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# A value co-creation model in brand tribes: the effect of luxury cruise consumers' power perception

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**Abstract** Given that power is often considered a psychological construct, it is important to examine whether and how group processes related to brand tribalism promote consumer power, and investigate the effects of power on consumers' value-co-creation behaviors in the luxury cruise industry. To test a conceptual model that explores these complementary phenomena, structural equation modeling analyses are performed with data gleaned from luxury cruise passengers. Analysis results found that brand tribalism positively affects the formation of perceived power among luxury cruise passengers. In addition, luxury cruise passengers' engagement in activities that co-create value is largely dependent on their power perception. This study contributes to the theoretical development of luxury consumer behavior research, and managerial implications are also discussed based on the findings.

**Keywords** Brand tribalism · Power perception · Value co-creation · Cruise industry

## 1 Introduction

A luxury cruise is a trip on a cruise-liner that costs more than \$350 per day and serves primarily upper-class travelers (Hyun and Han 2015). The luxury cruise sector has drawn a great deal of attention from both researchers and marketers because of its growth and substantial impact on the economies of cities. To illustrate

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the rapid growth of the luxury cruise industry, the data from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) revealed that the number of cruise passengers increased from approximately 17.8 million in 2010 to 24.2 million in 2016 (CLIA 2016). The total revenue of the cruise industry worldwide was predicted to reach 57 billion U.S. dollars by 2027, growing from 35.5 billion U.S. in 2016 (Statista 2018).

Many travelers take luxury cruises because they believe that by doing so, they can accrue status, prestige, and power (Hung and Petrick 2011; Hwang and Han 2014). Power is a critical concept in all things, including consumer behavior in luxury service industry (Wu et al. 2016). Previous studies have demonstrated that consumer power appears to manifest primarily in settings in which there occurs substantial personal contact (Menon and Bansal 2007). Moreover, value co-creation revolves around interactions between service provider and customer, as well as among customers (Lin et al. 2017; Mathis et al. 2016). During interactions, parties may feel a sense of being influential and/or exerting power over one another in the process of value co-creation. In other words, power perception is intrinsically embedded in interactional relationships between consumers and companies in which consumers are active creators of value. Although value co-creation has become a critical process in social marketplaces, questions regarding the activation and use of consumer power during the value co-creation process remain unanswered.

Consistent with the recent literature (e.g., Rucker et al. 2012), for the purposes of this paper, it is assumed that power is an individual's psychological state that results from consumption experiences. This perspective dictates that consumption environments activate individual power; so, group consumption experiences (including those related to brand tribalism) have the potential to trigger the onset and application of power. Brand tribalism refers to a phenomenon in which a community of individuals forms based on mutual emotional bonds to a brand (Loureiro and Kaufmann 2016). These consumer collectives are important for firms because they are willing to engage in value co-creation activities (Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). Despite the proliferation of studies on consumer collectives and value co-creation, little is known about the role of consumers' perceived power in value co-creation in brand tribes. Thus, this paper explores whether group processes associated with brand tribalism give rise to consumer power and determines how consumers' perceived power positively affects their value-creation behaviors in the luxury cruise industry.

Researching power in brand tribalism with respect to the service industry is important both theoretically and managerially. Many scholars have indicated that interaction and communication are the key determinants of customer satisfaction (e.g., Ahn et al. 2016a, b; Huang and Hsu 2010; Hyun and Kim 2014; Kim and Kim 2017; Kim et al. 2017). During these interactions, power perception can arise from the social processes that play out via their relationships with other parties (Huang and Hsu, 2010; Rucker et al. 2012). Moreover, tribal consumption revolves around interactive social processes in the relationship between firms and consumers, as well as among consumers (Taute and Sierra 2014). More importantly, it has been shown that consumer tribes empower customers and actively participate in the value-creation process (Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). Thus, power is an essential feature for consumer tribes. Furthermore, power is of significant concern for service

managers, as an understanding of power allows them to satisfy customers' needs of affiliation and power (Hung and Petrick 2011; Hyun and Han 2015).

Despite the aforementioned importance, no reported research has investigated the key antecedents and outcomes associated with consumer power perceived by members loyal to luxury brands. Specifically, in this study, the social dynamics of brand tribalism and their influence on power as a psychological state of consumers are explored. Further, the manner in which power influences consumers' value co-creation behaviors in brand tribes is investigated. Ultimately, this study will serve as a basis for understanding the power dynamics of consumer behaviors in luxury business. To achieve these research objectives, we have organized the article in a series of interrelated sections. First, we reviewed the extant literature on brand tribalism, power, and value co-creation and developed a new scale for measuring the construct of power in a commercial context. Second, we proposed and tested several hypotheses to evaluate the relationships between brand tribalism, power, and behaviors related to value co-creation. Finally, theoretical and managerial implications were derived from our analyses to bridge the divide between academics and practice. Ultimately, this study will serve as a basis for understanding the power dynamics of consumer behaviors and reveal new avenues of research in the domain of tourism and hospitality service.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Brand tribalism

Brand tribalism is defined as a phenomenon whereby a subculture of consumers forms on the basis of an emotional bond to a product or a brand (Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). Brand tribes have characteristics of being playful and transient, which means that these consumer collectives emerge and disappear as combinations of people and resources change. Whereas brand tribes are loose, informal collectives, brand communities are more formal and structured (Taute and Sierra 2014). It should be noted that brand tribalism is an important concept for service firms, because brand tribe is a powerful means of establishing long-term relationships between businesses and consumers (Loureiro and Kaufmann 2016). These consumer collectives represent a source of loyal customers and enthusiastic advocates that drive firm innovation (Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). More importantly, individuals within tribal networks are considered to be active co-creators of value because they produce or customize market offerings (Loureiro and Kaufmann 2016). Furthermore, the emphasis has been changed from the physical characters of goods to the values or experiences which are perceived by customers (Huang et al. 2018). In other words, consumer tribalism in the form of collective consumption is a rich source of value creation for both consumers and the businesses they patronize.

