at lower prices compared to luxury products to achieve high profit margins. Third, upward expansion of mass brands, in which brands target a broad customer base seeking high quality, status, and prestige at an affordable price (Paul, 2019). Mass brands

gain pricing power by adding a sense of prestige to their products through exclusive designer collaborations, creating masstige products. The increasing accessibility of luxury goods, the growing demand for more natural and organic ingredients, and the increasing popularity of social media are driving the growth of the masstige market.

While traditional luxury brands associated with high price, rarity, uniqueness, craftsmanship, and exclusivity with symbolic values in the market, masstige brands have disseminated select elements of prestige to a wider audience (Ko et al., 2019). Masstige brands offer a perception of luxury to middle-class consumers while employing communication strategies that provide more accessible pricing and an emotional connection that identifies with a particular lifestyle, status, or desired self-image (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003; Paul, 2019). Masstige brands provide emotional satisfaction and social recognition through offering accessible prestige, distinct from traditional luxury, and catering to the changing preferences and desires of those in the middle-income levels (Kumar et al., 2020).

Silverstein & Fiske (2003) were the first to define the formation of the masstige market. Masstige refers to high-quality luxury becoming more accessible and affordable for middle-class consumers (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003; Paul, 2015). These products are categorized as luxury or premium; their prices bridge the gap between the middle-class and super-luxury segments (Paul, 2019; Kumar et al., 2020). For luxury brands, it represents a downward brand expansion, targeting the growing middle class in Asian economies as new luxury (Das et al., 2022). Examples of masstige brands include Porsche offering a more affordable Boxster model and Armani offering less expensive Armani Jeans (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Masstige brands maintains its prestige perception by offering its products at accessible prices to a wider consumer segment (Paul, 2015).

Recent studies on masstige brand consumption have examined on three main themes: (1) comparisons with traditional luxury consumption, (2) psychological and behavioral determinants, and (3) generational differences. The first theme investigates the differences in consumer motivation and behavior between traditional luxury and masstige brands have been investigated, and how consumer perceptions differ between these product categories has been explored (Gupta et al., 2023). A comprehensive assessment of the evolution of masstige marketing provides a framework that distinguishes the masstige concept from traditional luxury (Kumar et al., 2020; Goyal, 2021; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Accordingly, masstige brands clarify their positioning in terms of price, targeted consumer income, and brand positioning. The findings provide a basis for behavioral modeling (Park et al., 2022). The second theme in the literature is the impact of masstige marketing on consumer behavior such as, value and motivation. Research has examined how masstige strategies influence outcomes such as brand equity, customer loyalty, and purchase intention. Indeed, some studies have concluded that masstige practices can positively affect brand equity and that masstige and traditional brand equity measures even capture similar constructs (Paul, 2019). Studies have been conducted to measure the perceived value of masstige brands to determine their actual masstige performance (Paul, 2015, 2019; Ishaq et al., 2023; Alagarsamy et al., 2024; Hiba, 2024). There are also studies investigating the antecedents and consequences of masstige brand value (Rodrigues et al., 2024; Shah & Shah, 2025). Among these, the antecedents of brand value (brand love, co-creation, and need for uniqueness) and its consequences (brand happiness, brand loyalty, and electronic word-of-mouth) have been investigated (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Another study was conducted to explore the antecedents (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, social motivation, real self-concept, ideal self) and their consequences (cognitive attitude, emotional attitude, conative attitude, attitudinal and behavioral loyalty) of brand value (Shah & Shah, 2025). The main psychological factors affecting masstige consumption include self-esteem, the ideal self, a desire for differentiation, and the search for symbolic value. The studies show that consumer happiness is associated with masstige brand happiness based on the

principles of self-awareness and the social ideal self (Kumar & Srivastava, 2022; Mansoor & Paul, 2022; Nobre et al., 2023). A study has conducted on the mediation of customer experience in the effect of masstige consumption value on customer lifetime value in the service sector. Accordingly, both emotional and functional values positively affect customer experience (Khan et al., 2024).

Academic studies have conducted masstige marketing (Kumar & Paul, 2018; Kumar et al., 2020; Das et al., 2022), there are not enough studies explaining the purchase intention of masstige brands (Kumar et al., 2020; Alić et al., 2022; Das et al., 2022; Kassie & Bang, 2022; Park et al., 2022; Purohit & Radia, 2022; Chatterjee et al., 2023; Gupta et al., 2023; Zaheer et al., 2023; Ismat & Suki, 2024; Rodrigues et al., 2024; Kapoor et al., 2025). One study revealed that individuals' self-esteem levels affect their purchase intentions towards masstige brands, and that this relationship is indirectly mediated by self-gifting behaviour and perception of brand personality. Findings indicate that masstige brand strategies are closely linked to factors such as price, quality, and psychological needs (Khan et al., 2024). It is suggested that masstige consumption is shaped by status-based extrinsic motivations as well as intrinsic desires for satisfaction and self-actualization. This approach suggests that both product features and consumer psychological processes need to be considered in the development of masstige strategies (Roy et al., 2025). There are a limited number of studies examining the impact of masstige brand of consumption value on purchase intention (Alić et al., 2022; Das et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022; Purohit & Radia, 2022; Zaheer et al., 2023). In the fashion industry, functional, symbolic, and experiential value have been considered important dimensions of consumption value for masstige brands (Das et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022).

