

Prestige

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Prestige and status are according to Nordstedts dictionary (Palmér J & H Freidländer, 1987) partly overlapping words which both could be explained with the word reputation. But status appears to describe a more objectively measurable phenomenon.

In order to examine the general perception of what the concept entails, 8 persons^A were asked about what they think prestige is. The answers were very different and none of them contained any of the words listed in Nordstedts dictionary. Although the respondents did quite agree on the relative ranking of the prestige value (table 1), i.e. the prestige scale, for a number of car models. The ranking also shows a fairly good agreement with the difference in price of the models, except that the Volvo was ranked higher than the Volkswagen.

Table 1. The participating interviewees ranking of what they believe is the general prestige scale for a number of car models. In the second column from the left shows the price of the basic version of the models. It was not visible to the participants. The rankings that showed complete agreement are highlighted in green and those that did almost match are highlighted in yellow.

<i>Rank what you think is the general prestige scale for these things (5=highest)</i>	Price for a new car according to dealers (SEK)	Participant number:								Average ranking
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Volvo V70	From 230 000	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.9
Porsche Carrera	From 888 000	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.0
Volkswagen Passat	From 245 000	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2.5
Fiat Panda	From 104 900	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Ford Focus	From 178 900	2	2	4	3	2	3	2	3	2.6

^A. Four participants were men and four women with an average age of 44 years (median: 45 years, min - max: 38-49 years) and with varying levels of education, occupation, income, family and housing conditions.

Although the concept possibly is unclear for the participants, the ranking in table 1 indicates that they all have the notion that expensive objects give more prestige value than cheaper ones. With the exception of Volvo, which they considered to have higher prestige value than Volkswagen. And the car market is probably full of other exceptions to this rule, if any. A used Porsche can, for example, be cheaper than a new VW but still it probably has higher prestige value.

There are certainly plenty of other examples of prestige values that do not follow the market price. Let's say someone buys an exclusive and rare wrist watch that look like a cheap watch from a gasoline station. Before anyone know that it costs much more than a "regular" Rolex or Breitling would probably give the wearer considerably less prestige than what those brands would do.



Picture 1-2. Two wrist watches in an exclusive watch shop.

Probably it is possible to find many more examples of the same phenomenon in other product areas. But it is probably unnecessary since the point is hopefully clear:

For something to give the holder more prestige, it requires that people believe it is more expensive or more difficult to achieve than other similar things.

The theory is supported by the fact that none of the participants in this study at all managed to achieve a ranking of prestige value of a number of boats. Although it differed much more in price between them compared to the car models in the table before.

Table 2. The participating interviewees ranking of what they believe is the general prestige scale for a number of boats. In the second column from the left shows the price of the models. It was not visible to the participants.

<i>Rank what you think is the general prestige scale for these things (5=highest)</i>	Price for a new boat according to a boat dealer (SEK)	Participant number:							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Yanmarin 53 BR	255 000	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Alström 650	149 000	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Anytime Boats 750TR Cabin	750 000	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Delta 29 SW	1 490 000	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Scandic 410	24 990	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?

A potential benefit of having something that gives prestige, may be that it might increase the chances of attracting a suitable life partner. Thus, it is likely that such phenomena to some extent, have been highlighted in the contact ads. If so, changes in what is highlighted in these, reflects changes in the perception of what gives prestige. A very limited study of a number of such ads from 1925 onwards (table 3) suggests, among other things, that the professional title has become less important, while the importance of appearance has increased.

Table 3. Properties highlighted in the 15^B first contact ads for men seeking women in the newspaper Dagens Nyheter, a Sunday in July every twenty years from 1925.