## 2.2 Luxury cruises as tribal communities

Luxury cruise brands have characteristics that differentiate them from nonluxury brands. For example, luxury cruise brands provide passengers with a variety of unique and exclusive experiences (Hwang and Han 2014). Luxury cruises are social spaces with distinctive features that signal power and prestige. A strong interest in achieving social value derived from a product's ability to improve one's self-concept motivates status-oriented consumers to pursue opportunities for communicating that status through luxury products (Hyun and Han 2015). The consumption of luxury goods and services is considered a sign of social distinction, making a luxury cruise an appropriate locale for studying domination and power (Hyun and Han 2015). Luxury cruise travel serves as a representative activity for reflecting the lifestyle of this consumer segment. Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean International, Star Cruise, and other brands affiliated with the CLIA are representative examples of the luxury cruise segment.

Many studies have suggested that social interaction on cruises reinforces bonds of friendship (Weaver 2011). Luxury cruise passengers share their experience and passion for a cruise brand, and engage in collective activities associated with the consumption of the luxury cruise experience. Moreover, many scholars have indicated that the consumers of luxury brands are alike in how they seek out luxury brands because of the brands' unique characteristics. Customers with preferences for luxury brands are likely to form sympathetic bonds with other luxury customers (Choo et al. 2012). Luxury cruise passengers expect to socialize with upper-class customers who share a similar social status (Hyun and Han 2015). Further, common-interest travel activities that take place in a communal environment could bring like-minded passengers together. The shared experience of this consumption forms the basis for a common bond between consumers. The prestige associated with luxury cruise brands makes cruise passengers identify themselves with luxury cruise brands and further experience feelings of closeness with each other (Hwang and Han 2014). Given the above, it seems that luxury cruise passengers form a subculture of consumers based on a common emotional bond to a cruise brand. This subculture resembles a brand tribe.

## 2.3 Power

Human beings are contradictory figures that strive to possess unlimited power, but are restricted by external forces such as economics or market forces (Fritsche et al. 2013). The long-recognized effects of power have led scholars to examine it across a number of disciplines. Traditional studies on power can be divided into two categories: studies in which power is treated as an individual-difference variable and studies that treat power as an interpersonal construct that is derived through interaction with others (Rucker et al. 2012). Power can be viewed as a societal-level variable that stems from five distinct asymmetries that underpin relationships (Rucker et al. 2012).

In multiple domains, the meaning of power has been modified over the last decade. As a result of its changing conceptualization, it has become clear that power

may not be only a relational or societal construct, but a psychological construct as well. In general, power is defined as asymmetric control over valued resources, which in turn affords an individual the ability to influence, modify, and control others' outcomes, experiences, or behaviors through the provision and withholding of valued resources or the administration of punishments (Keltner et al. 2003). Recent studies have focused on power as a psychological state, which relates to an individual's internal representations of their power in relation to others in social environments (Tost 2015). In line with recent conceptualizations (Tost 2015), power can be defined as a psychological state where one party feels influential and powerful over other parties in the context of consumption. Power may be described as one's perception of influence that derives from his/her power-related experiences with others (Keltner et al. 2003). For instance, the formation of consumer tribes in a luxury cruise setting can give a customer a temporary sense of feeling powerful.

Researchers from many domains have studied the effects of personal power perception on multiple facets of an individual's behavior (Rucker et al. 2012). Recent studies suggest that consumers' sense of power plays a considerable role in various luxury business settings (Choi and Mattila 2016; Liu and Mattila 2017; Mattila et al. 2016; Wu et al. 2016). Wu et al.'s (2016) research shows how power shapes consumer behaviors when writing travel reviews. Mattila et al. (2016) demonstrates how consumers' sense of power influences their engagement in a restaurant-based donation campaign. Liu and Mattila (2017) found that whereas individuals who perceive themselves to be powerful respond more positively to travel firms' advertising that emphasizes uniqueness, powerless individuals react more favorably to advertising that highlights belongingness. Moreover, customers with a low personal sense of power tend to approach other customers when the latter are dressed formally (Choi and Mattila 2016). These prior studies collectively support the notion that the feeling of power considerably influences consumer behavior in luxury business settings.

#### **2.4 Customer citizenship behaviors as value co-creation**

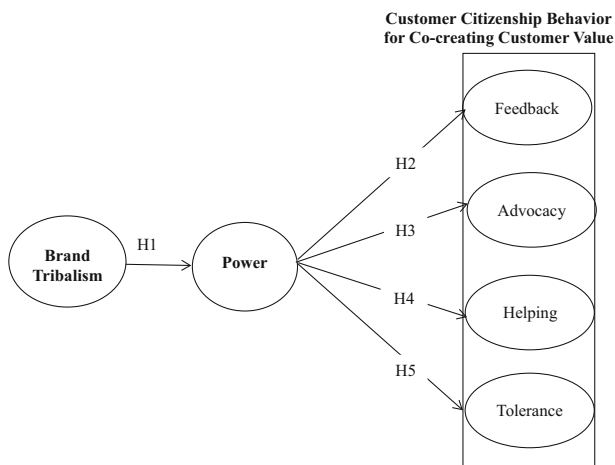
Value co-creation refers to a collaborative process in which consumers and firms improve in some respects (Anh and Thuy 2017). Service-dominant logic scholars argue that value arises from collaborative interactions between service providers and consumers (Vargo and Lusch 2004). This perspective posits that frequent interactions, open communication, and ongoing dialog are the drivers of value co-creation (Prebensen and Xie 2017). Yi and Gong (2013) differentiated participation behavior, including information seeking, information sharing, responsible behavior, and personal interaction, from customer citizenship behavior, including feedback, advocacy, helping, and tolerance. This research focused on examining the relationship between power and citizenship behavior, rather than participative behaviors, for following reasons. While participative behaviors are necessary for appropriate service delivery, citizenship behaviors are extra-role activities as active engagement of customers (Yi and Gong 2013). It is widely acknowledged that power increases action orientation (Rucker et al. 2012). In this vein, customers' extra performance may be closely associated with a sense of power. Citizenship