The third theme is to examine generational differences and digital interaction styles in masstige consumption. Factors influencing purchase intentions for masstige brands are quality awareness, perceived brand value (Rodrigues et al., 2024; Srivastava & Sinha, 2025), and perceived luxury value. Sensitivity to quality is the strongest factor influencing consumers' purchase intentions for masstige brands. Alić et al. (2022) investigated the effect of perceived consumer value in the consumer electronics sector on purchase intention in masstige brands among generations X, Y, and Z. The study found that these relationships vary across generations (X, Y, Z), and intergenerational affiliation moderates' consumers' purchase intentions. Brand perceptions and demographic variables are shaping masstige consumption behavior. Accordingly, Generations X and Y evaluate masstige brands solely in terms of functional value. At the same time, Generation Z intends to purchase masstige-branded products based on functional, personal, and social values as different dimensions of consumption value. This study found that perceived luxury value of masstige brands influenced the purchase intentions of Generations Y and Z, but this effect is no significant for Generation X (Alić et al., 2022).

In the digital age advancements, high-quality content produced by consumers, has strengthened the relationship between brands and consumers, enhanced brand prestige, and positively influenced consumers' purchasing intentions (Soekotjo et al., 2025). The success of masstige brand strategy is determined by price and quality, digital engagement and content creation. Masstige brands have gained popularity among Generation Z, who value affordability, brand prestige, and social impact (Alić et al., 2022). This trend has led masstige brands to meet demand in fashion, beauty, and technology sectors with high quality design and accessible prices (Roy et al., 2025).

Generation Z is projected to constitute 40% of consumers in the luxury market, becoming the largest and wealthiest economic force by 2035 (Deloitte Report, 2025). In this context, brands will focus on responding to the affordable luxury quest by targeting Generation Z, which will increasingly dominate in order to gain profitability and market share (Oyedele & Goenner, 2021). Generation Z have a strong affection for luxury experiences and prioritizes brands that express their individuality and success, align with their personal

values and provide value for money (Das et al., 2022), so it is important to understand how they perceive and interact with luxury brands (Alić et al., 2022). Unlike the luxury understanding of previous generations, Generation Z also perceives masstige brands within the scope of luxury consumption (Alić et al., 2022). In the literature, comparative studies have been conducted on the similarities and differences in consumer perceptions towards masstige brands across generations (Alić et al., 2022.; Rodríguez et al., 2023; Roy et al., 2025). There are also studies that explain the perceived value dimensions related to consumers' purchases of masstige brands (Das et al., 2022; Yadav et al., 2022; Herold et al., 2024). However, studies examining the consumption of masstige brands in the context of Generation Z are limited (Saavedra & Bautista, 2020; Sindhvani et al., 2022).

Alić et al. (2022), Das et al. (2022), and Park et al. (2022) and used the survey method in their quantitative research on masstige brands. Purohit & Radia (2022), on the other hand, used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The literature has not investigated the relationship between the dimensions of consumer value for Generation Z and their digital habits and identity (Cho et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between the dimensions of consumer value of masstige brands and purchase intention. This study aims to address this gap by examining the consumer values of Generation Z women in relation to masstige brands, based on consumer value theory, and expanding upon it by adding new dimensions. A qualitative research design was used for this purpose. The results will help marketers develop value propositions that better reflect Generation Z's desire for authenticity, individuality, and conscious consumption. In this way, the study will contribute to the literature on how masstige brands are perceived and evaluated by Generation Z.

Generation Z consumes luxury brands to reflect an image to society, gain social recognition and prestige, engage in conspicuous consumption, and show their achievements (Cho et al., 2022; Roy et al., 2025). Generation Z has a different other generation, considering masstige brands as luxury (Alić et al., 2022). Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the perceived value dimensions that influence the purchase intentions of Generation Z women towards masstige brands within the context of a single generation. Specifically, the study examines the effect of perceived value in masstige brands on purchase intention among Generation Z women.

The research questions for this study are:

RQ1: What are the dimensions of the consumption value of masstige branded products perceived by Generation Z women?

RQ2: How do the dimensions of the perceived consumption value of masstige branded products affect the purchase intention of Generation Z women?

This study is selected Generation Z (Gen Z), a generation born between 1997 and 2012 who grew up in a digitally-oriented world. For this reason, qualitative research was conducted through in-depth interviews to explore the consumption value dimensions that influence masstige consumption (Niosi, 2021; Dwidienawati et al., 2025).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Masstige Consumption**

The concept of "masstige" refers to the mass availability of luxury products with high price, the use of prominent logos, and mass-market affordability, availability, and accessibility (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). These brands are positioned between traditional and luxury brands, offering affordable, high-quality products that are accessible to middle-class consumers as luxury goods (Paul, 2015). These brands provide consumers with a superior experience, high prestige, and status (Kapferer, 2015; Park et al., 2022;

Chatterjee et al., 2023). Consumers use luxury to achieve their ideal identities (Hemetsberger et al., 2012). In this regard, masstige brands aim to meet consumers' desires to access affordable luxury products and gain status. Consumers, who are now able to afford products they could not access previously, wish to buy these brands to achieve their ideal selves. Masstige brands help young consumers rise the social hierarchy and gain social approval as a status symbol (Eastman et al., 2022). For example, brands such as Starbucks, Apple, Ray-Ban, Sony, Diesel, Voltaire, Dyson, and Lexus have been positioned as masstige brands (Boisvert et al., 2023). Masstige brands influence consumers' purchase intentions providing both utilitarian (e.g., premium quality) and emotional benefits (e.g., status representation, prestige) (Alić et al., 2022). According to Kapoor et al. (2025), self-image, social ideal self, brand image, and personal values have a positive effect on purchase intentions of masstige brands in the youth segment in the India.

