

## Realism And Perceptible Utilization: An Examination On Their Connection

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### ABSTRACT

*Astonishingly, the Indian population has seen a dramatic growth in materialistic inclinations as a result of increased urbanization and per capita wealth. The purpose of this research is to explore the importance of women's materialistic behavior in today's rapidly expanding consumer cultures. Models of the association between materialism and conspicuous consumption among Indian women consumers are presented in this research using structural equation modeling. However, while all three characteristics contribute to materialism that positively influences conspicuous buying, the distinctive conclusion of this study is that centrality has a greater impact on Indian female buyers than the other two.*

**Keywords:** pleasure, centrality, and success are all characteristics associated with materialism.

### INTRODUCTION

After the liberalization changes of 1991, the Indian economy grew at an unprecedented rate, setting the foundation for a fundamental shift in consumer behavior. Over the past decade, financial institutions have been able to cut interest rates on consumer loans, which has resulted in an increase in the middle-class and affluent-class incomes in India, respectively (1). India's populace has become extraordinarily more materialistic as per capita wealth has risen. Researchers hope to learn how materialism affects ostentatious consumption in one of the world's least studied but fastest growing nations.

When individuals place an excessive amount of value on material possessions, they are said to be practicing materialism (2). Consumption that is meant to be seen as an indication of a higher social status is known as conspicuous, on the other hand (3). While materialism and excessive consumerism have long been associated with the West, they are now spreading to Asia. "Global Attitudes on Materialism, Finances and Family" found that the most materialistic nations were China and India, with 71% and 58% of the population deeming their own and others' prosperity based on the superiority of items they possessed to be important (IPSOS, 2013). It is possible that these changes might be traced to a shift in conventional moral values and a shift in social structure.

When it comes to the attitudes of the Indian middle class, globalization and rising disposable incomes have had a significant impact. even so, even while it was found that India's middle class is growing, IPSOS's research was limited since it used a single item to gauge attitudes toward materialism (i.e. "I evaluate my success by what I possess"). A lack of clarity in the process might have hampered the quality of replies. A set of scientifically proven statements will be used to gauge a person's materialistic views in order to ensure the study's research design is as solid as possible.

The article is organized as follows to fill the void in the research. The following part contains a comprehensive assessment of the literature on the relevant concepts and constructions in question. The survey data is then analyzed and the research approach is applied. The findings and comments were revealed in a subsequent presentation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Materialism and excessive consumerism have grown in prominence over the previous decade as an essential aspect of consumer behavior. It has been extensively studied and written about because of its role in the rise of consumerism (4).

### Conspicuous Consumption

A synonym for "clearly noticeable, prominent, and flashy" is "conspicuousness". There were many who explored conspicuous consumption before Veblen, however he is credited with coining the word. Aristocrats and rulers of early civilizations showered themselves with elaborate festivities to show off their wealth, which may be traced back to the earliest civilizations. It's important to note, however, that the idea of being noticeable has developed over time.

In order to be most effective while communicating to others, we need to have something fascinating and significant to say. We'll have to think about it. The best source of content for us is not at the edge of our field, it is beyond the edge—we need to keep pushing broader. Despite the absence of links between our research clusters, each one is clearly connected to a big and dynamic community that does not consider itself to be "operations." For example, behavioral operations are linked to psychology, operations finance is linked to traditional finance, and markets are linked to economics. Because of this, we miss out on an opportunity to make a far greater impact on the world.

A number of studies have found that extravagant expenditure is motivated by the desire to project one's image in the society. There are two primary drivers of people's desire for social and professional status: their own sense of self-expression and their desire to rise in society (5).

There have been studies that show ostentatious consumption may also serve as a means to improve one's social standing. A new study suggests that women who are visibly inebriated in order to dissuade other female rivals who represent a threat to her relationship (6). But research shows that consumers use luxury goods to showcase their social position, promote their positive self-image, and in some cultures, to enhance their poor self-esteem.

There are few studies on conspicuous consumption that have been undertaken in the Indian context. The expenses on such purchases are more for groups that are comparatively poor in society, as they are prejudiced by the custom of signalling. Their investment in health or education was nearly negligible. Owing to the absence of alternative means to signal status, individuals from low-income groups in India tend to conspicuously spend (7). The study found that Indian consumers generally perceive possession of luxury goods to echo a prosperous lifestyle .

