

Revisiting celebrity contagion and the value of objects: Replication and extensions Registered Report of Newman et al. (2011)

1. Summary

This revised Stage 1 Registered Report presents a well-considered replication and extension of Newman et al. (2011), aiming to clarify the psychological mechanism of contagion in valuing celebrity possessions. I commend the authors for their thoughtful and transparent revisions in response to prior feedback. The manuscript now presents a tighter, more theoretically grounded design, with clearer hypotheses and an articulated analysis plan. I believe it is close to being ready for in-principle acceptance.

My remaining comments are offered to further sharpen the conceptual and methodological clarity of the manuscript, especially in terms of theoretical scope, statistical transparency, and interpretive precision.

2. Comments

I provide detailed comments below aimed at improving the paper, with relative importance indicated by the 0-3 stars (***). I use a three-star rating for points that are essential to resolve before in-principle acceptance, two stars for issues that I believe should be clarified or revised to enhance the manuscript's clarity and rigor, and one star for suggestions that are more interpretive or stylistic in nature and offered at the editor and/or authors' discretion.

1. Conceptual Overreach in Practical Implications ***

- The paragraph linking contagion to examples such as luxury branding, place-of-origin effects, and dark tourism overextends the theoretical construct. While these are interesting domains, they likely also reflect distinct mechanisms—such as authenticity, symbolic association, or identity signaling—rather than contagion as defined in this study (i.e., essence transfer via physical or imagined contact). I recommend clarifying how these examples are connected to the specific contagion mechanism being tested, or alternatively finding other examples that are more clearly linked to the construct under study.

2. Circularity of Market Demand Explanation **

- The manuscript currently describes the market demand explanation as circular—suggesting that people are willing to pay more simply because others are expected to pay more. While I see the point being raised, I'd suggest rethinking the use of the term “circular” here. From a behavioral economics perspective, second-order beliefs (“I believe others will value this highly”) are often central to valuation—especially in contexts like collectibles, fashion, or luxury goods. These beliefs don't need an exogenous “first cause” to be meaningful, nor are they inherently circular. They're part of how markets function, particularly in socially constructed value settings.
- If the concern is about what triggers the *initial* valuation spiral, that's a valid theoretical point—but it's more about the origins of demand or belief cascades, rather than circular logic. You might consider reframing this as a limitation of explanation depth (i.e., it stops at prediction rather than causal understanding), rather than logical inconsistency.
- Clarifying this would strengthen your theoretical framing and help avoid unintentionally undermining a plausible and widely accepted valuation mechanism.

3. Ambiguity Around Correction for Multiple Comparisons **

- It's great to see the use of Holm correction for post-hoc comparisons and a stricter alpha level for certain exploratory or follow-up analyses. These steps show a clear effort to reduce the risk of false positives. That said, from a reader's perspective—particularly in the context of a Registered Report—it's still not entirely transparent how many statistical tests are planned overall and how the correction procedures map onto the full set of analyses.
- In particular, it would be helpful to distinguish between the total number of confirmatory tests (e.g., hypothesis-driven tests across multiple DVs and experiments) and exploratory ones, and to clarify:
 - Which specific tests are included under Holm correction,
 - Whether corrections are applied within DVs or across the full set of tests,
 - And which tests (if any) are excluded from adjustment.
- I raise this not because I believe your approach is flawed—it's thoughtful and aligned with best practices—but because it would strengthen inferential transparency. Without this summary, readers may struggle to assess the evidential weight of any significant results, especially if multiple related tests are presented together. A brief table or paragraph outlining this structure would really help clarify how to interpret results at Stage 2.

4. Mixed Use of 90% and 95% Confidence Intervals **

- I noticed both 90% and 95% confidence intervals reported throughout, but it's not entirely clear why. Is this tied to preregistered thresholds, directional hypotheses, or exploratory framing? A brief clarification would help the reader interpret these intervals appropriately.

5. Language: “Magical Thinking” **

- While this term has precedent in the literature, it can come across as dismissive or culturally loaded, even though it is a term used in the literature. Something like “intuitive belief” or “essentialist reasoning” might better capture the construct without unintended implications.

6. Language: “Contaminate” and “Infected” **

- Describing objects as “contaminated” or “infected” by cultural or symbolic sources might carry unintended negative connotations. I'd suggest using more neutral terms like “symbolic transfer” or “association,” especially when referring to music, art, or identity-linked objects. Again, the terms likely originate within the literature, but one can take extra care with their modern day usage.

7. Consider Outlining Planned Robustness or Sensitivity Checks *

- It might be useful to note whether you plan to run any basic robustness checks—like excluding borderline manipulation check failures—especially in the case of ambiguous results. This isn't essential, but could strengthen the transparency of your Stage 2 plan. As is, I *think* the authors plan on using all data as collected. There's pros and cons here that I'd recommend thinking over once more.

8. Provide a Brief Overview of Elicited Celebrities and Non-Celebrities *

- Since the figures are self-elicited, it could be helpful to provide a brief summary of who participants tend to name—just thematically or by category. This would help readers assess generalizability without needing raw data. An appendix table would suffice.

9. Acknowledge Interplay Between Market Beliefs and Personal Valuation *

- In the theoretical setup, personal valuation and perceived market demand are presented as distinct mechanisms. That distinction is useful for experimental clarity, but in practice—especially in consumer contexts—these two often inform each other. People’s willingness to pay may be shaped by what they believe others will value, and vice versa.
- This doesn’t undermine your theoretical categorization, but it may be helpful to briefly acknowledge this interplay, either in the theory section (to show conceptual nuance) or in the discussion. Doing so would add realism to the interpretation and help clarify why the mechanisms might not produce wholly divergent outcomes.

10. Consider Exploratory Heterogeneity Analyses in Stage 2 *

- Given the self-elicited figures, you might find it informative to explore whether effects vary by familiarity, moral alignment, or perceived celebrity status. Clearly labeling this as exploratory in Stage 2 would make such analyses a nice bonus without affecting the core design.