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Relations between Conspicuous Consumption and Materialism

ABSTRACT

The research focuses on relationships between conspicuous consumption and materialism. Contrary to previous studies, here conspicuous consumption is seen as an individual trait rather than as an attitude. The purpose of the research was twofold: to establish to what extent are a) success, centrality, happiness, and b) the importance and the attainment of wealth, popularity and image responsible for conspicuous consumption. Two studies were conducted. Materialism was measured using the MVS (Richins, 2004) in study 1 (N=80), and the Aspiration Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) in study 2 (N=169). In both studies, the measure of the propensity to conspicuous consumption was the same: The Conspicuous Consumption Orientation Scale (CCO) (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghoshal, 2011). The obtained data demonstrated that the propensity to conspicuous consumption was significantly related to only two dimensions of materialism – success and centrality. Furthermore, the results showed that while the importance of financial success and popularity enhanced the propensity to conspicuous consumption, attainment of financial and popularity aspirations had no impact on the propensity to conspicuous consumption. In turn, image (both its importance and its attainment) was a significant positive predictor of the propensity to conspicuous consumption. The research findings suggest that the crucial materialistic drivers of the propensity to conspicuous consumption are: the belief that success is closely connected with ownership; the conviction that owning and acquiring are the primary life goals; and the need to have a socially admired image.

Keywords:

conspicuous consumption, innate trait, materialism, materialistic aspirations

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INTRODUCTION

Consumption is a social and cultural phenomenon and a social practice of meaning-making and interpretation. It also serves as a means to communicate and express personal and social identities. According to Goffman's metaphor of everyday life as a theater, being is inseparably connected with demonstrating. On an individual level, demonstration requires the awareness of the meanings of symbols and, on a social level, the imagery of goods and their denotative and connotative meanings must be readable. Therefore, the nature of consumption is symbolic. Goods lose their usefulness in favor of the symbolic values and cultural associations inscribed in them. Conspicuous consumption is the manifestation of symbolic consumption. Many diverse social motives underlay conspicuous consumption. In Veblen's terms, conspicuous consumption is a means to confirm power and status. Nowadays, conspicuous consumption has become a tool for self-expression. The motives of conspicuous consumption might be also analyzed from the perspective of evolutionary psychology. In this approach, conspicuous consumption is regarded as a strategy chosen by individuals to signal their social status through the use of the symbols of prestige (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Saad & Vongas, 2009; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014).

The research focuses on relationships between materialism and conspicuous consumption. Contrary to previous studies, here conspicuous consumption is seen as an individual trait rather than as an attitude. The purpose of this research is to establish the relationships between materialism and the propensity to conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, in this research, materialism is examined in a more detailed manner through the analysis of relationships between conspicuous consumption (study 1) and the three dimensions of materialism or the three materialistic aspirations (study 2). The purpose of the research is to answer the following questions: To what extent are success, centrality and happiness responsible for conspicuous consumption? How are materialistic aspirations, such as financial success, popularity and image, related to conspicuous consumption? To what extent are the importance and the attainment of the three materialistic aspirations responsible for conspicuous consumption?

This research has several important contributions. It focuses on two purposes. Firstly, it focuses on the relationships between the three dimensions of materialism and conspicuous consumption. Secondly, it focuses on the importance and attainment of the three materialistic aspirations and conspicuous consumption. To my knowledge, no study has explored these relationships so far. While a few previous studies have investigated the relationships between materialism and conspicuous

consumption generally (the aggregate score in the material values scale (MVS) and the aggregate index of materialistic aspiration), the present research examines the relationship between acquisition centrality, success, happiness and the propensity to conspicuous consumption. It also examines the relationship between the importance of materialistic aspirations and the attainment of materialistic aspirations (financial success, popularity and image), and the propensity to conspicuous consumption, which has not been examined so far.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