	1925	1945	1965	1985	2005
	(% of the studied ads)				
Self employed	100	13	7		7
Economy	50	7		27	33
Academic	50		7	13	13
Work title		53	20		7
Sober, non-smoker, tidy		27	33	20	13
Appearance			20	40	53
Personal qualities	50	27	7	47	40
Interested in culture			20	13	20
Likes to travell				7	13
Interested in nature			27	20	13
Likes promenades, cycling		13	13		
Other/general interests/qualities		13	13	40	47
Nothing except maybe age is mentioned		13	20	7	13

^{B.} In the newspaper from the year 1925 there were only two ads of this kind.

Regarding titles, it may be that as the labour market has become more equitable and education has become more accessible to everyone, the use of, and probably prestige value in educational and professional titles has declined. The use of titles in telephone directories suggests that this is the case:

In the sixties, it was much more common with the titles of these than it is today. In addition, people were sorted by (in order of priority):

1. Sir name, regardless of spelling variations for the first letter.
2. Title i.e. for example, all engineers were listed consecutively regardless of given name.
3. Given name.

A comparison of the first two full columns of a randomly selected name (Björk) in the Stockholm area a number of years from 1965 onwards showed that:

- In 1965 and 1970 phone directories most^C names were accompanied by a title of which the most common was wife (1965: 98 persons of 181, 1970: 113 of 185), followed by Miss (1965: 36, 1970: 27).
- 1975 the persons were sorted only by name. 44 of the 160 names were not accompanied by any title. The number of wives and misses in the first two full columns had also fallen dramatically, probably mainly because of the different sorting.
- 1987 most listed persons (116 of 181) were untitled. Of those who had a title there were 17 wives and five Miss.
- And in 2006 there were almost no one (2 of 253) who was presented with a title, neither of these two had the title Mrs. or Miss.

C. In six of the seven columns with people named Björk in the 65-year phone directory and 7 of 8 in the 1970 year ditto the individuals were presented with their educational or professional title.

The observations may be summarized by the following statement:

A phenomenon has only prestige value as long as it is considered to be something beyond the ordinary.

Another example that suggests this is the variation in what is emphasized in housing ads in Stockholm while living standards has increased.

In the 1920s, it was far from all the villas that had electricity retracted. Which is seen in the ads?

G. H. NYMANS EGENDOMSAFFÄR

Försäljning av fastigheter, affärer m.m.

Värdefull Gård

int. Uppsala är av en händelse till salu, gården har innehafits av samma ägare i nära 30 år. Är lämplig till styckning, innehåller 50 tnd åker och 50 tnd skog. Billigt vid snar uppgörelse. Svar t. "Gård", Allmänna Tidningskontoret, Uppsala.

MINDRE LANTEGENDOM,

bel. i Möklinta socken, invid landväg i folkrik trakt, 4 km. från Broddbo station (efter stamban.), inneh. c:a 15 tunn. åker och c:a 30 tnd skog och hagmark. Boningshus om 2 rum. Ladug. för 5 kor. Stall för 2 hästar. Loge, redskapslld, vagnslider, magasin, källare, brunn. El. ljus och kraft. Säljes med årets gröda och tillträde genast för 10,000 kr. Utan gröda säljes egendomen för 8,500 kr. Sköndelån 5,000 kr. Fotografi och beskrivning på begäran. G. H. NYMANS EGENDOMSAFFÄR, AVESTA. Tel. 61.

VILLASPEKULANTER

Visning av salubjudna Enskedevillor även i dag Söndag kl. 12-4 efter hänvändelse till **Enskede Fastighets- & Uthyrningsbyrå** Apotekshuset. Tel. Enskede 68.

Ålstensvillorna

samt Villor i Äppelviken och Smedslätten (storl. 3-4-5-6-7-8 rum) visas även Söndag kl. 12-4 e. m. efter hänvänd. pr tel. Äppeiv. 2 69, 2 67. **Äppelvikens Fastighetsbyrå,** Kontor "Ålstensgårds" hpl.

För 12,500 kr. i Enskede säljes 2 rums Ensamvilla, vackert bel. vid skog. Litet kontant. Visning i dag kl. 12-3 genom **BACKS VILLAFÖRMEDLING.** De gamlas vägs hållpl. Tel. Ensk. 8 10, 8 20.

