



Green with Envy at Your Kid:
The Effects of Two Different Types of Envy on Purchase Intention

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Keyword: benign envy, malicious envy, economic capital, cultural capital

Background and Purpose: The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. This proverb shows that people always have desires for others property. Envy is an emotion that “arises when a person lacks another’s superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it”(Parrott & Smith, 1993, p. 906). Envy has been disregarded since it considers as negative emotion thought to be malicious and destructive(Smith & Kim, 2007). In recent studies envy has been classified into two types: benign envy and malicious envy. Benign envy emphasizes the brighter side of envy, which is related to moving-up motivation, while malicious envy represents the destructive side of envy, which motivates people to pull down(Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters, 2009). Envy has potential in understanding motivation of consumer; however, limited attention has been given. Thus, people could decide not to buy products turning green with envy, or decide to buy products with admiring envy. Since upward social comparison prevails throughout Korean culture, envy could be more powerful drive in understanding consumer behavior(Cha, 2009). This phenomenon can be more prominent in Korean mothers who are eager to raise their children to be the best. The purpose of this study is to address research gap by exploring how envy affects purchase intention among mom through experimental design. The following research questions guided the study: What is different between benign envy and malicious envy? How different in envy influence depending on type of products?

Method: In three studies we investigated how envy affects purchase intention depending on types of envy, types of products, and regulatory focus. Participants were recruited by research company, total one hundred and twenty eight moms with 5-7 year old kids were randomized in each study. Envy is manipulated into two types depending on the deservingness of the situation. Participants were given a short scenario which described a friend who has more capital for raising her children. In specific, capital is manipulated into economic and cultural capital. In line with previous research(Cha, 2009; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters, 2009), economic capital is defined with reference to economic resources, such as luxury clothing and cultural capital is with cultural sophistication such as going art exhibition, watching musical, and classical music concerts. According to condition, scenario was given. In study 1, we examine differences in benign envy and malicious envy in purchasing economic capital related products. In study 2, we examine differences in in benign envy and malicious envy in purchasing cultural capital related products. The experiments were conducted in two stages. Firstly, participants were asked to rate how much they would be willing to buy the given products. In Second phase, participants were manipulated to experience either benign envy or malicious envy and were asked to rate purchase intention in buying the given products.

Results: In study 1, sixty six moms took part in experiments in exchange for prescribed money. Participants were randomly assigned to either benign envy condition (n = 32) or malicious envy (n = 34). In purchasing economic capital related products, benign envy condition (M=2.57, SD=1.36) reported greater desire for purchasing products than malicious envy condition (M=2.35, SD=1.21) (F=5.392, p<.05).

In study 2, sixty two moms took part in experiments in exchange for prescribed money. Participants were randomly assigned to either benign envy condition (n = 32) or malicious envy (n = 30). In purchasing cultural capital related products, benign envy condition (M=4.00, SD=0.78) reported greater desire for purchasing products than malicious envy condition (M=3.98, SD=1.08) (F=.235, n.s).

Discussion and Implication: The findings confirm that difference depending on type of envy, and benign envy play an important role for Koreans in purchase intention, which is supported by previous studies (Goo, Sohn, and Rim, 2013; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters, 2009). However, envy has no influence in purchasing cultural capital related products. In this study, clothing is selected as an item representing economic capital, but it has a limit to overlook the domestic characteristic that children's clothing selection does not simply represent economic capital. In Korea, economic capital is highly correlated with cultural capital, especially in fashion (Choi & Jin, 2007), which is used as a strategy of cultural capital, and the style and sense of advanced taste are likely to be interpreted as part of cultural capital. Therefore, in future research, it is necessary to consider other stimuli to represent economic capital and cultural capital. Furthermore, this article leaves out personal differences. If consumer is approach oriented, they would try to achieve products more than who are avoidance oriented. Thus, further studies with personal differences such as regulatory focus approach are necessary to understand better about envy influence.

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