In his theory of the leisure class, Veblen (1971) [1899] claimed that the emergence of private property wealth has become a tool to show social status. Possession itself does not guarantee prestige because prestige is based on external signs and it has thus become necessary to demonstrate wealth. He described two socially-developed strategies for strengthening or improving social status; conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption. Both strategies are based on the idea of waste. While conspicuous leisure relates to wasting time by ostentatiously dealing with unproductive activities, conspicuous consumption involves wasting money by purchasing very expensive, luxury products. Veblen explained the motives of conspicuous consumption entirely from the perspective of status. Individuals engage in conspicuous consumption because of the perceived social equilibrium between price and status. Expensive, luxury consumption is a means to signal one's status by providing evidence of wealth and, therefore, status. Nowadays researchers consider the need for status signaling to be only one of the social factors inducing a propensity to conspicuous consumption. Nevertheless, the majority of research focuses on status seeking (Amatulli, Guido, & Nataraajan, 2015; Friehe & Mechtel, 2014; Kaus, 2013; Kim & Jang, 2014; Mazzocco, Rucker, Galinsky, & Anderson, 2012; O'Cass & McEwen, 2006; Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011; Rucker & Galinsky, 2009; Saad & Vongas, 2009; Truong, Simmons, McColl, & Kitchen, 2008). The need to be unique and the need to be similar to significant others are also responsible for the propensity to conspicuous consumption (Amaldoss & Jain, 2008; Chaudhuri & Mazumdar, 2006, 2010; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012, 2014; Leibenstein, 1950; Niesiołędzka, 2018; Tsai, Yang, & Liu, 2013; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). The need to be unique underlies the snob effect and is associated with the search for unusual, original and unique products. The desire to be fashionable and the need to belong to, and be approved by, aspirational groups

are responsible for the bandwagon effect and manifest themselves in the search for fashionable products used by significant others (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). The symbolic meaning of products used by significant others helps individuals to construct, maintain, and express a desired identity. Therefore, individuals choose products congruent with the social image of aspirational groups, especially famous people (Niesiobędzka, 2018).

Chaudhuri and Mazumdar (2006) emphasize that in modern capitalism very expensive products (e.g., diamonds) were used by the nobility and the upper class to demonstrate social power and status. In turn, in post-modern society, primary objects of consumption have become images and experiences used by the middle class and the masses as vehicles to express the inner self, to signal uniqueness and similarity with significant contemporary others (e.g., pop stars, celebrities) more than status. The nature of conspicuous consumption has become more discrete. It is not only wealth, but taste that gains in importance (Berger & Ward, 2010). Individuals with exclusive taste but less money might exhibit their uniqueness through product selection and usage (Chaudhuri & Mazumdar, 2010). Contrary to other researchers, Chaudhuri, Mazumdar and Ghoshal (2011) do not treat conspicuous consumption as an attitudinal variable, but as an individualistic one, and define it as “a deliberative engagement in symbolic and visible purchase, possession and usage of products and services imbued with scarce economic and cultural capital with the motivation to communicate a distinctive self-image to others” (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghoshal, 2011, p. 217). Thus, conspicuous consumption might be treated as an innate trait that motivates individuals to engage in visible forms of consumption. This approach not only opens a new perspective for understanding and exploring conspicuous consumption, but also recognizes the inner sources of preference for a certain product, which is deeply connected with self and the symbolic construction of identity. Most of the recent studies have analyzed conspicuous consumption as an attitude. This research explores the predictors of conspicuous consumption operationalized as an individualistic variable – an inner trait.

Data demonstrate greater propensity of men to conspicuous consumption than women. To answer question why men engage in expensive and visible consumption, researchers appeal to costly signaling theory, which relates to the handicap principle (Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997). Theory suggests that the high cost of signals guarantees their reliability. In line with handicap principle, only animals in superior fitness may afford to devour many resources to send costly signals, which as features are for them only a burden. Miller (2000) extends the handicap principle to humanity and claims that signaling process of superior fitness has primary importance to the most sexual reproduction species, inclusively human one.

Individuals who present themselves the most convincingly attract more sexual partners and also repel the strongest rivals. Demonstration of wealth by men fulfills the same role as peacock tail – communicates competitive edge. Conspicuous consumption is regarded as a strategy chosen by men to signal their social status through the use of prestige symbols. Griskevicius et al. (2007) showed that inducing mating goals in men increased their willingness to spend more money on luxurious and visible goods, but not on basic necessities. In turn, mating motivation in women did not increase conspicuous consumption. It is worth to consider that women also utilize signaling function of luxury products. However men use conspicuous luxury products to attract mates, women use such products to deter female rivals. Data showed that luxurious goods are used by women to signal the extent to which romantic partner is committed and cares about them. Thus, activating a motive to guard one's mate triggered in women desire for conspicuous consumption, especially when the luxurious products can be seen by other women who pose a threat to the relationship (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014).