MINDRE VILLA till salu, elektr. o. vatt., källarlokal, amortering och stadslån. Ersta Villastad 136. Hildur Carlsson.

3 rums Ålstensvilla

skapslld, vagnslider, ma- an. El. ljus och kraft. gröda och tillträde ge

MINDRE VI i, elektr. o. vatt.,

Villa ads in Dagens Nyheter the 14th July 1925. With the Swedish word for electricity highlighted.

Ten years later, almost all housing in Stockholm had electricity. But it was used sparingly and things like fridges were not obvious (Tamm-Hallström K, 1993):

<p>1 Rum o. kök Hyra 650 kr. Ledig genast. Event. kan portvaktssyssla erhållas. Tel. 10 80 80.</p>	<p>Modern, solig 5-rums Våning med hall, jungfruk., 2 balk., <u>kylskåp</u>, w. c., badrum, inb. badkar. Fri trappa. Tysta sovrum åt planterad gård. Rep. fullständigt. Portvakten, Tel. 50 51 60.</p>
<p>Erik Dahlbergsgatan 36. NYBYGGNAD. Stora, vackra, 1-, 3-, 4-rumslägenh. Alla upplysningar i dag m. 9-5 & Byggnadskontoret Erik Dahlbergsg. 32. T. 62 60 31.</p>	<p>NORR MÄLARSTRAND 64. Högmodern 5-rumsvåning. Kök, hall, kapprum, serv. rum, badr. (inb. badkar), 3 garderob., <u>kylskåp</u>, värmeskap, öppen spis, balkong åt sjösidan. Portv. visar 2-4. Tel. 33 63 53, 53 63 84.</p>
<p>1 omöbl. Dubblett ledig genast. Styckjunkarg. 7, 2 tr., Eklöv. 60 45 19.</p>	<p>4 Rum och kök fullt modernt, fr. 1 Okt. i 8 Rålambstorg Södersol, fri utsikt. Portv. 1-3.</p>
<p>Dubbl. vackra r., sk. ing., kokg., vatten, el. lj., stor tamb., led. gen., bill. 605390</p>	<p>4 Rum o. kök badr., värme, goda utr. Hyra 2.000. T. 50 51 60</p>
<p>Enkelrum med kokvrå, 1 Rum, kök, hall, matvrå moderna, till 1 Okt. på Gärdet. T. 61 30 18.</p>	<p>Sol., modernis. 4-Rumsvån. Värme, v.-v. Goda utr. Badr. 2.300. Med dusch 2.100. Drottningholmsv. 14. (Vid S: Eriksg.). Visas 4-6. Telef. 53 25 10, 9-4</p>
<p>1.050:— Enkelr., kokvr., badr. Intill Strandvägen. 10 01 10.</p>	<p>NORR MÄLARSTRAND 64. Högmodern 3-rumsvåning. Kök, hall, kapprum, serv. rum, badr. (inb. badkar), värmeskap, <u>kylskåp</u>, öppen spis. Från 1 okt eller tidigare. Portv. visar 2-4. Tel. 33 63 53, 53 63 84.</p>
<p>Omöbl. R., eg. ing. fr. förstugan. Östermalmsgatan 76, n. b., ö. g. Carlsson.</p>	
<p>Centralt 1 Rum t. kont. ell. bost. omod., 1/7. Vid Österm.-torg. T. 62 75 91.</p>	
<p>Omöbl. eller möbl. Rum. 60 56 78. Billigt.</p>	
<p>Om. Rum, bad, f. 1-2. Storgat. 16, 1½ tr.</p>	

Apartment for rent listed in Dagens Nyheter in July 1935, with the word "fridge" circled. In the mid-30th, there were apparently many vacant apartments in prime locations in Stockholm.