behaviors in connection with power is worthy of examination in detail due to customers' extra-role performance associated with power directly leads to creating superior value for firms. Therefore, customer citizenship behaviors can be categorized as value co-creation. For example, customer citizenship behaviors increase the reciprocal value for both consumers and firms (Yi and Gong 2013). In other words, advocacy, feedback, helping behaviors, and tolerance are valuable for firms because they contribute to the firms' functions and provide them with competitive advantages (Yi and Gong 2013). These types of customer citizenship behaviors are also beneficial for consumers because sharing knowledge and exchanging resources provide customers with relationship value and improve their judgments of the benefits related to consumption (Hsiao et al. 2015). Thus, citizenship behaviors add reciprocal value to the service (Ahn et al. 2016a, b) and are therefore conceptualized as value co-creation (Hsiao et al. 2015; Jung and Yoo 2017). It has been argued that value is an experience-based concept that is derived from the interactions of diverse parties in multiple phases. Customers' value-in-use is specifically influenced by their experiences with employees and the value proposition of hotel companies (O'Casey and Sok 2015). In this vein, prior studies on value co-creation provide support to the notion that interactive experiences are the drivers of value co-creation. Our theoretical framework is graphically represented in Fig. 1.

### 3 Research hypotheses

#### 3.1 Brand tribalism: the antecedents of power

According to Taute and Sierra (2014), brand tribalism is composed of four subdimensions: lineage, social structure, defense of the tribe, and sense of



**Fig. 1** Conceptual model

community. Lineage, the first dimension of brand tribalism, refers to the common bond that tribe members share or the threads that bind tribal segments together (Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). Lineage plays a crucial role in establishing brand loyalty in multiple contexts. For instance, parents may pass preferences for a particular brand on to their children (Taute and Sierra 2014). Common social and communal features create this lineage. Community members often feel strong connections with one another, arguing that they feel they sort of know each other even if they have never met (Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). In the context of luxury consumption, luxury cruise passengers share a passionate appreciation of cruise travel and tend to be loyal to particular cruise brands (Huang and Hsu 2010). In this way, shared experiences on the cruise help to foster psychological bonds and strengthen feelings of lineage among cruise passengers.

In this article, it is argued that by integrating in-group favoritism and group narcissism, lineage can increase or decrease power perception among cruise passengers. Consider, for example, that lineage is closely linked with attraction to those perceived as similar (Brack and Benkenstein 2012). Perceptions of similarity as a basis for liking things not only increase attraction at the individual level, but also in-group favoritism at the group level (Brack and Benkenstein 2012). Moreover, in-group favoritism can lead to an inflated image of one's group based on feelings of superiority and entitlement—a phenomenon known as group narcissism (Lyons et al. 2010). Narcissistic consumers seek self-enhancement (Cisek et al. 2014), tend to purchase prestigious and exclusive products, and positively evaluate scarce products (Lee and Seidle 2012). More importantly, prior studies have provided empirical evidence to support the notion that a collective narcissism associated with self-enhancement may create power perception among consumers with common interests in particular brands (Alexandrov et al. 2013; Hawk et al. 2015). Therefore, lineage is associated with similarity attraction and in-group favoritism, and further induces feelings of power among consumers motivated to self-enhance.

Past research on the cruise tourism sector provides evidence to support this assertion. Perceptions of similarity have been shown to relate to attempts to achieve status (Hyun and Han 2015). This finding is consistent with the social identity perspective, which suggests that people tend to be internalized, socialized, and cooperative with group members that share similar prestigious characteristics (Loureiro and Kaufmann 2016). Moreover, luxury consumers prefer to interact with other customers with whom they identify because they are more likely to feel comfortable with them. These interactions afford passengers the opportunity to enhance their own statuses through affiliation with upper-class customers. In this vein, luxury cruise passengers expect to meet high-class customers while on board (Hyun and Han 2015). Lineage among luxury cruise passengers can result in self-enhancing cognitions, as they perceive themselves as belonging to the upper class. In other words, luxury cruise passengers enjoy greater social status when interacting with other passengers of similar social statuses.

The second dimension of brand tribalism, social structure, refers to members' perceived sense of unity (Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). Social structure is critical for unifying members of consumption collectives and represents the unique

characteristics of these consumer collectives (Badrinarayanan et al. 2014). As explicit indicators of social structure, rules and rituals embedded in the social structures of luxury consumer tribes signify their uniqueness. Tribe members with the capacity to experience luxury cruise brands build their unique social identities by engaging in cruise-specific rituals with other passengers. Rituals associated with luxury cruise brands convey their founding myths, tradition, and history and thereby give its legitimacy to the prestige and power innate to such brands. For instance, splendid galas or other formal celebrations that showcase the brand's distinct identity serve as contexts for grooming rituals and the social structure of brand tribes.

In this study, it is argued that the social structure associated with luxury-specific brand tribes can yield power perception. The acquisition of power via social structures may be explained by the emotional contagion process in which rituals and ceremonies are visible indications of social structure. For instance, dignified rituals at luxury fashion shows reinforce distinct collective identities among show attendants and provide consumers with feelings of uniqueness (Dion and Arnould 2011). Charismatic authority manifests in rituals that shape the social structure of luxury brands. Similarly, luxury customers feel empowered as a function of the prestige they perceive and the treatment they receive through distinguished brand ceremonies (Cervellon and Coudriet 2013). A powerful collective identity is transmitted within and beyond the community through distinctive brand-specific rituals that define the group's social structure. The social structures associated with luxury cruise brand tribes help consumers to differentiate their groups from others, thereby improving their own perceived status and amplifying consumers' power perception. In this way, exclusivity enhances consumer perceptions of their own power.

The third factor associated with power—defense of the tribe—relates to tribe members' tendencies to be emotionally hostile toward competing tribes or opposing brands. When tribe members feel threatened or as though they are competing for resources, they tend to unify in support of the in-group and actively oppose the out-group (Taute and Sierra 2014). This defensive behavior can lead individual consumers to feel an elevated sense of power in the pursuit of self-enhancement (Alexandrov et al. 2013). When personal identity and social identity are fundamentally confounded, individuals consider threats against their social selves as threats to their individual selves (De Hoog 2013) and positively distinguish their in-group by criticizing others (Chang et al. 2013). In the context of brand tribalism, when individuals are confronted with negative information about the brand with which their tribe is associated, they react with defensive behaviors. This defensive reaction is motivated by the consumer's need to restore his/her damaged group-based status (Lisjak et al. 2012). Ultimately, these self-protective processes are geared toward maintaining a favorable conception of one's social self, thereby protecting one's ego and strengthening power (Chang et al. 2013). Tribe members may assume that they can increase their power by defending themselves against negativity aimed at their tribe's brand. This opposition to other brands is an important aspect of reinforcing the strength of their own brand tribes (Taute and Sierra 2014).