Luxury brands are expanding their brands downward by launching new products at affordable prices for the masses without sacrificing quality to create a masstige brand. However, this can create the perception that luxury brands are less luxurious (Hennigs et al., 2013). Another way to generate masstige is for luxury brands to position themselves as a sub-brand at lower prices than the parent brand. Masstige brands is defined as a downward extension of affordable luxury brands (Riley et al., 2015), new luxury (Eckhardt et al., 2015), accessible luxury (Walley et al., 2013).

## 2.2 Masstige Consumption Values

Consumption value that consumers obtain from products, is defined the balance between the benefits and costs (Zeithaml, 1988). Theory of Consumer Value (TCV), a marketing theory, is a function of multidimensional consumption value, is theoretical framework of this study. The aim of TCV is to understand the motivations behind consumer behavior (Sheth et al., 1991). The theory has also been used to understand the consumption value of luxury goods and services (Atkinson & Kang, 2022; Akarsu et al., 2025). In this study, TCV was used to understand the dimensions of consumption values that may influence purchase intentions for masstige brands among Generation Z women.

This theory emphasizes that consumer preferences have both utilitarian and hedonic attributes to perceived value (Turel et al., 2010). This theory considers multiple value dimensions together to explain consumer behavior (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011). This theory involves functional, social, cognitive, emotional, and experiential values as five consumption values (Sheth et al., 1991; Akarsu et al., 2025). Consumers' purchasing decisions and brand loyalty are influenced by their perceptions of the dimensions of consumption value (Akarsu et al., 2025). Social and emotional values are particularly affecting in consumer decisions for luxury products. Luxury products provide a distinctive identity and a sense of prestige to their users (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Emotional value refers to the personal satisfaction and pleasure derived from purchasing luxury products, while social value generates from an individual's need for recognition within society (Han & Kim, 2020).

Functional value is products functional characteristics such as performance, durability, quality, or ease of use of a product. For example, a luxury watches brand's superior technical attributes create high functional value (Berthon et al., 2009). Emotional value refers to the consumer's emotional responses during product experiences, such as excitement, pleasure, a sense of belonging, and pride. Luxury products generally have increased emotional value because they evoke feelings of uniqueness and self-reward (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Epistemic value contains a product's originality, novelty, or knowledge enhancing characteristics. Examples of products that trigger a sense of discovery in consumers can include limited-edition fashion items or high-tech products (Sheth et al., 1991). Social value refers to how a product is perceived and accepted by the social environment and how it contributes to the consumer's social status. For example, a

consumer carrying an expensive bag or wearing a designer clothing can enhance their prestige within their social environment and foster a sense of belonging (Wiedmann et al., 2009).

Compared to luxury brands, masstige brands appeal to financially conscious and prestige-seeking consumers by making prestige accessible without financial barriers (Das et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022). While Theory of Consumption Value was initially based on five consumption values in luxury consumption studies, it has been expanded over time to include a financial value dimension. Financial value is defined as a product's "value for money". For example, a luxury watch expected to appreciate in value over time, providing with both symbolic and economic value (Han & Kim, 2020).

Individual value, which is often lacking in luxury brands, refers to the emotional and psychological relations that motivates consumers to buy "for themselves" in order to obtain both intrinsic and extrinsic pleasure (Shukla, 2012). This is related to values such as the desire for renewal, a sense of youth, a feeling of beauty, and aesthetics. For example, a person might buy a cosmetic product promising a "feeling of youth" to increase their self-esteem and enhance their individual value. Through individual value, consumers' intrinsic motivation increases, such as authenticity, identity formation, and personal satisfaction.

Effect of perceived consumption value dimensions towards masstige brands mentioned in the previous literature. Consumers buy masstige brands not only for their functional value, but also for their experiential and symbolic value (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Purchase intentions for fashion brands will be influenced by functional, experiential, and symbolic values (Das et al., 2022). The purchase of masstige brands is influenced by functional and conspicuous value, whereas experiential value has no significant effect on purchase intention for consumer electronics products (Purohit & Radia, 2022). Pleasure, prestige, and emotional satisfaction influence customer satisfaction with cosmetics and fashion products (Kumar et al., 2020; Mansoor & Paul, 2022; Vujic & Szabo, 2022). Functional value influences consumers' cognitive evaluations, while social and emotional value positively affects consumer purchase intentions by increasing emotional satisfaction (Akarsu et al., 2025). Also, epistemic value plays a significant role for novelty-seeking consumers, while financial value varies depending on cultural and demographic factors.

The number of studies examining the relationship between the consumption value dimensions of masstige brands and purchase intention together is limited (Alić et al., 2022; Das et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022; Purohit & Radia, 2022; Zaheer et al., 2023). Purchase intention of masstige brands has generally been related to prestige value (Paul, 2015; Gilal et al., 2022; Zaheer et al., 2023), overall consumption value (Ismat & Suki, 2024), symbolic and experiential value (Ostovan & Nasr, 2022), hedonic value (Kassie & Bang, 2022), perceived luxury value (Alić et al. 2022). Zaheer et al. (2023) examined the effect of only prestige value on the features of masstige products (iPhones) and purchase intentions. Kassie & Bang (2022) emphasized that uniqueness and hedonic values influence masstige purchase intentions, but are not affected by perceived quality. While Das et al. (2022) and Park et al. (2022) examined the impact of masstige consumption value dimensions on consumer purchase intentions in fashion brands, Purohit & Radia (2022) researched this in the consumer electronics sector. Park et al. (2022) found that masstige consumption value dimensions influence perceived brand value, which in turn influences purchase intentions. Das et al. (2022) demonstrated that functional, experiential, and symbolic consumption values encourage masstige consumption in fashion apparel brands. Purohit & Radia (2022) emphasized that functional and vanity value play an important role, however experiential value is not a significant determinant of the purchase intention for a masstige brand in the consumer electronics industry.