Central heating (common radiators) was also not given^D at this time and thus it was pointed out in the ads:

Exklusiv 4 r. villa
på Nockebyhöjdens sydsluttning

 Privatman säljer sin verkligt gedigna hypereleg. villa med sällsynt fritt förnämligt läge på Nockebyhöjdens vackraste område med milsvid utsikt över skog och sjö.

Innehåller 4 stora komfortabla rum, verkligt ståtli. hall, stor jfrk., stora altaner och terrasser åt sjösidan med fritt ogen. läge. C-värme, v.-v., varkettg., ektrappa, badrum, element, fönsterbänkar av marmor. Hefautomatisk oljeeldning m. m. Vålördn. terrasserad tomt i rent söderläge.

Tillfälle för spekulant som söker villa i särklass med idealiskt läge. Säljes till facilt pris vid snar uppgörelse. Visas jämte övriga salubjudna villor i Appelviken, Alsten, Angby och Nockeby även söndag.

Bilar till förfogande.

EHNS BYRA, Brommavägen 171, Alviks hpl. Tel. Appelviken 7 89, 9 87.

Villa ad in DN i July 1935, with the word "centralvärme, v-v" (= central heating, warm-water) circled.

- ^D. Only 7% of the dwellings in the country side and 38% in larger urban areas had central heating 1935 (Tamm-Hallström K, 1993). The rest heated their homes through different kinds of fire places.

Twenty years later, most had central heating and then it would probably not have given any prestige value anymore, since it was something you took for granted. Instead, oil combustion was an exclusivity that was highlighted:

Villa ads in DN twenty years later. With the word "oljeeldning" (=oil combustion) circled.

**VILLOR SÄLJES
NORRA STOR-STOCKHOLM**

Omod. 2 fam. stenvilla
centr. beläg. i lugnt samhälle (Sundbyberg), bra kommunikationer. Sv. t. "80.000:- kont. - 4 r., k. led." 23 58 00 (Telsvar).

VIGGBYHOLM
omod. 2-fam.-villa på dubbel-tomt, nära stn. Tel. 16 05 67.

NORRA LIDINGÖ
Mod. 2-familjevilla med 2 läg. om vardera 5 rum o. kök samt badrum. Garage. Oljeeldning. Ovanligt vackert, ovanligt stort. En av båda läg. lediga vid köp. Tel. 65 00 32, 65 04 42.

1 plans Brommavilla,
6 rum, vardagsr., matsal, frukost-rum, 4 sovrum, stor hall. Allt i ett plan. Ytan 160 kvm., fullt mod. Friköpt tomt. 26 36 49 AMANS BYRA 26 79 80

ÄPPELVIKSVILLA
Innehållande 5 r. o. k., 2 möblerb. hallar, badr., 1 b. kar, bidé, solaitan, oljeeldning. Lättskött vackert tomt nära bilplats. Tillträde eft. omh. 63 08 00.

NOCKEBY
välbelägg. villa & skogstomt intill park. 5 r., hall o. 2 altaner med garage. Oljeeldning o. tvättmaskin. Säljes med ett utvald byte. Tillträde slutet av augusti. Svar till Box 1532, Göteborg 1.

BROMMA
Å egen tomt, nyb., exkl. lättst. stenv. med all mod. utr. 5 r. k., gillest. Gar. m. bekv. infart. Tillträde omg. 52 98 10, 52 98 11

Mod. Äppelviksvilla
n. lärov. o. T-bana, 5 r., jfrk., alt., terr., gar., gaseldn., tvättm. 519451 BERGS VILLABYRÅ 515040

Utan lägenhetstvång
nyren. 5 r. m. v. naturtomt i Ulvsund. Oljeeldn. Gar. 910588 Tureberg, ny 2-fam.-villa, 5 r. i varje. 3 % lån. 33 66 56, 65 32 89

Ten years later none of that was pointed out. But as the central heating, and later electric heating was installed in old homes they had no longer any use of the fireplaces and these were often thrown out, probably to save some space. Today, however, it is considered to be a major advantage to have one.