Symbolic self-completion theory supports this argument; it dictates that consuming a luxury brand provides customers with a form of psychological armor with which they can deflect negativity and buttress their self-worth (Gao et al. 2009). When a luxury consumer perceives threats against goods relevant to their identity, he/she assumes that their identity itself is under attack, thereby undermining their self-worth (Gao et al. 2009). In response to this threat, the consumer will inevitably engage in defensive behavior (e.g., derogation and discrimination against competing groups) to compensate for the perceived loss of influence. This mechanism for self-protection suggests that defensive behavior is crucial for enhancing power in consumer settings (Sayin and Gürhan-Canli 2015). Research has demonstrated that the polarizing judgments concerning preferred brands (i.e., “My brand is superior to other brands”) is associated with the motive of protecting self and group identity (Marticotte et al. 2016). Self-enhancers that seek to augment their self-worth tend to engage in defensive behaviors (Sivanathan and Pettit 2010). Similarly, members of brand communities make derogatory comments toward out-groups to create a positively differentiated group identity, build group cohesion, and increase group strength because they assume that community status overlaps with personal status (Hickman and Ward 2007). In the luxury cruise context, tribal consumers exposed to critical comments from others concerning the luxury cruise brand are likely to engage in defense behaviors due to admiration of the brand builds collective pride and critical attitudes toward rival brands (Chang et al. 2013; Lisjak et al. 2012). These studies suggest that defensive behavior can restore and increase perceived power and prestige.

The fourth marker of brand tribalism is sense of community, which relates to consumers' ability to coexist peacefully (Taute and Sierra 2014). Tribe members who feel a mutual sense of community also experience a sense of co-ownership (Loureiro and Kaufmann 2016) which allows them to coexist without an established, permanent social structure (Taute and Sierra 2014). The individual's ability to think in terms of “we” instead of “I” opens the door to collective achievements (Fritsche et al. 2013). This sense of community induces members of a community to act in a unified manner through collective bargaining and collective product/brand evaluation, which increases the power of the group and its members (Wang et al. 2013). In this way, pride on the basis of group accomplishments can boost personal pride, and that collective efficacy bolsters personal efficacy (Fritsche et al. 2013). As such, a high degree of collective power is intrinsically related to a high degree of individual power (Wang et al. 2013). These group-based outcomes based on one's sense of “we-ness” then affect an individual's perceptions of his/her own power.

In the luxury cruise sector, passengers who perceive a sense of community build harmonious relationships with other passengers. Huang and Hsu (2010) explained that positive collective experiences between customers tend to result in a strong sense of community among those customers. Members of consumer tribes experience a sense of community, which creates feelings of cohesion with other passengers on themed cruises (Weaver 2011). Further, luxury cruise passengers tend to behave politely to remain consistent with behavior expected of their social status. These behaviors help passengers to obtain and retain status value and make other

cruise passengers feel respected, thereby improving their perceptions of their own status (Hyun and Han 2015). As a result, a consumer's adherence to behaviors consistent with communal harmony and collective norms contributes to the collective's power. As mutual co-ownership of community increases, so does group cohesion, social influence, and social power. As such, it is predicted that a sense of community among members of tribes is causally antecedent to power:

**H1** Brand tribalism among luxury cruise passenger is positively related to perceived power among passengers.

### 3.2 Value co-creation behaviors: the consequences of power

Yi and Gong (2013) argued that value co-creation behaviors can be categorized as one of two types: customer participation behaviors and customer citizenship behaviors. We argue that power derived from consumption predicts four customer citizenship behaviors: the provision of feedback, advocacy, helping, and tolerance. Feedback refers to information (both solicited and unsolicited) that customers provide to employees regarding the firm's performance. Feedback helps the firm to improve services, thereby increasing the firm's likelihood of success in the long term (Yi and Gong 2013). Customers can offer user-oriented insight into the strengths and weakness of goods and services (Yi and Gong 2013). As such, their feedback is an efficient and cost-effective source of information for improving the process through which goods and services are produced. Further, when consumers unite to produce feedback in creative and enjoyable ways, they feel as though they are a valuable part of the firm. In this way, the provision of feedback can produce value for firms and customers alike.

It is likely that consumers who feel powerful during consumption are likely to provide feedback to firms. Empowerment leads consumers to feel a sense of mastery over a good or service and ultimately helps them to provide valuable feedback on products (Huang 2012). Some researchers have similarly adopted a brand governance perspective to reveal the close relationship between power and consumer feedback (e.g., Hatch and Schultz 2010). The provision of feedback via available communicative channels sheds light on power differences between firms and their customers. For instance, members of the LEGO brand community who feel they can affect the company's practices tend to use social media channels to communicate suggestions on how to improve the LEGO brand and the product development process. Given the close association between power and feedback, it is predicted that:

**H2** Perceived power is positively related to feedback in a luxury cruise setting.

Advocacy refers to the tendency for a firm's customers to recommend its products or services (Yi and Gong 2013). Advocacy manifests in conversations between family and friends about the firm's services, and analysts often consider advocacy to be an indicator of consumer loyalty (Angelis et al. 2012). Advocacy creates value for both consumers and firms. By supporting a firm's reputation as trustworthy and reliable, advocacy benefits firms by establishing the financial

performance due to positive word-of-mouth (Yi and Gong 2013). For instance, brand advocates tend to disseminate information about a firm's new products and services, negating the need to incur substantial advertising costs. Moreover, the social nature of advocacy provides consumers with a sense of reliability regarding the information they receive. Consumers typically engage in advocacy for a particular brand when they assume their consumption experience is representative of how people maintain self-image through use of the product (Angelis et al. 2012). In this way, it represents a reliable source of information about a brand's products or services.