### 2.3 Consumption Habits of Generation Z

Generation Z, compared to other generations, uses luxury brands to express their self-image, engage in conspicuous consumption, and highlight their appearance. They seek status and image through the brands they consume. This generation uses brands to show as their achievements (Cho et al., 2022). Therefore, their perception of luxury increasingly encompasses masstige brands, which they purchase to attain a sense of status and belonging to a particular social group (Shin et al., 2022). Generation Z reveal a particularly different approach of masstige brand consumption (Roy et al., 2025). Masstige brands are related to individual values, self-expression, and lifestyle. Consumers' brand preferences compatible with their identities and aesthetic values (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Roy et al., 2025). Therefore, masstige brands create a strong preference by combining functional, experiential, and symbolic values (Vickers & Renand, 2003; Park & Park, 2016).

Generation Z of brand expectations and consumption patterns differ from other generations due to they grew up with digital technologies. Generation Z expects from the brands that are prestigious or high-status, align with their personal values, unique, high-quality, functional, and easy to use. At the same time, this generation prefers brands that reflect their lifestyle and identity, allowing them to express themselves (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Cho et al., 2022; Roy et al., 2025). Social media and online communities influence Generation Z's brand perceptions. For this generation, brands are purchased to increase their visibility on social media, express their identity, and enhance their sense of belonging (Saavedra & Bautista, 2020). Masstige brands offer them both visual appeal and symbolic and innovative value at affordable prices, creating attractive alternatives for them (Alić et al., 2022; Das et al., 2022). Generation Z, who seek prestige, social value is one of the fundamental dimensions of masstige brands (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012; Wang, 2022). In today's digital media-centric world, masstige brands create social value through the active participation of consumers in brand narratives, particularly on social media (Gensler et al., 2013; Srivastava & Sinha, 2025). Generation Z, widely using social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube, and influencer collaborations and viral challenges increased desirability of masstige brands as status symbols (Alić et al., 2022).

In the literature, most studies have examined the factors influencing masstige brand consumption on Millennials or consumers in general (Kumar et al., 2020; Das et al., 2022; Chatterjee et al., 2023). The motivations and values of Generation Z in masstige brand consumption are less understood (Das et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2022; Roy et al., 2025). Existing research primarily relies on quantitative methods to measure perceptions of luxury values, while there are very few studies that use qualitative approaches to deeper understand into these experiences (Mansoor & Paul, 2022; Boisvert et al., 2023). There are limited studies examining the relationship between Generation Z's digital habits and ways of expressing their identities and functional, social, and emotional values within the context of masstige brand consumption (Cho et al., 2022). There is a research gap by investigating how Generation Z interprets the functional, social, emotional, and individual values of masstige brands. A qualitative research design was used and based on academic studies about luxury value (Zeithaml et al., 2020; Park et al., 2022; Blut et al., 2023; Akarsu et al., 2025). The findings will assist marketers in developing masstige brand value propositions and designing brand messages for Generation Z.

### 3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in a phenomenological perspective to examine consumers lived experiences with masstige hair care product (Creswell, 2013; Tracy, 2013). The phenomenological perspective was appropriate for exploring how consumers interpret price, quality, and prestige through their everyday usage experiences. The focal brand, originally recognized for technology-driven home appliances, has recently expanded into hair care products positioned between high

performance and accessible prestige. The brand's haircare segment includes hair dryers, hair styles, hair straighteners, hair care accessories, and products. A qualitative study design was created with in-depth interviews as the data collection method to investigate the impact of customer perceived value on home appliance and haircare product purchase intention.

### **3.1 Sample**

The purposive sampling method is used to conduct the in-depth interviews incorporating typical instance and critical instance sampling strategies (Creswell, 2013). In this study, purposive sampling was used to reach people with personal, relevant experience with the issue being explored. The goal was to include participants who could describe their experiences in depth and share what those meant to them. In this respect, it aligns with the phenomenological research approach's goal of achieving in-depth meaning (Creswell, 2013; Tracy, 2013).

The study focuses on Generation Z consumers (born between 1997 and 2012) who actively own. References were used to determine the participants to be included in the study. Accordingly, a participant who used the hair care brand recommended another person who also used this brand. In this way, participants were reached through referrals. This generation was selected for their preference for digital engagement, premium consumption experiences, and technological innovation in their purchasing decisions (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). In accordance with the principle of determining sample size in in-depth interviews based on the repetition of responses, the interviews in this study were completed with ten women who had purchased hair care products.

The sample in this study consists of only female participants because the hair care products of the selected brand are designed and marketed primarily for women. Women represent a primary consumer segment in the hair care and styling product category (Naderi & Steenburg, 2018), focusing on female participants in the study appropriately reflects the consumer reality of this category. For this reason, the study focused on female participants to reflect the consumption context of this category and to explore value perceptions associated with hair care products (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Choo et al., 2012).

### **3.2 Data Collection**

For this research, semi-structured online interview was conducted via Zoom and Microsoft Teams. It was applied between March to August 2025. Before start to the interview, participants are asked to complete informed consent form as a part for procedure. After that, main questions were asked to them which were 12 open-ended questions, structured into four sections corresponding to the core value dimensions (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Park et al., 2022).

