

# Can a Victoria's Secret shopping bag make you feel glamorous?

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Certain brands have personalities that can actually change the way some people feel about themselves, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"Why are brands such as Cartier, Harley-Davidson, and Nike so well-liked by consumers? One of the reasons is that they have appealing personalities," write authors Deborah Roedder John and Ji Kyung Park (both University of Minnesota). When consumers use a brand with an appealing personality, does the brand's personality rub off on them? "Absolutely," say the authors. "Using brands with appealing personalities can rub off on the way consumers see themselves, even if the brand is used for only a short time."

The researchers conducted four studies that revealed two types of consumers. In the first study, they asked female shoppers in a local mall to carry a shopping bag for an hour during their shopping trip. Shoppers were allowed to use either a Victoria's Secret shopping bag or a plain pink shopping bag. After an hour, shoppers were asked to rate themselves on a list of personality traits, including traits associated with the Victoria's Secret brand. Shoppers who carried the Victoria's Secret bag perceived themselves as more feminine, glamorous, and good-looking than [shoppers](#) who carried the plain shopping bag.

The researchers discovered the participants had different beliefs about

their personalities. "[Consumers](#) most affected by their experience with Victoria's Secret held certain beliefs about their personalities," the authors write. "They believe their personal qualities are fixed and cannot be improved by their own efforts at self-improvement. Therefore, they look for ways to signal their positive qualities through other means, such as brands." People who were not affected by carrying the Victoria's Secret bag believed that their personal qualities were more flexible and could change for the better by their efforts to improve themselves.

In subsequent studies, the authors found that some people felt more intelligent, and more like leaders when they carried a pen embossed with an MIT logo. In one study, this was the case even after some participants were led to believe they did poorly on a math test.

**More information:** Ji Kyung Park and Deborah Roedder John. "Got to Get You Into My Life: Do Brand Personalities Rub Off on Consumers?" *Journal of Consumer Research*: February 2011.

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