

# Does driving a Porsche make a man more desirable to women?

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New research by faculty at Rice University, the University of Texas-San Antonio (UTSA) and the University of Minnesota finds that men's conspicuous spending is driven by the desire to have uncommitted romantic flings. And, gentlemen, women can see right through it.

The series of studies, "Peacocks, Porsches and Thorstein Veblen: Conspicuous Consumption as a Sexual Signaling System," was conducted with nearly 1,000 test subjects and published recently in the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#).

"This research suggests that conspicuous products, such as Porsches, can serve the same function for some men that large and brilliant feathers serve for peacocks," said Jill Sundie, assistant professor of marketing at UTSA and lead author of the paper.

Just as peacocks flaunt their tails before potential mates, men may flaunt flashy products to charm potential dates. Notably, not all men favored this strategy – just those men who were interested in short-term sexual relationships with [women](#).

"The studies show that some men are like peacocks. They're the ones driving the bright colored sports car," said co-author Vladas Griskevicius, assistant professor of marketing at the University of Minnesota.

According to the researchers, women found a [man](#) who chose to

purchase a flashy luxury product (such as a Porsche) more desirable than the same man who purchased a non-luxury item (such as a Honda Civic). However, there was a catch: Although women found the flashy guys more desirable for a date, the man with the Porsche was not preferred as a marriage partner. Women inferred from a man's flashy spending that he was interested in uncommitted sex.

"When women considered him for a long-term relationship, owning the sports car held no advantage relative to owning an economy car," said co-author Daniel Beal, assistant professor of psychology at Rice. "People may feel that owning flashy things makes them more attractive as a relationship partner, but in truth, many men might be sending women the wrong message."

Though often associated with Western culture, extreme forms of conspicuous displays have been found in cultures across the globe and throughout history.

While finding that men may use conspicuous consumption as a short-term mating signal, the researchers discovered that women don't behave in the same manner and don't conspicuously spend to attract men.

"Obviously, women also spend plenty of money on expensive things," Sundie said. "But the anticipation of romance doesn't trigger flashy spending as it does with some men."

**More information:** To read the complete study, go to [psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/100/4/664.html](http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/100/4/664.html)

Provided by Rice University

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