kakelugnar och

som kakelugn

2:a Vasastan - Drömläge med balkong, låg avgift och kakelugn
3 100 000 - budstart • 1 930 - mån • Boarea: 66,2 m² • Byggtår: 1902 • Ej his • 100 1
Ett stenkast från Vasaparken ligger denna genomgående exklusiva lägenhet med gäststuga, låg avgift, kakelugnar och stor balkong i sydöst.
SÖDUNAGATAN 14 ÖPPET HUS SÖN 11:4 KL. 12:00-16:00 ÖMÄSNING MÅN 12:4 KL. 17:30-18:00

2:a Vasastan - Underbart hem med öppen spis och kakelugn
2 750 000 - budstart • 1 565 - mån • Boarea: 64 m² • Byggtår: 1902 • His • 1
Ljus, rymd och charm präglar denna lägenhet, här finns både bevarade originaldetaljer som kakelugn och öppen spis samt moderniteter som induktionshäll.
FRIKÖPTAN 44 ÖPPET HUS SÖN 11:4 KL. 12:00-16:00 ÖMÄSNING MÅN 12:4 KL. 17:30-18:00

Condos for sale in "Vi i Vasastan" April 2010 with the word for fireplace highlighted.

I have noticed that some groups, appears to have a degree of consensus about the dress code. And it is likely that there are some brands that give the owner better reputation^E than other. In other groups, however, these clothes are uninteresting and the members would never buy them, even if they can afford even the most highly respected brands.

The same applies to other things, such as cars. In some groups it seems like American cars from the '50s gives the most respect. While such vehicles may not give any respect at all, among those who prefer modern sports cars. In summary:

What gives respect in a group does not have to give it in another group.

^E I.e. prestige.

The group referred to may vary from the small group of friends to much of the world's population, but not all.

If a group member first lacks all the group's prestige markers and then gets some of these, it is reasonable to believe that the other group member shows appreciation for it. Though if the member got more and more markers, he or she would probably at some point cross a border when the ambient contempt turned into pure jealousy.

Let's say the person would go so far that he conquered all that has prestige value in the group, what would happen then? In well-defined groups, such as among stereo geeks, athletes or extreme bird watcher, the answer seems pretty simple. As members, with increasingly advanced methods, refine their prestige items: stereo, sports performance or the number of observed species within a given geographical area. The stereo geek raises the limit for the perfect sound, world records are pressed and birdwatchers will charter a plane to some remote spot as soon as unusual and previously not yet flagged species are reported. That is to say that the limit for the highest prestige increases, with higher stakes as a result. And many have probably marvelled at the energy with which people in such groups attack a problem that for others seems pretty insignificant. A subset of the explanation could be as follows:

The clearer and more common the prestige scale is within a group, the more committed the group members will be in advancing on it.

Of the so far presented prestige objects it is most likely that there is an objective, measurable and universal prestige scale (i.e. a status scale) for cars. And I think that there is a much larger portion of the population who would like to compete in having the "coolest" car compared to a lot of other luxury goods.

But there are also other areas where people claim that there is a general prestige scale, for example in the case of professions. Since in this context terms like "high status occupation" or otherwise "low status occupation", are used and quotes as the following are fairly common: "What we think and construct with our minds have higher status than what we experience with our bodies or produce with our hands."

(Nordeman M, 1992).

There are even those who make status scales for different professions (Söderqvist Tralau M, 2009). In order to investigate whether it is possible to establish such a scale, the participants were asked to rank a number of professions, that according to Söderqvist-Tralau are located quite far from each other regarding their status and thus should be pretty easy to rank on a five-point scale.

It turned out that the ranking was quite consistent (table 4), but it differed to some extent from the ranking Söderqvist-Tralau found. And her results differ in turn from how the scale would have looked like if it had been based on the simplest measurable factor in this context, namely, the average wage for the various jobs. And this shows that the scale regarding occupations is less objective, measurable and universal than that for cars.