Consumers who feel powerful while consuming a brand's product or experiencing its services are likely to advocate for that brand because of the motivation to self-enhance. The human tendency to pursue self-enhancement can induce consumers to speak positively about a brand (Angelis et al. 2012). Moreover, power plays a key role in inducing consumer advocacy (Wu et al. 2016). In the context of luxury consumption, consumers' identification with luxury brands leads those consumers to feel a greater sense of power because imagery associated with luxury brands conveys influential self-image (Hyun and Han 2015; Hwang and Han 2014). Advocacy of luxury brands is a means of communicating high social status, which can further increase social value among other consumers (Hyun and Han 2015). Indeed, luxury cruise passengers are often eager to tell their friends about their hedonic experiences on the cruise (Hwang and Han 2014). In doing so, these passengers expect to improve their self-image by communicating affiliation with the luxury cruise brand (Hyun and Han 2015). Therefore, it is predicted that:

**H3** Perceived power is positively related to advocacy in a luxury cruise setting.

Helping—one form of organizational citizenship behavior—refers to a consumer's willingness to advise or give information to other consumers (Yi and Gong 2013). Consumer helping behaviors can benefit firms because helping among customers resolve inquiries about product usage, thereby decreasing the workload of employees. For instance, members of luxury car clubs assist each other by sharing information that improves the functions of cars (Loureiro and Kaufmann 2016). Many researchers argue that organizational norms and moral obligations influence helping behavior (Laroche et al. 2012). For example, if members of consumer communities believe they have obligations to society, they are more likely to assist others in the use of a brand's products. In this way, helping behaviors often occur in settings in which consumer collectives are salient. Members of brand communities often assist new members of the community by informing them of useful ways to consume the product or service (Laroche et al. 2012). When engaging in helping behaviors, consumers become co-producers of value. Conversely, Rucker et al. (2012) asserted one's perception of having power leads to engagement in behaviors consistent with current goals. Engaging in helping behaviors can hinder an individual's ability to achieve those goals, as there is a clear time cost. Furthermore, the state of high-power produces a psychological distance from others and increases the level of self-importance by making the self more focal (Rucker et al. 2012), resulting in less helping behaviors toward others. To test these theories, Rucker

et al. (2012) conducted an experimental study and found that high-power individuals engage less in behavior for others than low-power individuals.

Building on the contradiction, Hoogervorst et al. (2012) suggested power is not always associated with selfish motivation and behavior. Therefore, it can be argued that consumers' perceived power positively influences helping behavior in a community populated with consumers of luxury brands. Social power facilitates the effects of prosocial orientation on empathy (Cote et al. 2011). Helping relations may reflect power relations because the high-status group provides help to the low status group (Nadler 2002). Furthermore, one's perception of having power leads to engagement in goal-oriented behavior (Hoogervorst et al. 2012) and helping behavior does not necessarily hinder an individual's ability to achieve goals. Finally, it has been shown that perceived power is likely to increase helping behavior because of interpersonal sensitivity (Tost 2015).

**H4** Perceived power is positively related to helping behavior in a luxury cruise setting.

Tolerance refers to customer patience and understanding when a product or service does not meet expectations (Yi and Gong 2013). Service firms often face difficulty meeting customer expectations. Following a service failure, customers typically report feelings of surprise and irritation; it is the customers' tolerance of this frustration that determines their attitudes toward the service failure and, by extension, the brand (Kim and Cho 2014; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2009). Service failures also require patience on the part of customers. Therefore, tolerance represents a client's capacity to remain patient and forgiving when a service fails to meet expectations for a reason attributable to the service provider (Wu 2011). Tolerance for failure is a critical consideration for service firms because it is a negative predictor of switching behavior (Yi and Gong 2013). Further, the quality of consumer interactions with firm personnel positively affects tolerance for failure; the value of the cultivated relationship between a client and firm is of importance to the client, thereby increasing his/her likelihood of remaining loyal to the firm (Wu 2011). In this regard, a customer's tolerance has positive effects on a firm's effectiveness.

Recent scholarship on power indicates that people who perceive themselves to be powerful are not necessarily aggressive or selfish (Karremans and Smith 2010). The positive link between power and tolerance is likely reinforced in committed relationships (Karremans and Smith 2010) such as the relationship between band tribal consumers and service providers. In a similar vein, individuals with an elevated sense of power tend to be social driven and engaged in communal behaviors in socially responsible ways (Tost 2015). Moreover, increased customer power decreases the perceived severity of a service failure and increases a more positive secondary appraisal (Sembada et al. 2016). This positive appraisal helps to lead to more instances of forgiveness in social situations. Thus, power perception is likely to increase generosity to others (Tost 2015) and can be positively associated with conciliatory behaviors (Karremans and Smith 2010). Therefore, it is predicted that:

**H5** Perceived power is positively related to tolerance in a luxury cruise setting.

## 4 Method

### 4.1 Measures

For this empirical study, a questionnaire was designed. Measurement of brand tribalism included two items for lineage, three items for social structure, five items for defensive behavior, and three items for sense of community. All items were adapted from work by Taute and Sierra (2014). To measure power, items used by Schwartz et al. (2012) were used. Schwartz et al. (2012) proposed that the concept of power is rooted in the fundamental motive of self-enhancement. Schultz and Zelezny (2003) argued that as a theoretical construct, self-enhancement was composed of multiple goals, including social power, authority, wealth, success, ambition, and influence. Based on the experts' suggestions, the original items for measuring power were developed. Luxury cruise passengers' value co-creation behaviors (feedback, advocacy, helping, and tolerance) were measured with a total of twelve items (three items for each specific behavior). These items were adapted from Yi and Gong (2013). All items in the questionnaire were measured using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### 4.2 Data collection

To empirically test the conceptual model with distinctive data, online questionnaires were distributed to 833 passengers who have experienced luxury cruises. These questionnaires were distributed through a data-collection research company in the United States called Survey Monkey in January 2015. At the very beginning of the questionnaire, a luxury cruise was described as a "trip that starts at a rate of \$350 per day and serves upper-class consumers" (Hyun and Han 2015). Of the individuals who received the questionnaires, only 739 passengers tried to participate in the survey. Of these, 447 response sets were removed because the participant had not taken a luxury cruise in the past three months. This left a sample of 292. All data were visually inspected, showing that 34 response sets had incomplete or suspect data. As such, data were collected from a final total of 258 respondents. The luxury cruise brands that the participants had taken were Carnival, Royal Caribbean, Princess, Disney, Norwegian, Holland America, Seabourn Cruises, Celebrity, Crystal Cruises, Windstar Cruise, Oceania Cruises, and Star Cruise. Approximately 51% of respondents were male, and 57% were married. Respondents' mean age was 36.4 years old. Roughly 63% of the sample was Caucasian and 51.6% reported to have earned a Bachelor's degree or graduate degree (see Table 1).