MATERIALISM

In the literature, materialism is treated as an attitude, a belief, a value, as well as an individual trait or as a complex of behavior patterns determining a life style. Belk (1985) treats materialism as the importance that people attach to possessions, and connects it with personality traits, such as envy, possessiveness and lack of generosity. Envy relates to a desire for others' possessions, the lack of generosity denotes unwillingness to share, give, lend or assign ownership to others, and possessiveness refers to a desire for a greater control over possessions. Contrary to Belk, Richins and Dawson (1992) do not see materialism as personality traits, but as values. Richins and Dawson (1992) define materialism as values that guide the selection of possessions and behavior in consumer-related situations. There are three key aspects of the phenomenon: centrality, success and happiness. The first one – acquisition centrality – refers to the importance attached to acquiring material possessions as the primary life goal. The second aspect is connected with the belief that one's own and others' successes can be estimated by the quantity and quality of material goods. The last aspect refers to the belief in a close relationship between ownership and happiness, and treats the acquisition of goods as a happiness indicator.

Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996) distinguish between two kinds of life goals and aspirations: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic aspirations refer to affiliation with others, personal development, and community involvement. They fulfill the basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence and relatedness. In contrast,

extrinsic goals are concerned with aspirations for financial success, fame and attractive appearance. These materialistic goals demonstrate how important and valuable it is to prioritize the acquisition of goods and money and of being attractive and admired. Individuals who pursue extrinsic goals tend to fulfill the need to have and are concerned about how they are perceived by others.

Materialists consider the possession of goods as a sign of success and a source of satisfaction with life. They put material acquisition in the center of their lives. Materialistic consumers tend to assign greater importance to items that can be worn or seen in public, and they use goods to impress others. Kim and Jang (2014) have demonstrated that materialism positively relates to the extent to which individuals seek to improve their social status through status consumption in upscale cafés. Materialism also increases the tendency to construct one's own identity and enhance self-concept by integrating the symbolic meanings of products into identity (Belk, 1985; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Luxury products can be particularly helpful in the accomplishment of these objectives. Data demonstrates that materialistic consumers are generally more interested in luxury – they can talk about luxury for hours (Gil, Kwon, Good, & Johnson, 2012), estimate luxury more positively (Gil, Kwon, Good, & Johnson, 2012; Lee & Hwang, 2011), and engage in luxury consumption more frequently than less materialistic individuals (Hudders & Pandelaere, 2012). A luxury brand might serve as an indicator of a product's prestige, a status symbol, a means to improve one's own image and a source of self-directed pleasure (Tsai, 2005; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

The present study focuses on the socially-oriented motives of consumption. Although many researchers have treated materialism as the main driver of consumer behavior, only a few studies examined mutual relationships between conspicuous consumption and materialism. Troung (2010) has confirmed significant relationships between personal aspiration and conspicuous consumption. Extrinsically motivated respondents engage in purchasing luxury brands primarily for prestige, then for quality and the pursuit of self-directed pleasure. The last two motives are the drivers of luxury consumption for consumers who value intrinsic aspirations rather than a product's prestige. The relationships between intrinsic aspirations and luxury status-oriented consumption are significant, but negative. Podoshen, Li and Zhang (2011) have demonstrated a significant positive correlation between materialism and conspicuous consumption in samples of both young Americans and young Chinese people. Furthermore, materialism was an important predictor of conspicuous consumption in the sample of Americans (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). In both studies, materialism was measured as a value using the MVS (Richins, 2004), and only an overall relationship between conspicuous

consumption and materialism was analyzed. Thus, it seems to be necessary to perform further, more detailed analysis, which will include the three dimensions of materialism – success, centrality, and happiness. Furthermore, in the previous studies, conspicuous consumption was defined as an attitude and not as an individual trait. The purpose of this research is to establish the relationships between materialism and conspicuous consumption defined as a personality trait. Moreover, data demonstrated that men are more materialistic than women, and are more likely to associate material possessions with own success and happiness (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997, Kamineni, 2005, Robert & Clement, 2007). Thus, in the presented study, gender is treated as mediator of the relationships between materialism and conspicuous consumption. In the study, materialism is examined in a more detailed manner through the analysis of relationships between conspicuous consumption and the three dimensions of materialism or the three materialistic aspirations. The purpose of the research is to answer the following questions: To what extent are success, centrality and happiness responsible for conspicuous consumption? How are materialistic aspirations, such as financial success, popularity and image, related to conspicuous consumption? To what extent are the importance and attainment of the three materialistic aspirations responsible for conspicuous consumption? What is the role of gender? Whether gender moderates the relation between materialism and conspicuous consumption? In order to better understand the relationships between materialism and conspicuous consumption, I conducted two studies. Materialism was measured using the MVS (Richins, 2004) in study 1, and the Aspiration Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) in study 2. In both studies, the measure of the propensity to conspicuous consumption was the same.