The first section of the interview included questions about brand usage and satisfaction with the product. The following section was based on open-ended prompt questions to elicit detailed feelings from participants. Through these questions, participants' perceptions were examined about the financial, functional, individual, and social value dimensions, as well as their purchase intention for the product (Shoham et al., 1998; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Choo et al., 2012; Yang & Mattila, 2016; Jain, 2020).

Participants' evaluations of price fairness and value for money were explored using financial value questions. Functional value questions addressed participants' perceptions of product performance, usability, and quality. For usability value, participants were asked whether the brand's products provide convenience in their lives and how they evaluate the functionality offered by the brand's products; uniqueness value, they were asked how owning this brand makes them feel, how the difficulty of finding the products everywhere affects their purchasing decisions, and the importance of the product being rare for them;

quality value, questions were asked about the perceived quality of the brand and the effect of this perception on purchasing decisions. Based on individual values, sub-questions related to self-reflection, materialism, self-rewarding, and hedonic value were asked. It was explored whether the brand aligns with the participants' identities, whether using the brand increases their quality of life and enjoyment, and the emotions created by the brand, the feelings it evokes in terms of visual design, and their thoughts about the brand were examined. In order to assess, sub-questions related to social prestige and conspicuous consumption were asked. Social prestige was questioned, with the social environment or trends influencing participants' preferences; regarding conspicuous value, the importance of whether others notice them using the brand and whether the brand serves as a marker of social status were examined. Participants were asked about their purchase intention regarding whether they would buy other products from this brand in the future or if a new product is released in this product category. In the final section of the interview, demographic questions about participants' age, education, and income levels were asked.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

All participants are women (100%,  $n = 10$ ), and it reflects the brand's focus on women. Due to purposive sampling, the participants were Generation Z individuals (ages 13–27), with representation from those aged 21–23 (30%,  $n = 3$ ) and 24–26 (30%,  $n = 3$ ). Most participants held an undergraduate degree (80%,  $n = 8$ ). Regarding monthly income, 40% ( $n = 4$ ) were in the high-income group, 20% ( $n = 2$ ) in the middle-income group, 20% ( $n = 2$ ) in the low-income group, and 10% ( $n = 1$ ) did not disclose income. **Table 1** shows descriptive statistics for the participants in the study.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of participants' profile.

Participants	Age	Education level	Income level
P1	24	Bachelor degree	Low (0–9,999)
P2	21	Bachelor degree	Medium (10,000–24,999)
P3	25	Master degree	High (25,000+)
P4	23	Bachelor degree ee	Low (0–9,999)
P5	22	Bachelor degree	None
P6	26	Master degree	Medium (10,000–24,999)
P7	24	Master degree	Medium (10,000–24,999)
P8	26	Bachelor degree ee	Medium (10,000–24,999)
P9	24	Bachelor degree	Unknown
P10	26	Master degree	Medium (10,000–24,999)

In this research, drawing on established theoretical dimensions, a deductive approach was employed during data analysis (Clarke et al., 2015). After transcribing all interviews, content analysis was conducted, a method that systematically detects and interprets patterns in textual data (Creswell, 2013). Following this, content analysis involved a structured coding process to identify recurring themes and patterns in the data (Kassarjian, 1977; Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Thus, the coding procedure was directed by themes predefined from the theoretical framework, including functional, social, prestige, and emotional value dimensions (Truong et al., 2009; Shukla, 2012). After that, individual statements served as the units of analysis, and all transcripts were closely examined through multiple readings. For coding, the procedures of deductive content analysis are followed (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Initial codes were then organized under higher-level themes using axial and selective coding (Tracy, 2013; Saldana, 2016). For this research, to ensure coding accuracy, several validation steps were implemented (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), and each theme was exemplified with direct quotations from interviews. The reliability of the findings was enhanced by involving multiple researchers and conducting participant verification.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis revealed distinct themes corresponding to the masstige consumption value framework (Sheth et al., 1991; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Park et al., 2022). These themes directly reflected the experiences of Generation Z consumers.

### 4.1 Financial Value

Prior research has conceptualized financial value in terms of price perceptions related to rarity and exclusivity (Choo et al., 2012). From a consumer perspective, financial value is evaluated through the balance between perceived benefits and monetary sacrifice (Smith & Colgate, 2007). Within luxury and masstige consumption contexts, higher prices have been associated with feelings of privilege and enhanced self-perception. High price levels are often interpreted as signals of superior quality (Akarsu et al., 2025).

In the present study, participants frequently evaluated the perceived quality of the product as high relative to its price, reflecting a strong sense of value for money. Some consumers stated that the brand created a perceived value of long-term use. They emphasized that the brand improved their quality of life and that they purchased it specifically for long-term use. The following quote illustrates these expectations:

*"I wanted to buy it once and buy it right — I purchased it with the intention of using it long-term." (P3, 25)* Therefore, they indicated that when quality is good, price can be secondary item.

*"I'm getting my money's worth." (P2, 21); "The price is high, but it's worth it." (P6, 26)*

Some participants, however, stated, *"I think it would be more accessible if the price were a little lower or half the price." (P10, 26).*

### 4.2 Individual Value

Individual value refers to a person's self-confidence, self-pride, self-expression, and the pleasure derived from the products (Das et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022). Masstige brands encompass factors such as self-actualization, well-being, pleasure, and self-esteem. Participants reported experiencing pleasure and a sense of self-reward when purchasing the brand, a finding consistent with prior masstige consumption research (Goyal, 2021).