**Table 1** Profile of respondents ( $N = 258$ )

Category	Variable	Total frequency	%
Gender	Male	131	50.8
	Female	127	49.2
Income	Under \$25,000	17	6.6
	\$25,000–\$39,999	49	19.0
	\$40,000–\$54,999	25	9.7
	\$55,000–\$69,999	37	14.3
	\$70,000–\$84,999	47	18.2
	\$85,000–\$99,999	29	11.2
	\$100,000–\$149,999	36	14.0
	Over \$150,000	18	7.0
Education level	Less than high school diploma	3	1.2
	High school diploma	37	14.3
	Some college, but no degree	42	16.3
	Associate's degree	43	16.7
	Bachelor's degree	89	34.5
	Graduate degree	44	17.1
Ethnicity	African American	39	15.1
	Asian	16	6.2
	Hispanic	38	14.7
	Caucasian/White	162	62.8
	Other	3	1.2
Marital status	Single	91	35.3
	Married	147	57.0
	Divorced	9	3.5
	Widowed	11	4.3
Age	Mean = 36.4 years old		

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Measurement validity and reliability

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs prior to hypothesis testing. Based on the CFA's results, the measurement model fit the data adequately [ $\chi^2 = 649.340$  ( $df = 329$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.066, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.921, incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.922, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.910]. To confirm convergent validity, it was found that all items loaded on their constructs significantly, ranging from 0.678 to 0.840 ( $p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 2). All average variance extracted (AVE) values of the hypothesized factors were greater than the cutoff value of 0.5 (Hair et al. 2010) (see Table 3). It can therefore be

**Table 2** Confirmatory factor analysis: Items and loadings

Construct	Items	Standardized loading
<i>Brand tribalism</i>		
Lineage	This cruise brand's users have a bond	0.817
	This cruise brand's users are bound together	0.828
Social structure	People who use this cruise brand are unique from those using other brands in the same market	0.790
	I identify uniquely with others who use this cruise brand	0.761
	People who use this cruise brand differentiate themselves from nonusers of this brand	0.767
Defensive behavior	Whenever this cruise brand is put down, I react strongly	0.815
	I often disagree whenever someone prefers a competing brand to this cruise brand	0.801
	I won't use any competitor of this cruise brand	0.697
	This cruise brand fits me personally in a way no other brand will	0.821
Sense of community	Cruisers of this brand "get it"; non-users of this brand don't	0.836
	If other cruisers of this brand planned something, I'd think of it as something "we" would do, rather than something "they" would do	0.811
	I see myself as part of the cruise brand's community	0.732
	When the opportunity presents itself, I refer to other cruisers of this brand as "us" or "we"	0.829
Power	Taking this luxury cruise makes me feel that I have social power over other people	0.727
	Taking this luxury cruise makes me feel that I have more authority than other people	0.725
	Taking this luxury cruise makes me feel more influential over others	0.699
	If I have a useful idea on how to improve service, I would let an employee know	0.788
Feedback	If I receive good service from an employee, I would comment about it	0.725
	If I experience a problem, I would let an employee know about it	0.759
Advocacy	I would say positive things about this cruise trip and the employees to others	0.840
	I would recommend this cruise trip and the employees to others	0.747
	I would encourage friends and relatives to use this cruise brand	0.760
Helping	I would assist other customers if they needed my help	0.788
	I would help other customers if they seemed to have problems	0.808
	I would teach other customers to use the services correctly	0.700
Tolerance	If service is not delivered as expected, I would be willing to put up with it	0.678
	If an employee makes a mistake during service delivery, I would be willing to be patient	0.742
	If I have to wait longer than I normally expect to receive service, I would be willing to adapt	0.704

A total of 258 respondents evaluated each measurement item, and all factor loadings were significant at  $p < 0.001$

concluded that convergent validity was assured. Subsequently, to estimate discriminant validity, each construct's AVE value was compared with the square of the correlation for a pair of factors. The majority of the constructs indicated satisfactory discriminant validity since their AVE values were higher than squared correlations (Fornell and Larcker 1981). To discriminate nonvalidated factors, a Chi-squared test was conducted to identify whether the free model and combined model (which is constructed by merging two factors) were distinct from each other (Ahn et al. 2017; Bagozzi and Yi 1988). The results of the Chi-squared test showed that each factor was significantly different. Hence, discriminant validity was ensured. As shown in Table 3, the composite reliability values of latent constructs indicated higher values than the standard value of 0.7 (Hair et al. 2010). Therefore, substantial reliability was verified.