RESULTS

STUDY 1

The research involved 80 individuals, including 48 women and 32 men, aged $M = 23.19$ ($SD = 10.44$).

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

The conspicuous consumption orientation scale (CCO) (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghoshal, 2011; Polish own adaptation) was used to measure conspicuous consumption. The scale is uni-dimensional and contains 11 items reflecting the various manifestations of one's own status, taste and uniqueness manifested by a visible consumption of goods (*I buy some products because I want to show oth-*

ers that I am wealthy; I choose products or brands to create my own style; I buy some products because I want to show others that I am wealthy and that everybody admires me). Participants estimated how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 6 (“strongly agree”). The reliability of the scale was excellent $\alpha = .95$.

The present research used the short nine-item version of the MVS (Richins, 2004; Polish adaptation by Górnik-Durose, 2016) to examine materialism. The scale includes three measures for each of the factors that make up materialism – centrality (*I like a lot of luxury in my life*), success (*I like to own things that impress people*), and happiness (*My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have*). Participants had to answer how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a five-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). The reliability of the MVS was satisfying $\alpha = .88$, and the reliability of the sub-scales was as follows: centrality $\alpha = .54$, success $\alpha = .83$, and happiness $\alpha = .85$.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between materialism and propensity to conspicuous consumption. Data showed positive, strong relationships especially between conspicuous consumption and the belief that success might be estimated based on material goods possessed ($r = .68, p = .001$). Positive relationships were also noted between acquisition centrality and conspicuous consumption ($r = .61, p = .001$). The correlation between conspicuous consumption and the belief that acquisition might serve as the indicator of happiness was significant, but slightly weaker ($r = .46, p = .001$) (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between dimensions of materialism and conspicuous consumption

	M	SD	CCO
Centrality	3.23	.80	.61**
Success	2.96	1.13	.68**
Happiness	3.44	1.18	.46**
Materialism (MSV)	3.21	.91	.65**
Conspicuous consumption (CCO)	3.44	1.40	

*** $p < .001$

Hierarchical regression analysis with gender as moderator was carried out in order to establish relationships between each dimension of materialism and propensity to conspicuous consumption. Before performing the analysis, variables were standardized and moderator was centered (+1 man, -1 woman). Table

2 presents the results of this analysis. The first testing model was well fitted to the data ($F_{(3,76)} = 24.48; p = .001$) and explained 47% of variance of conspicuous consumption (*Adjusted R*² = .47). The propensity to conspicuous consumption was significantly related to the belief that one’s own and others’ successes can be judged by ownership ($\beta = .48, p = .001$) and acquisition centrality ($\beta = .33, p = .003$). The belief in close relationships between ownership and happiness was a non-significant predictor of conspicuous consumption ($\beta = -.06, p = .61$). Introduction of gender to the model significantly, but to a small extent, increased the percentage of the explained variance (*Change Adjusted R*² = .04; $F_{(1,75)} = 6.48, p = .013$). The relationship between gender and conspicuous consumption was significant ($\beta = .21, p = .013$) and demonstrated higher propensity to conspicuous consumption in men than in women. The second testing model was also *statistically significant* ($F_{(4,75)} = 21.29; p = .001$) and explained 51% of variance of conspicuous consumption (*Adjusted R*² = .51). Contrary to the expectations, the interaction effects were non-significant, and introducing them to the model did not change significantly explained variance (*Change Adjusted R*² = .03; $F_{(3,72)} = 1.33, p = .271$).

Table 2. Gender as moderator in relationships between dimensions of materialism and conspicuous consumption

	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β
Centrality	.33**	.42***	.47***
Success	.48***	.41***	.45***
Happiness	-.06	-.08	-.10
Gender		.21**	.23**
Centrality x Gender			.18
Success x Gender			-.03
Happiness x Gender			-.002

**** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

STUDY 2

The sample consisted of 169 participants, including 82 women and 87 men, aged $M = 32.91$ ($SD = 10.83$).

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

Conspicuous consumption was measured using the same scale – CCO (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghoshal, 2011). The reliability of the scale was excellent $\alpha = .93$.

