



**MACQUARIE**  
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**Digital envy:  
An investigation of consumer envy on digital  
platforms and its mediating influence on  
behavioural intent**

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**[Inside cover page]**



## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree at any other university or tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text and a list of references given in the bibliography.

This thesis involved research on human subjects, for which I received approval from the Macquarie University Human Ethics Research Committee. The approval reference numbers are: 5201300702, 520101189 and 5201500665.

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# Thesis Abstract

Digital envy is an emotion that has been overlooked in consumer research. As the popularity of social networking sites continues to grow, so does the incidence of envy it fosters. In this era of digital media, the study of envy should not remain neglected. This thesis makes a notable contribution by bridging this gap. The studies presented in this thesis explore the marketing implications of digital envy within the context of Facebook. The research focused on young female Facebook users between the ages of 18 and 25.

Paper 1 is a literature review covering more than a decade of research on online envy. This reveals gaps in the literature highlighting many avenues for research in online envy, some of which are addressed in the subsequent papers. Paper 2 reports on findings from qualitative in-depth interviews. The data revealed that envy is one of the key motivators for young women to act on their desires. Paper 2 also reports on a large-scale online survey which found that approximately 45% of young women experienced digital envy in a given week. Envy was, most commonly, induced by posts relating to a friend's physical attractiveness.

Guided by the findings from Paper 2, a 2 x 2 x 2 between factor experimental design was developed for Paper 3. The experiment exposed users to envy-inducing posts that are commonly found on Facebook to test their effects on purchase intent. It manipulated two levels of envy (benign and malicious), two levels of brand familiarity (known and unknown) and two product categories (yoga pants and luxury watch). As hypothesised, the benign envy condition produced more positive brand evaluations. Results also show that the unknown brand and body-related product (i.e. yoga pants) are more influenced by the effects of envy. Causal modelling tested the intervening variables of 'attitude towards the brand owner', 'brand attitude' and 'extent of envy towards the brand owner'. It found that 'attitude towards the brand owner' is the key mechanism behind positive brand perceptions. The final chapter of this thesis provides an integrative summary of the work described in each paper.



Chapters 1-5 of this thesis have been removed due to copyright reasons

Appendix A-C of this thesis have been removed as they may contain sensitive/confidential contents