### 5.2 Hypothesis tests

AMOS was used to analyze the structural model as a means to test the proposed hypotheses. Goodness-of-fit indices showed that the model fit the data ( $\chi^2 = 798.748$  [df = 339,  $p < 0.001$ ], RMSEA = 0.073, CFI = 0.901, IFI = 0.902). Results of the structural relationship test are presented in Table 4 and Fig. 2. First, the effects of luxury cruise passengers' brand tribalism on power was evaluated (H1). The results of test showed that brand tribalism positively influenced luxury cruise passengers' power perception ( $P = 0.815$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. Second, the relationships between luxury cruise passengers' power perception and value co-creation behaviors were evaluated (H2-H5). The path from passengers' power perception to feedback was positive and significant ( $P = 0.972$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting Hypothesis 2. Cruise passengers' perceived power was a significant and positive predictor of advocacy ( $P = 0.915$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting

**Table 3** Descriptive statistics and associated measures

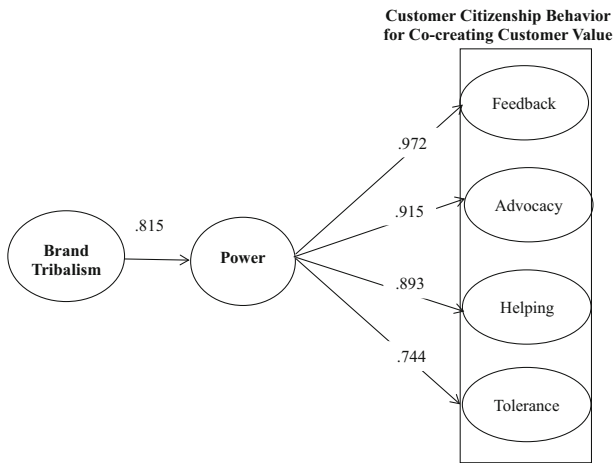
	No. of items	Mean (SD)	AVE	BT	P	F	A	H	T
Brand tribalism	13	3.938 (0.729)	0.630	0.844 <sup>a</sup>	0.819 <sup>b</sup>	0.750	0.740	0.653	0.659
Power	3	4.011 (0.717)	0.514	0.670 <sup>c</sup>	0.811	0.646	0.608	0.526	0.565
Feedback	3	4.197 (0.690)	0.574	0.562	0.417	0.859	0.900	0.933	0.713
Advocacy	3	4.258 (0.679)	0.613	0.547	0.369	0.810	0.883	0.852	0.646
Helping	3	4.161 (0.691)	0.587	0.426	0.276	0.870	0.725	0.864	0.642
Tolerance	3	3.939 (0.752)	0.501	0.434	0.319	0.508	0.417	0.412	0.778
Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2$ (329) = 694.340, $p < 0.001$ , $\chi^2/df = 2.110$ ; CFI = 0.921; IFI = 0.922; TLI = 0.910; RMSEA = 0.066									

AVE average variance extracted, IFI incremental fit index, CFI comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, RMSEA root mean square error of approximation

<sup>a</sup>Composite reliability is indicated along the diagonal; <sup>b</sup>correlations are above the diagonal; <sup>c</sup>squared correlations are below the diagonal

**Table 4** Standardized parameter estimates for the structural model

Hypothesis	Paths	Standardized estimate	<i>t</i> value	Result
H1	Brand tribalism → power	0.815	8.265	Supported
H2	Power → feedback	0.972	8.813	Supported
H3	Power → advocacy	0.915	8.867	Supported
H4	Power → helping	0.893	8.475	Supported
H5	Power → tolerance	0.744	6.892	Supported



**Fig. 2** Results

Hypothesis 3. Further, the path from power to helping behavior was positive ( $P = 0.893, p < 0.01$ ), thereby providing support for Hypothesis 4. Finally, luxury cruise passengers’ power perception had a positive and significant impact on tolerance ( $P = 0.744, p < 0.01$ ), indicating support for Hypothesis 5.

## 6 Discussion and implication

### 6.1 Discussion

As value co-creation becomes more important in social marketplace, owners or managers of service firms are sure to have questions about how to increase customers’ participation in the process of value co-creation. To address these issues, this study identifies whether consumers’ power perception affects the value-creation behaviors in which they engage in the luxury cruise industry. Specifically, the results reveal that customers’ power perception positively influences their brand advocacy, feedback, tolerance, and helping behaviors. Luxury cruise managers can

more effectively increase the likelihood to engage passengers in value co-creation by treating a customer as influential. Moreover, the analyses reveal that brand tribalism exerts significant effect on cruise travelers' power perception. As a fundamental human motivation in the quest to pursue self-enhancement, the concept of power can help us understand the social dynamics and value-added activities of consumer collectives.

## 6.2 Theoretical implications

This study provided two major contributions. First, this study's findings contribute to the theoretical development of the emerging consumer power literature in luxury service industry. This study revealed that power was identified as a psychological state that has the potential to promote value co-creation in the luxury cruise industry. Although power is omnipresent in a wide range of relationship types, including the relationship between producers and consumers, power has rarely been examined in the consumer behavior literature of luxury service industry. Furthermore, the few studies on power within tourism-related disciplines have neglected to investigate the antecedents of power (Choi and Mattila 2016; Liu and Mattila 2017). This study verified that the social dynamic of brand tribalism can serve as a source of luxury cruise travelers' perceived power, thereby extending the emerging literature on consumer power. In addition, the findings of the current study extend recent works by Wu et al. (2016) and Sembada et al. (2016) in which power is closely related to customer value co-creation and engagement.

Second, this study also enriches our understanding of value co-creation research in the luxury cruise consumption environment. Specifically, it was demonstrated that consumers' psychological power derived from consuming a luxury cruise experience predicts four customer citizenship behaviors. That is, in contrast with prior research that has focused on co-creation of experience value in hotel and tourism activities (Liang 2017; Mathis et al. 2016), this study shifted the research focus to examine the psychological determinants of value co-creation in the luxury cruise industry. Furthermore, these results extend the findings of Lindhult et al. (2018) who examine how value can be created in the pursuit of service innovation. In addition, the findings of the current study extend recent works by Lüftenegger et al. (2017) in which value co-creation was identified as a collaborative way of service creation. As such, the current study extends the travelers' behavior literature by shedding light on the relationships between brand tribes, power, and value co-creation in the luxury cruise context.