Table 4. The participating interviewees ranking of what they believe is the general prestige scale for a number of professions. In the second column from the left shows the rankings according Söderqvist-Tralau, lower number = higher status. The third column shows the average salary for those working in the profession. These two columns were not visible to the participants. The rankings that almost match are highlighted in yellow.

Rank what you think is the general prestige scale for these things (5=highest)	Ranked status (Tralau scale (lower figure=higher status) /five grade scale)	Average salary in profession ^F ((SEK/month)/ ranking)	Participant number:								Average ranking
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Fire man	36/3	21 797/2	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	4,0
Enforcement man	49/4	33 814/5	2	1	5	3	2	2	3	2	2,6
Vetrinary	13/5	31 948/4	5	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	4,6
Train driver	66/2	21 442/3	3	4	2	2	3	3	2	3	2,7
Supermarket cashier	94/1	17 700/1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,1

^F. According to www.lonestatistik.se

But when a number of occupations were compared with other phenomena, the participant's rankings were less consistent (table 5).

Table 5. The participants' ranking of what they consider to have the lowest (1) to highest (9) prestige value in the eyes the general public for a number of phenomena that perhaps are prestige markers.

Thing	Participant number:								Average ranking
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Dior dress	1	2	6	4	5	2	1	6	3,4
Exclusive alloy wheels	2	1	5	1	4	1	2	5	2,6
Oil painting by Peter Dahl	6	8	4	2	7	3	3	1	4,3
Medical education	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	4	8,4
Group leader at Ericsson	3	6	8	8	1	7	8	2	5,4
Well trained body	7	4	2	3	3	6	7	8	5,0
Main role in a TV show	5	3	3	7	6	5	6	9	5,5
Fifth place in Vasaloppet	4	7	1	5	2	8	5	3	4,4
Apartment on a fancy adress	8	5	7	6	8	4	4	7	6,1

After each participant had made the ranking presented in tables 1, 2, 4 and 5, I asked them: Is your own scale the same? And there were just as many who said yes (4 persons), as no. Suggesting that many believe/think their own prestige scale is shared by the general public. Not just for cars, boats and professions, but also for mixed phenomena as those in table 5. But some of those interviewed, however pointed out, without being asked about this, that they don't think that there is a general prestige scale.

When the interviewees' were asked about their prestige scales for a number of familiar phenomena (the question was open without given alternatives). It turned out that although the ranking ladder was rough and despite that the various phenomena reasonably often are ranked in our society, the answers were very different from person to person. The most stringent and similar rankings were regarding education (table 6 in the Swedish version of this book). It is of course not surprising since most of the participants have gone to the university and they have thus, if not earlier, received a general prestige scale in terms of the traditional educational stages: primary, secondary school, undergraduate education at a university, doctoral education at a university.

Regarding jobs (table 7 in the Swedish version) the responses were significantly less stringent. And

probably more personally shaped, by the participants' own experiences. The same applied to housing (table 8), family relationships (table 9), and spare time activities (table 10).

The explanation for the different rankings I think is that they were a very heterogeneous group. They belong to different professions. Regarding the accommodation, some live in one of Stockholm's inner suburbs. Other live further away from the centre, or even in another part of the country. Many live in an apartment, some have a villa. Some are married, others are single or divorced. Some of them have children living at home, others have grown-up children, while still others are childless. Some are interested in playing sport while others like to travel.

And society consists, as is well known, of a more or less infinite variety of groups and we feel like participants in a number of these. Some groups are well defined, others are more diffuse. Some may have a distinct prestige scale, others do not. But each individual has a unique mix of group affiliations, with associated prestige scales. And the rankings in table 7-10 spanned a variety of group affiliations. Unlike the ranking in table 6 that affected academic programs and, regarding that issue all but two belonged to the loosely defined group of academics. In summary I draw the following conclusion:

Every person's overall prestige scale is unique.

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