In terms of individual value, purchasing the hair care brand was related with self-expression and self-reward. Participants described the brand as a means of personal gratification that also simplified everyday routines. Using the brand contributed to participants' perceptions of being well-groomed and confident, reinforcing individual value through self-expression and personal reward. The following quotes show these points:

*"I'm not paying for a hairdresser; I'm taking on the role of hairdresser myself." (P6, 26); "The ease of use makes my life easier." (P4, 23); "Appearing as someone who takes extra care of their hair makes me feel good." "The brand represents a well-groomed woman. I feel well-groomed." (P10, 26); "I feel cool when I use the product." (P1, 24); "The brand is not easily accessible, because of the brand's price. But I worked hard to buy it, and I'm glad I did." (P3, 25).*

### 4.3 Social Value

Social value refers to the symbolic and conspicuous benefits derived from a product or service, indicating belonging to current and targeted social groups, and increased status (Shukla, 2012). For consumers, luxury products symbolize economic well-being, and they demonstrate their personal identity by purchasing them (Roux et al., 2017). At the same time, luxury products are considered a consequence of consumers' seeking

status-based social approval and experiencing prestige (Tsai, 2005; Bharti et al., 2022). The consumption of conspicuous and status benefits contributes to an increase in social value (Kumar & Srivastava, 2022). Through conspicuous consumption, consumers demonstrate to others that they are successful and wealthy, possessing social status, through the products they consume (Bharti et al., 2022). At the same time, consumers want to be associated with a specific customer group (Shukla, 2012) and to shape their social image. In this context, social value is expressed as conspicuous consumption (Hennigs et al., 2013; Sharma & Kushwah, 2025).

As for social value, participants have emphasized that owning hair care-branded products provides them with social prestige. Some participants have noted that after using the product, being noticed by their social environment, such as friends, and the praise from others creates a positive effect of social approval for them. This way, conspicuous value is also generated.

They expressed sentiments like, *"If someone likes my hair, I say I have a hair care brand. If you can afford it, get it..."*(P8, 26); *"When I style my hair with hair care brand, my friends ask about it, and I like it"* (P5, 22); *"My friends who come to my house want to try it, which makes me feel good socially."*(P6, 26)

Participants have indicated that the brand can be purchased by the middle and upper-income groups, thus suggesting that the ability to purchase the brand reinforces a certain social group affiliation and symbolizes economic status. These statements are illustrated as follows:

*"The brand gains popularity among my friends."*(P5, 23); *"It's important for me that the brand is highly approved within my group of friends."*(P1, 24); *"It gives the impression of being someone who uses innovative and advanced technology."*(P10, 26); *"It's perceived as an exciting status symbol."*(P8, 26).

Participants frequently mentioned influencer-generated content on social media in their purchase decisions, underscoring its role in shaping perceptions of social value. They have also noted that recommendations from close environment such as friends and family are effective in purchasing decisions. Participants have mentioned that the social approval seeking for the brand's purchase means that if more people like the brand, it suggests a greater level of appreciation for it. Participants expressed their opinions with some statements. *"Social media influencers really influence me. I saw the ad, it caught my attention, I watched it, and I bought it."* (P4, 23); *"Influencer videos and opinions really influence me."* (P3, 25).

Participants have particularly pointed out that owning hair care brands is perceived as a status indicator of conspicuous value. They noted that popular culture has a significant impact on purchasing behaviour, and the brand's popularity among friends in their close environment's influences purchasing behaviour. They expressed views like, *"Everyone is buying it, so I should buy it too"* (P2, 21); *"I saw it with others and couldn't resist buying it"* (P4, 23).

#### **4.4 Emotional Value**

In terms of emotional value, consumers do not purchase products not only for their tangible functional benefits, but also for intangible emotional satisfaction or pleasure (Dubois & Laurent, 1994; Akarsu et al., 2025). Consumers purchase luxury brands with emotions such as joy, pleasure, excitement, and entertainment (Yoo & Park, 2016; Indrawati et al., 2022). Prior studies have related with emotional value with feelings of uniqueness and indulgence in consumption experiences (Kassie & Bang, 2022).

In the present study, the use of the hair care brand was frequently related with positive emotional states, such as feelings of happiness and calmness. Some participants' evidence illustrated with the following quotes:

*"By purchasing this product, I pampered myself and felt happy."* (P7, 24); *"When I use this product, I feel happy and peaceful."* (P5, 22); *"Buying a product that I couldn't initially reach later gives me a sense of satisfaction"* (P7, 24); *"It makes me so happy when people around me tell me that it's obvious you use that brand."*(P3, 25); *"I feel more well-groomed."* (P10, 26)

#### **4.5 Functional Value**

Functional value consists of the characteristics related to a product or service's performance, durability, and quality, expressed in functional or physical attributes (Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Consumers expect multifaceted benefits, such as superior quality, durability, sophistication, performance, and rarity, from luxury products (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Therefore, consumers are willing to pay more for these products as they provide greater status (Kumar et al., 2020). For masstige products, consumers perceive the quality of products as high, which lead them to perceive the functionality as high as well (Das et al., 2022). Thus, functional attributes of a masstige product may affect consumer purchase intention (Chatterjee et al., 2023).

In the present study, functional value emerged as a dominant factor based on participants' brand evaluations, with frequent mentions of the product's fast-drying feature. Participants consistently emphasized the product's practical benefits, particularly its fast-drying feature. Ease of use and time efficiency were frequently associated with perceptions of functional value. Functional value was also linked to the effectiveness of after-sales service, particularly the prompt resolution of product-related issues. Product usability was closely associated with higher satisfaction through perceptions of reliability and convenience. However, some participants have emphasized that the large number of product attachments may make it difficult for some consumers to use the products, and that training is necessary for their use. Some participants have stated that this brand protects hair health through heat control, as it does not damage hair as much as other brands or may even cause no damage at all.