## 6.3 Practical implications

This study offers a number of practical implications as well (see "Appendix"). First, the successful marketing of a luxury cruise requires that managers make use of consumer lineage mapping which is likely to increase consumer power perception. For instance, to give customers the sense of being influential, a firm could emphasize co-experience by holding public and private events that include exhibitions, dinner parties, memorial album launches, premieres, and limited

edition releases. It may also be useful to enhance social links (and thus perceived power) among brand fanatics by distributed branded clothing (e.g., hats, vests, scarves) or accessories (e.g., rings, badges, pendants) that signal their membership of brand tribes. Through these symbolic products of group identity, brand users could feel a heightened sense of influence and charismatic power. Furthermore, to arouse a sense of kinship among brand users, practitioners could use databases to identify profiles of potential consumers that may be susceptible to feeling connected and empowered. These feelings could be further amplified by holding functions at venues that are consistent with the brand in terms of status (i.e., luxury brand events could be held at spas, golf courses, casino VIP lounges).

Second, it is suggested that luxury cruise managers support the social structure within consumer tribes. For example, by engaging in luxurious welcome rituals and formal festivals (e.g., gala celebrations), firms can increase their customers' perceptions of their own power. The cruise managers can reinforce the social structures intrinsic to consumer tribes, thereby increasing the community members' sense of power.

Third, cruise managers and executives could promote tourists' engagement in ego-defensive behaviors under certain circumstances. For instance, it may be useful for luxury cruise managers to build brand tribes by providing championship events, which give an opportunity for customers to engage in defensive behaviors to protect their brand identities.

Fourth, consumer advocacy research suggests that transforming consumers into brand advocates benefits firms by creating positive, cost-effective word-of-mouth related to the brand's goods and/or services. This literature is extended by the findings presented here by revealing a strong positive effect of power on brand advocacy in the luxury cruise settings. Accordingly, the positive association between consumer power perception and brand advocacy suggests that luxury cruise managers should prioritize financial resources to provide dignified premiere shows on luxury cruises where passengers can become loyal advocates. In these marketing venues, luxury brand enthusiasts could discuss their favorite brands, thereby influencing other consumers. As such, luxury cruise managers can promote brand advocacy by increasing cruise passengers' perceived power. Marketers can use these tools to catalyze advocacy by overtly bestowing power on consumers.

Fifth, results show that luxury cruise travelers' power perceptions are significantly related to their tendency to provide feedback related to a luxury cruise firm's goods and/or services. It is critical to obtain feedback from luxury cruisers, as it informs developers on how to improve new and existing product offerings. In this way, cruise firms could give consumers the impression that they possess substantial power with respect to the brand. In doing so, firms can increase customer feedback and improve cruise performance.

Sixth, the results reveal that customer helping behavior is influenced by consumer prestige and power appeals. Thus, marketing managers should foster these reciprocal practices by providing public acknowledgment of consumer assistance as a means to enhance their reputation (i.e., public badging and labeling, activity-based ranking).

Finally, results of this study indicate that managers can increase customer tolerance for service failures by treating consumers as valued, influential individuals with high social status. In other words, while service failures are inevitable from time to time in high contact services, luxury cruise managers can increase passengers' tolerance by increasing the degree to which they feel powerful.

#### **6.4 Limitations and future research**

Results of the research generated by analyses show deep insight and contribute to the body of knowledge in the luxury cruise context. Despite its significant theoretical and practical implications, however, this study does suffer from some limitations. Although the most findings of this study focused on the view of power over people in luxury travel, another research should be examined on the alternative view of power toward others in different settings. For example, Hoogervorst et al. (2012) suggested power is not always associated with selfish motivation and behavior, which means that the concept of power should not necessarily be linked to conduct behaviors a self-focused manner (Rucker et al. 2012). Power toward others could be elevated and legitimized when power is executed in a responsible manner in the social relationship. In this vein, it is recommended that future study could explore the different views features of power in commercial contexts. In addition, another study could be conducted regarding the detailed examination on the multidimension of power. Moreover, the results of the study were derived from analysis of a single luxury consumer base. In other words, the data used for this study were collected from luxury cruise passengers in the United States. To better generalize the findings of this study to other sectors, future researchers should replicate the analyses described here using a broader respondent base from other sectors (e.g., first class passengers for airline) to produce more valid and reliable results. Future researchers should gather data from other various countries to cross-validate the results. These shortcomings render the external validity of this study somewhat limited; future studies should be conducted to clarify these issues.

## **Appendix**

See Table 5 for Appendix.

**Table 5** Actionable marketing plans

The antecedents and effects of power	Key ideas of power building blocks	Actionable plans of the firm
Consumer lineage mapping	Events	Emphasize co-experience by holding public and private events that include exhibitions, dinner parties, memorial album launches, premieres, and limited edition releases
	Memberships	Enhance social links among brand fanatics by distributed branded clothing (e.g., hat, vests, scarfs) or accessories (e.g., rings, badges, pendants) that signal their membership of the brand community
	Database	Use databases to identify profiles of potential consumers that may be susceptible to feeling connected and empowered
	Employee training	Train service employees to positively comment on the brand to family members and companions that utilize connections with others to identify valuable products
	Functions	Hold functions at venues that are consistent with the brand in terms of status (i.e., luxury brand events could be held at spas, golf courses, casino VIP lounges) to give customers the sense of being influential psychological connection with other high-status consumers
Social structure	Roles	Assign authorized roles to leading consumers (e.g., spreader of information on new products)
	Rankings	Explicitly rank consumers on the basis of their purchasing habits and social activities
	Rituals	Engage in luxurious and dignified welcome rituals and formal festivals (e.g., gala celebrations)
Defense behavior	Championship events	Provide brand related championship events sponsored by cruise firms to encourage customers engage in defensive collective action against rival brands
Advocacy	Premier shows	Prioritize financial resources to provide dignified premier shows of luxury brand products, where customers become brand advocates
	Social places	Provide social places in which luxury brand enthusiasts can discuss their favorite brands
	Social networks	Make customers' firm-related statuses explicit on social media (e.g., quantity of followers, activity-based rankings), thereby making them become brand advocates
Feedback	New product development	Solicit feedback for new product development by treating customers as valued and influential individuals
Tolerance	Service recovery strategy	Provide consumers with a variety of options for them to feel to have retain a sense of control in order to compensate for unsatisfactory service performance
Helping	Public acknowledgement	Foster reciprocal practices by providing public acknowledgement of consumer assistance and enhance their reputation (i.e., public badging and labeling, activity-based rankings)

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