The Aspiration Index was used to measure materialism (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Polish adaptation by Zawadzka, Duda, Rymkiewicz, & Kondratowicz-Nowak, 2015). The index consists of three goals: financial success (*to be a very wealthy person*), popularity (*to have one's name known by many people*) and image (*to successfully hide the signs of aging*). Respondents gave answers to two questions using a seven-point scale. The first question was “How important is this goal to you?” (from 1 = not at all, to 7 = very important). The second question was “How much of this goal have you already attained?” (from 1 = not at all, to 7 = very important). The reliability of the sub-scales used to measure each of the aspirations was: financial success $\alpha = .91$, popularity $\alpha = .88$, image $\alpha = .92$. The reliability of the sub-scales used to measure the importance of each of the aspirations was as follows: financial success $\alpha = .88$, popularity $\alpha = .81$, image $\alpha = .85$. The reliability of the sub-scales used to measure the attainment of each of the aspirations was: financial success $\alpha = .91$, popularity $\alpha = .84$, image $\alpha = .85$.

RESULTS

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between materialistic goals, the importance and the attainment of materialistic goals and the propensity to conspicuous consumption. Correlational analysis showed significant, positive relationships between the importance and attainment of materialistic goals and conspicuous consumption. Particularly high correlations were noted between the importance ($r = .74, p = .001$) and attainment of image ($r = .71, p = .001$) and conspicuous consumption.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between the importance and attainment of materialistic goals, and conspicuous consumption

	M	SD	Conspicuous consumption
IMPORTANCE			
Financial success	4.39	1.63	.58**
Popularity	2.68	1.45	.47**
Image	4.05	1.54	.65**
ATTAINMENT			
Financial success	3.07	1.46	.46**
Popularity	2.25	1.25	.34**
Image	3.28	1.41	.63**
Conspicuous consumption	2.83	1.11	

*** $p < .001$

Regression analysis demonstrated that in contrast to image ($\beta = .52, p = .001$) and financial success ($\beta = .28, p = .001$), popularity ($\beta = .07, p = .26$) had no impact on conspicuous consumption. The testing model was well fitted to the data ($F_{(3,165)} = 94.98; p = .001$) and explained 63% of variance of conspicuous consumption (*Adjusted R*² = .63).

In order to make a more detailed analysis of the relationships between the importance and attainment of materialistic goals and conspicuous consumption, hierarchical regression analysis was applied with gender as moderator. Before performing the analysis, variables were standardized and moderator was centered (+1 man, -1 woman). The results are presented in Table 4. The first testing model was *statistically significant* ($F_{(6,162)} = 54.12; p = .001$) and explained 66 % of variance of conspicuous consumption (*Adjusted R*² = .66). The regression analysis revealed significant positive relations between the importance of each materialistic goal and conspicuous consumption. This means that participants were more prone to conspicuous consumption when they assigned more importance to financial success ($\beta = .26, p = .002$), image ($\beta = .25, p = .019$) and to popularity ($\beta = .22, p = .001$). In contrast to the importance of financial success ($\beta = .07, p = .46$) and popularity ($\beta = -.087, p = .40$), the attainment of financial success and popularity had no impact on conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, the data showed that the attainment of image was a significant positive predictor of propensity to conspicuous consumption ($\beta = .24, p = .04$). Introduction of gender to the model significantly, but to a very small extent, increased the percentage of the explained variance (*Change Adjusted R*² = .01; $F_{(1,161)} = 5.80, p = .017$). The relationship between gender and conspicuous consumption was significant ($\beta = .13, p = .017$) and demonstrated higher propensity to conspicuous consumption in men than in women. The second testing model was also *statistically significant* ($F(7,161) = 48.59; p = .001$) and explained 67% of variance of conspicuous consumption (*Adjusted R*² = .67). The third model with the interaction effects was significant ($F_{(13,155)} = 31.45; p = .001$), and changed the explained variance significantly (*Change Adjusted R*² = .05; $F_{(6,155)} = 4.33, p = .001$) (Table 4).