From an aesthetic perspective, participants have indicated that the products are pleasing, to the eye particularly noting that the stylish carrying case makes the brand valuable and attractive, creating a perception of luxury. However, some participants reported that the weight and corded nature of the products, along with the loud operation and the size of the adapter, could negatively affect perceptions of functional value. Additionally, consumers using the product experienced issues maintaining their hair for long periods without damage, emphasizing that to achieve lasting results, it needs to be supported with other products; thus, their performance expectations could be higher. Some examples from participants' explanation are as follows: *"Purchasing this brand provides a sense of security."* (P5, 22)

#### **4.6 Experiential Value**

Experiential value has been associated with the *consumer's* feelings and emotions related to hedonic benefits (Smith & Colgate, 2007). Consumers, particularly those who perceive luxury brands as rare and unique, are willing to pay high prices (Berthon et al., 2009). It is important to note that consumers who enjoy the brand's exclusivity satisfy their internal self (Jain, 2020). Regarding experiential value, participants noted that the brand's products enable them to style their hair at home without visiting a hairdresser. This was reflected in participants' statements, such as: "I enjoy taking on the role of a hairdresser at home." (P6, 26). Consumers can use their creativity and skills while doing their hair. This self-directed use of the product contributes to a sense of personal involvement and reinforces consumers' pride and brand-related attachment. In addition, as an experiential value personalized packaging of the

product was linked with the development of emotional bonds, thereby contributing to the brand's symbolic value.

#### **4.7 Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention refers to consumers' willingness to engage in future purchasing behavior. In addition, the concept is an important indicator in markets where multiple value dimensions coexist for a product (Jain, 2020; Das et al., 2022). Functional performance, price, and symbolic value together influence consumer purchase decisions in the masstige context (Vuong & Giao, 2020). However, empirical evidence on how these factors operate remains limited. Building on this context, it is important to recognize that while established value dimensions provide important background, empirical evidence on how consumption value dimensions influence purchase intention within masstige branding remains limited (Kumar et al., 2020). Addressing this gap, experiential value for participants in our study highlighted interactive in-store experiences as an important influence on their purchase decisions. In addition, limited physical availability of a product in certain locations was identified as a factor constraining consumers' purchase intention. Across interviews, trust in the brand also emerged as a key factor supporting intentions to purchase additional products in the future.

### **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

In this study, we extend our knowledge of perceived consumption value of masstige branded products on the purchase intentions among Generation Z women by qualitative approach. Unlike previous studies, our research focuses on specific sample and specific product. The present findings regarding masstige consumption practices show that functional, social, and experiential values shape the purchase intentions of Generation Z women toward hair care brands. They mentioned the products functional values such as ease of use, quick drying, and effective heat control. Some participants noted that the products offered. They are willing to pay higher prices for masstige brands because they perceive them as more valuable. Functional value affects their purchase intentions with a focus on their quality sensitivity. Similarly, the functional value of the present finding appears to be in harmony with the findings of Wiedmann et al. (2009), Shukla (2012), Zhang & Zhao (2019), and Purohit & Radia (2022). Generation Z purchased the masstige branded product for its functional value, while also symbolic and social values influenced their perceptions and behaviors. This finding is also supported by Anning-Dorson & Tackie (2025). Women purchased the masstige brand to save them money and time/energy. In particular, the brand's experiential value enabled them to style their hair at home as they wished, avoiding visits to a hairdresser. Since previous research (Gilal et al., 2022) has found that aesthetic value plays a significant role in shaping value perceptions, the present study also provides potential insights into visually appealing aesthetics, particularly in terms of color and packaging.

While some participants mention that the packaging of the products may positively affect their perception of luxury, others state that examining the weight, long cord design, and noise produced negatively affects the product's enjoyable attributes. The positive effect of hedonic value and purchase intention supports the findings of Kassie & Bang (2022). Furthermore, participants expressed the need for an additional hair product (e.g., spray or cream) to maintain the long-term effectiveness of the product and were disappointed that these complementary products were not available on the market. The results of this study indicate that experiential and social values are also effective in predicting masstige brand purchase intention, consistent with other studies in the literature (Wang & Qiao, 2020). This is somewhat in harmony with Burhanudin's (2024) findings, which reveal that consumers' desire for self-indulgence influences their intention to purchase mass-market branded products. According to Burhanudin's (2024) research, consumers' desire for self-indulgence influences their purchase intention towards masstige branded products. As regards brand dimensions, participants perceive technologically innovative brands, and features such as a variety of color

options reinforce this perception. The current study's findings are in line with those of Kapoor et al. (2025). Owning the brand's products makes them feel more technologically conscious and innovative and improves their self-image. However, research shows that, for the broader concept of masstige brand consumption, value is about gaining authenticity and status. The current study's findings also emphasize the same relationship among branding, a well-developed identity, and social recognition (Anning-Dorson & Tackie, 2025). Further, participants stated that having a masstige brand of hair care products gave them with social prestige and approval. In this way, masstige brands create social value for them. Thus, participants preferred masstige brands for social prestige, status, and self-expression. They emphasized that by offering superior quality at an affordable price, these specialities increase the perceived value of the brand (Purohit & Radia, 2022; Kapoor et al., 2025; Shah & Shah, 2025). In conclusion, participants perceive the brand as a status symbol by popular culture and the social environment which affect their purchasing decisions.