## Materialism

The concept of materialism has been widely studied by researchers in different contexts. There have been studies that have viewed materialism in the individual as well as sociocultural perspectives, and these perspectives have evolved over time. There exists a school that pivots around the positive influence of materialism. Here, the underlying belief is that materialism leads to happiness. As per this, materialism is an outlook on life categorised by the quest for riches and belongings. Recent innovations in business models have been enabled by ever-advancing digital technologies that reduce the cost and accelerate the speed of collecting, storing, sharing, and analyzing data; connecting supply with demand via automated processes; etc. We should not ignore this even if a business model does not fit nicely into a single optimization problem—business models might be more strategic or “high-level” than we are traditionally comfortable with, but given the impact and interest surrounding new business models, and the key role of operations management phenomena in designing and operating such new business models, we would be foolish not to venture there.

Another study found that the outcome of materialism could be positive or negative depending upon its three facets: success, centrality, and happiness (8). The study found that acquisition of material possessions helps consumers cope up or overcome negative feelings. Centrality and happiness were also found to be positively related to attachment. Another study conducted to understand the impact of materialism on subjective well-being in three countries – UK, Germany, and Croatia – found that happiness was the major dimension which explained the major part of the variation in materialism in all the three countries. Studies conducted among north-eastern states in US reveals that

materialism varies among gender. Studies conducted in China reveal that the materialistic tendencies of both men and women are on a high. However, women consider the acquisition of possession to be more important (9). Studies in China, one of the fastest growing economy in the world, found that young Chinese consumers are being turned into consumerism as they believe that possessions of products will lead to greater levels of happiness and satisfaction (10). Robotics can change the need and nature for labor in all settings, from the factory floor to a retail store and even a hospital. If we replace workers in fulfillment centers with robots, then is that loss exceeded by the gain in workers/engineers to design and manage the robots? Which types of work are most likely to be replaced? And is there evidence that matches theory? There is simply no shortage of high-priority, important questions in this domain.

## **HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT AND MODEL**

According to Richins and Dawson, materialism is considered as a value. Accordingly, materialism represents a set of centrally held beliefs about the significance of possessions in one's life. They proposed that materialism to have three dimensions: centrality, success, and happiness. Centrality manifests the tendency of the materialists to consider possession of worldly goods to be central to their lives. The core purpose that steers their behaviour is the act of acquisition(s). Happiness is the belief that pleasure and well-being in life can be attained through acquisition of assets. For people with high materialism, both acquisition and ownership of goods are vital in achieving fulfilment and well-being in life.

In their research, the relationship between materialism and conspicuous consumption. Shoppers derive contentment from others' reactions more than the functional use of the item. Material-oriented people focus on the spending on prestige, exclusive goods to differentiate themselves. There are studies from Western economies that validate this positive relationship materialism has with conspicuous consumption. Though there has been a considerable growth in the expenditure on status goods among Indian consumers post-liberalisation, researchers could not come across any study of this nature in the Indian context. Hence, this study was undertaken to fill this space.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

After a comprehensive review of the literature on conspicuous buying, materialism, and measure construct like success, centrality, and happiness, the questionnaire was constructed. This survey instrument had two parts. First part comprised of questions related to consumers' demographic characteristics. Second part pivoted around measuring

the variables using a five-point Likert scale where 5 and 1 reflected “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree”, respectively.

In an Indian society, accumulation and possessions of the material goods have traditionally been considered as a negative value system. Finding respondents who are ready to share such information is relatively difficult. Hence, it was decided to use snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling method to the collected data. The data was collected from women through survey during first-half of 2016. The questionnaire was shared with 550 working women across four cities in India.

## RESULTS

With AMOS 22.0 software, SEM was used to analyse the data. A two-step approach for data analysis as suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson was followed. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to estimate the measurement model, followed by testing the path analysis and the research hypothesis. To explore the relationship between materialism and conspicuous consumption, second-order confirmatory factor analysis was attempted. This statistical method is employed to confirm that the theorised construct loads into a certain number of underlying sub-constructs or components.

To measure the fit statistics, another index – expected cross-validation index (ECVI) – has also been used. This index measures the discrepancy between the covariance measure that is fitted and the expected covariance matrix that would be obtained from another sample of equivalent size. The model with smallest ECVI indicates good measure and has the greatest potential for replication. In the study, obtained ECVI value is 0.328, which indicates that there can be a small discrepancy between the covariance measure that is fitted and the expected covariance matrix that would be obtained in another sample of equivalent size.