There were two significant interactions: between gender and importance of image ($\beta = .35, p = .001$), and between gender and importance of financial success ($\beta = -.16, p = .05$). The regressions analysis conducted in women and men group demonstrated that in women group importance of financial success was significant predictor of propensity to conspicuous consumption ($\beta = .54, p = .001$), but in men group it was the importance of image ($\beta = .62, p = .001$). It means that women were more prone to conspicuous consumption when they assigned more importance to financial success. In turn, in men group importance of image enhanced willing-

Table 4. Gender as moderator in relationships between importance and attainment of materialistic goals and conspicuous consumption

	Model 1 β	Model 1 β	Model 1 β
Financial Success Importance	.26***	.19*	.28***
Popularity Importance	.22**	.21**	.16**
Image Importance	.25**	.36***	.29**
Financial Success Attainment	.07	.04	.01
Popularity Attainment	-.07	-.08	-.04
Image Attainment	.24*	.24*	.22*
Gender		.13*	.10
Financial Success Importance x Gender			-.16*
Popularity Importance x Gender			-.02
Image Importance x Gender			.35***
Financial Success Attainment x Gender			-.13
Popularity Attainment x Gender			-.05
Image Attainment x Gender			.01

**** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

ness to engage in visible forms of consumption. Two models were well fitted to data (women: $F_{(6,75)} = 26.10$; $p = .001$; men: $F_{(6,80)} = 39.52$; $p = .001$) and explained high percentage of dependent variable variance (women: *Adjusted R*² = .65; men: *Adjusted R*² = .73).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research is to establish relationships between materialism and the propensity to conspicuous consumption. In the two studies conducted, conspicuous consumption was not considered as an attitudinal variable, but as an inner trait which motivated individuals to communicate a distinctive self-image through engagement in visible consumption (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghoshal, 2011). Furthermore, the relationships between materialism and conspicuous consumption were examined in more detail. Firstly, materialism was measured with different scales in two separate studies. A short, nine-item version of the MVS (Richins, 2004) was used in study 1, and the Aspiration Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) was used in study 2. Secondly, not only were the overall relationships between conspicuous consumption and materialism analyzed, but the relationships

between conspicuous consumption and the three dimensions of materialism were also explored. The purpose of the research was twofold: to establish to what extent are a) success, centrality, happiness, and b) the importance and the attainment of wealth, popularity and image responsible for conspicuous consumption. The current research confirmed the results of previous studies and demonstrated a significant, positive correlation between materialism and conspicuous consumption (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012; Podoshen, Li, & Zhang, 2011). Furthermore, the propensity to conspicuous consumption was significantly related to only two dimensions of materialism – success and centrality. The belief that one's own and others' successes can be judged by ownership, as well as the importance attached to owning and acquiring as the primary life goals enhanced the propensity to conspicuous consumption. The third dimension of materialism – the belief in close relationships between ownership and happiness – was a non-significant predictor of the propensity to conspicuous consumption.

The data obtained also demonstrated a significant relationship between extrinsic personal aspirations and the propensity to conspicuous consumption. The findings are in line with results previously obtained (Truong, 2010). Furthermore, the research revealed significant positive relationships between the importance of each materialistic goal and the propensity to conspicuous consumption. It means that the more individuals value being attractive and admired, as well as prioritizing the acquisition of goods and the attainment of money, the more they engage in visible consumption to communicate self-image. Moreover, the results showed that while the importance of financial success and popularity enhanced the propensity to conspicuous consumption, attainment of financial and popularity aspirations had no impact on the propensity to conspicuous consumption. In contrast to these two aspirations, image was a significant positive predictor of the propensity to conspicuous consumption. Thereby, even the attainment of a socially admired image does not reduce motivation to perform visible forms of consumption. The research findings suggest that image is the extrinsic aspiration that is primarily responsible for the relationship between personal materialistic aspirations and the propensity to conspicuous consumption. Individuals (especially men) who value and pursue this extrinsic goal tend to buy high-priced brands, show others their wealth and original taste, and exhibit unusual consumption habits. This means that the crucial materialistic drivers of the propensity to conspicuous consumption are: the belief that success is closely connected with ownership; the conviction that owning and acquiring are the primary life goals; and the need to have a socially admired image.

The results did not support moderating role of gender in the relationships between materialism and conspicuous consumption in the study 1. Only two inter-

action effects were significant in study 2: between gender and importance of image, and between gender and importance of financial success. Data demonstrated that women were more prone to conspicuous consumption when they assigned more importance to financial success, but men's willingness to engage in visible forms of consumption enhanced importance of image.

The novelty of this research is that it demonstrates more complex relationships between materialism and conspicuous consumption indicating which dimensions of materialism strengthen conspicuous consumption. The current research has its limitations. In order to expand the results, further research should be carried out to examine the relationships between materialism and conspicuous consumption considered simultaneously as an inner trait and an attitude. Moreover, the research should be carried out in an experimental setting. This research is questionnaire-based and so the current findings are correlational.

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