The study provides a contextual understanding of social value through a masstige brand among users in Generation Z. First, participants reported being happy while using this product. This finding is similar to that of previous research by Kumar et al. (2021) and Roy et al. (2025). Second, participants stated that the brand's affordability was a status symbol and increased social group cohesion. Some women reported that sharing their experiences with close friends and giving them the opportunity to try the product increased their social satisfaction. Third, when the present findings in respect of social value consumers enjoy a pleasant experience by freely styling their hair using their own creativity. For this reason, personalizing a product strengthens consumers' emotional connection with the brand, contributing to its social value.

Masstige product and aesthetic experience, and the present finding supports the previous findings (Alić et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022; Blut et al., 2023). Experiential value strengthens emotional attachment and brand loyalty. The experiential value of a masstige product in the existing literature is mostly reflected in its influence on purchasing decisions (Hennigs et al., 2013). Generation Z prioritizes masstige brands to express their personal style and gain a sense of exclusivity, which closely resembles the findings of Bae & Jo (2024) argue that the masstige brands are becoming an important option for consumers, offering practicality and prestige. Similarly, masstige brands emphasize self-expression and identity formation; the present findings are in harmony with those of Das et al. (2022), Shin et al. (2022), and Roy et al. (2025). The finding is in line with previous work that consumers derive self-focused satisfaction and psychological well-being from masstige brands that align with individual values, fostering personal empowerment and authenticity (Choo et al., 2012; Hennigs et al., 2013). In the future, most women indicated that they might purchase hair products or new products in other categories from masstige brands.

The findings of this study have significant academic and managerial implications in order to develop marketing strategies for masstige brands. According to the economic and commercial implications, masstige brands should prioritize and emphasize experiential and functional value to increase their relations with Generation Z. Masstige brands can contribute to the expansion of the retail sector through increasing consumer spending through enhanced practicality and visual appeal. Brands should prioritize digital marketing strategies by increasing collaborations with influencers, due to the influence of social media on Generation Z's consumption of masstige products. Masstige brands emphasize these values will increase their market share as expands of market. Social media videos of influencers affected purchase decisions of masstige brand and increased the brand's social value. This finding is consistent with Srivastava & Sinha (2025).

This study's theoretical contribution to TCV is its extension to the field of masstige branding. The study concludes that Generation Z women feel they are getting value for their money on masstige brands, and that quality is more important than price, thus adding a financial value perception to TCV. Therefore,

Generation Z women want to buy masstige brands not so much for status, but for functional, individual, and experiential value. In this context, the research found that consumers in the accessible luxury brand sector also have expectations beyond practical benefits, such as emotional satisfaction, self-expression, and authenticity. In this way, it gives a new meaning to accessible luxury, connecting marketing and consumer psychology.

At the micro (firm) level, as highlighted in this study, the increasing market share of brands producing mass-market products has positive economic effects on employment and growth. When functional value plays a dominant role in consumers' intentions to purchase masstige brand, producers should primarily invest in enhancing the brand's core product (e.g., fast drying, heat control, ergonomic design) quality. Brands need to connect with consumers emotionally through messages that promote comfort, higher living standards, and status. Consumers choose masstige branded products to gain a sense of uniqueness and differentiate their personal identity (Kassie & Bang, 2022; Roy et al., 2025). Since these products offer this social value, masstige brand manufacturers are encouraged to integrate personalization features into their products. In this way, the perceived exclusivity of masstige brands can be increased. The perception of exclusivity can create a compelling reason for consumer preference. Products and accessories can be personalized according to consumers' hair type, frequency of use, and individual characteristics.

The need for uniqueness and trust in order to increase brand value. Masstige brands can utilize influencer marketing, share content highlighting the brand's contributions to customers' lives, and explain the benefits of product use in their content. This strategy can differentiate themselves by publishing informative product usage videos on their websites to help consumers use the brand more effectively. Marketers can create educational content and visual presentations to increase brand engagement in both physical and online stores. Brand loyalty can be increased by creating exclusive content, events, and opportunities for online brand communities. Experience areas can be established in different cities in order to increase brand accessibility.

In the meso (sector) level, masstige brands achieve profitable growth by creating an accessible image of prestige for consumers through social media content, peer recommendations, and online reviews. There is a need for practices that support transparent and consistent communication in the beauty and haircare sectors during economic downturns times. Retailers can create style bars, training workshops, and demonstration areas where consumers can experience products. Industry guidelines and regulations within the haircare category can develop to increase consumer trust, transparent, honest, and consistent communication in the industry.

Lastly, at the macro level, findings should be interpreted in the context of Generation Z, a rapidly growing and high-expectations demographic in developing economies. Policymakers should regulate marketplace that protect against exaggerated or misleading claims, particularly those targeting young consumers. They should incorporate basic finance and digital literacy education into the curriculum to raise awareness about luxury brands among Generation Z.

## **6. Limitations and Future Research**

The present study contributes to academic literature and practice in general. However, as with other empirical research, there are several limitations readers should be aware of when interpreting the findings. First, this research focused on a specific empirical design with the help of purposive sampling, which consists only of Generation Z consumers, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Thus, this may bias the result. Therefore, future studies should use a random sample to report generalized findings using a longitudinal research design. Second, the present research has focused only on masstige hair care

product consumption. However, other product categories can be considered as a different form of value perception. Still, future studies may focus on similar patterns that emerge in other masstige industries, which will help in comparison. Third, the present research is limited to female participants, which limits insights into possible gender-based differences in masstige consumption. Future researchers may study both genders and should also compare the effects of gender and age across groups. Lastly, the present research adopts a qualitative approach and offers an initial view of how Generation Z consumers interpret masstige value in the hair care context.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest to declare for this publication.

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