Statistical significance of parameter estimates was established using t-test statistic (critical ratio). Factor loadings for the three constructs – success, centrality and happiness – were found to be greater than 0.60 and hence significant. These high values in each case indicate convergent validity. This reflects that the three constructs contribute to materialism. Hence, the theory of three sub- constructs for materialism is well supported. Critical ratio values that exceed 2 are regarded as significant at the level of 0.05; all the regression values (estimates) were found to be significant.

Only three items of the construct success were found to have factor loadings above 0.5. For centrality, three statements out of seven were found to have factor loadings above 0.5. Among the five statements that contribute to the sub-construct happiness, three statements were found to have loadings above 0.5.

Only two statements out of the four that constituted conspicuous consumption were found to have loadings above 0.5, and hence they were significant. It is supported as the CR values were found to be greater than 2 and hence significant at  $p < 0.00$ .

## Hypothesis Testing

The relationship between the two important factors was studied. R2 of 0.46 was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) when looking at the premise that materialism leads to excessive consumption. As a

result, H1 has been approved. According to this data, materialism is responsible for 46% of the variance in conspicuous consumption variation.

## DISCUSSION

Though materialism has been linked to consumer behavior by many (12), few studies have focused on the problem in a developing economy like India, and even fewer have examined the issue from the perspective of women customers. These factors have been studied in the context of a wide range of Indian women customers in this work. There were three main objectives: to evaluate whether or not three aspects of materialism had any impact in influencing conspicuous consumption and to validate the MVS in an Indian environment. Success, centrality, and enjoyment were all confirmed by the confirmatory factor analysis.

In the context of developing economies like India, this study confirms the link between materialistic variables and ostentatious consumerism. The statistical research shows that both the internal and external impulses of materialism (stimuli) - happiness and centrality – lead to ostentatious consumption. Conspicuous consumption was shown to be affected by all three predictor factors, although their relative importance differed in the study population. Conspicuous spending among Indians is best predicted by a person's centrality, whereas happiness has the least impact on this behavior among Indian women, according to the study's empirical findings. Though all the three factors – success, centrality, and happiness – contribute to materialism, which in turn has a positive influence on conspicuous consumption, centrality component of materialism has much higher prominence in predicting the conspicuousness of the Indian female shoppers. For the products that have a very high-status appeal, marketers must use “enhanced personality” or “improved status” as their promotional campaigns. The process of acquiring such products may be projected as a celebration of an “event” in consumers’ life. Campaigns/sales talks promising “magical moments in life” can easily convert potential buyers into consumers.

Explaining success through possession, Similarly, acquisition centrality is the tendency to place such possessions and the process of getting possessions as the pivot of their lives. Given the data in this study, it can be inferred that female consumers in India tend to concern themselves greatly with the public meaning of possessions. Success and centrality are key influencers of materialism today.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study provide much-needed guidance for marketers as they plan their future actions. To capitalize on the growth in materialism, marketers might design their advertisements in a way that emphasizes the need to purchase a product or service. According to this data, women buyers place more priority on accumulating material possessions than satisfying their moral desires. One reason for this might be the cultural and monetary disparity between the two markets. The second most important predictor for Indian women buyers is their likelihood of success. According to Richin, materialism leads to a need to acquire items that imply status, which is supported by the findings of this study. Cues based on the aspects of materialism can be used by marketers to stimulate the hidden wants and desires of the shoppers (12).

**CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study shed light on hitherto unexplored facets of materialism and conspicuous spending in our cultural context. The three-factor MVS model of materialism in the Indian context was confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis. It also contributes to the current body of research on buying behavior in the context of conspicuous consumerism, especially for individuals with academic and strategic marketing interests in developing nations like India. Conspicuous consumption's centrality and success elements have been determined to be critical. That is, women who are more self-conscious about flaunting their material wealth and social standing are more prone to engage in conspicuous consumption.

**Research Limitations and Directions for the Future**

According to the same criteria as previous research that rely on data collecting, this study has several drawbacks. Indian women were the primary sources of data collection. There may be regional differences in people's attitudes about these issues despite using data from India, making it difficult to draw any general conclusions from the study. Luxurious experiences are no longer reserved for those who can afford the most expensive goods, but rather for those who can afford luxury. In order to test this theory, it is necessary to conduct an empirical study. Another disadvantage is that the study solely looks at the association between materialism and ostentatious consumption. In this study, the influence of age, religion, spirituality, and education on materialism and conspicuous consumerism has not been explored.. The proportional influence of functional, personal, and societal value judgments can also be studied in future study because value perceptions have a big impact on luxury purchase intention. More research is needed to find out if similar variations exist among Indians living elsewhere.

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