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Research Paper

The Moderating Role of Self-Concept Clarity in the Relationship between Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence and Conspicuous Consumption.

Özgür Kılınç *
Serdar Yıldız **
Ali Arıcı ***

ABSTRACT

This study analyses the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence (SII) and conspicuous consumption (CC), and the moderating effect of self-concept clarity (SCC) in this relationship. The participants (n=427) responded to the online questionnaire in this cross-sectional survey research. In addition to correlation analysis, we tested the moderation effect via the Hayes Process Macro. Results indicated a positive, significant, and strong relationship between SII and CC. SCC was negatively related to both SII and CC. The study revealed that SCC moderates the relationship between SII and CC. Therefore, as the level of SII increases, the tendency to CC also increases, but SCC negatively affects this positive relationship.

Keywords: Self-concept clarity; susceptibility to interpersonal influence; conspicuous consumption; the self; consumption

* İnönü University, Malatya, Turkey. Email: ozgur.kilinc@inonu.edu.tr

** Anadolu University, Eskişehir, Turkey. Email: serdar.y@anadolu.edu.tr

*** Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University, Bilecik, Turkey. Email: ali.arici@bilecik.edu.tr

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1. INTRODUCTION

Consumption behavior is a complex process that involves a wide range of motivations and influences. Today's consumer considers consumption not only as a matter of needs but also within a symbolic and social context. The conspicuous consumption phenomenon is an example of consumption practices shaped by factors such as the desire to establish social networks and resemble high social classes (Patsiaouras & Fitchett, 2012), the effort to improve social status (Eastman et al., 1999) and to manage status anxiety (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2010). Conspicuous consumption, a fundamental consumer behavior discussed since Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), has taken on different dimensions, especially in recent years, with the influence of social media. Social media platforms, influencer culture, and algorithmically amplified visibility have transformed how consumers observe, evaluate, and imitate others. The transformation of users into content producers, the presentation of daily life, including acts of consumption, on social media, and the new consumption culture created by influencers as new opinion leaders are the new triggers behind conspicuous consumption behavior.

Another important concept that emerges in relation to these social foundations of consumption is interpersonal influence. In addition to the efforts of brands to shape consumption behavior, interpersonal influence is an important determinant of consumer behavior (Calder & Burnkrant, 1977). The developments described above as the motivations behind conspicuous consumption also cause the concept of interpersonal influence to gain more importance. Users who have the power to produce and publish content can disseminate information and content with the potential for interpersonal influence in a variety of ways, from word-of-mouth communication in the form of customer reviews to more sophisticated streaming practices. The realization of such influence depends on susceptibility to interpersonal influence, which explains how individuals are affected by others (Hoffmann & Broekhuizen, 2009). Individuals' level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence shapes their consumption practices based on this influence (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012).

Conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence, which are based on a similar psychological background and stand out in the social and symbolic dimension of consumption, are interrelated constructs. Considering that external (social) influences play a role in conspicuous consumption (Eastman & Eastman, 2015), the role of interpersonal influence in this tendency will be more evident. Previous studies emphasize that interpersonal influence can affect conspicuous consumption (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). In particular, consumers with low socio-economic status may engage in conspicuous consumption with the motivation of acquiring status (Wang et al., 2022).

The complex nature of consumer behavior and the human being requires examining different variables that have the potential to affect the relationship between conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence. The concept of self-concept clarity, which comes to the fore in this context, explains the status in which individuals' beliefs about their selves are internally consistent and stable (Campbell et al., 1996, 141). Individuals with low self-concept clarity tend to be more sensitive to the evaluations of others (Servidio et al., 2021; Wang & Yu, 2023) and thus more open to interpersonal influence (Isaksen & Roper, 2008; Mittal, 2015). This shapes behaviors such as following others' recommendations for products/services (Lee et al., 2010) and motivations like social consumption (Gil et al., 2017). While prior research has examined these constructs individually or through direct relationships, limited research has investigated how they interact within an integrated framework. Previous research suggests that self-concept clarity is negatively related to conspicuous consumption, as it is with susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Chakraborty & Chattaraman, 2025). In other words, low self-concept clarity increases the tendency towards conspicuous consumption (Wang et al., 2023).

This study examines the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence, conspicuous consumption, and self-concept clarity to contribute to the discussion summarized above. More specifically, this study proposes a moderated model in which self-concept clarity acts as a psychological mechanism that reduces the effect of interpersonal influence on conspicuous consumption. Although the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption has been examined in various contexts, explaining these variables on a holistic model by considering the moderating role of self-concept clarity in this relationship will contribute to this discussion.

In addition, culture is also an important determinant in the complex structure of consumption behavior. Like many other social phenomena, the cultures of societies also affect consumption practices. All the variables discussed in this study may differ according to cultural characteristics. Previous studies have shown that conspicuous consumption tendency yields different results regarding individualistic and collectivistic cultural characteristics (Souiden et al., 2011) or the power distance variable (Park et al., 2023). In particular, individualistic or collectivistic cultural orientation is a determinant of susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Kabir & Sarker, 2015; Kongsompong et al., 2009; Murali et al., 2005) and self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996; Ma & Schoeneman, 1997) as well as conspicuous consumption. This study is also important in terms of providing an example from Türkiye to the literature, which is primarily composed of studies conducted in Western countries. Accordingly, this study contributes to the literature by integrating interpersonal influence and self-related constructs within a unified framework, highlighting the moderating role of self-concept clarity as an underlying psychological mechanism, and providing empirical evidence from a non-Western, collectivist cultural context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Susceptibility to interpersonal influence (SII)

Interpersonal influence, an important determinant of consumer behavior (Calder & Burnkrant, 1977), involves persuading and influencing others (Cheah & Phau, 2011) and plays a role in consumer decision-making processes through reference groups (Rosen & Olshavsky, 1987). Accordingly, susceptibility to interpersonal influence is an important variable in understanding consumer behavior (Bearden et al., 1989) and refers to how individuals are influenced by others regarding their consumption decisions (Kropp et al., 2005). The extent of the potential influence depends on individuals' susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Hoffmann & Broekhuizen, 2009). Consumers with a high level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence are more likely to be influenced by others. Bearden et al. (1989, 474) define susceptibility to interpersonal influence as follows:

"The need to identify or enhance one's image with significant others through the acquisition and use of products and brands, the willingness to conform to the expectations of others regarding purchase decisions, and/or the tendency to learn about products and services by observing others and/or seeking information from others."

Based on the above definition, susceptibility to interpersonal influence is related to other people whom one perceives as important. Reference groups, family, and the broader social environment are part of this sphere of influence. In contemporary consumption environments, this sphere has expanded to include digital actors, making interpersonal influence more visible and scalable.

In the digital era, susceptibility to interpersonal influence is not limited to immediate social circles but is increasingly shaped by influencers, other users, and online communities. Consumers with high susceptibility to interpersonal influence are more likely to be affected by online reviews (Lee & Ma, 2012), exposure to social media influencers drives social comparisons and increases conspicuous product purchases (Dinh & Lee, 2024), consumers seeking social status and conspicuity feel more aligned with mega influencers (Pangarkar, & Rathee, 2023). Thus, consumer behavior is shaped not only by traditional social environments but also by digitally mediated interactions.

Interpersonal influence has two dimensions: informational and normative (Schroeder, 1996, 585). Informational influence refers to requesting information or obtaining it through observation, while normative influence refers to individuals using others' norms, values, and behaviors as models (Mourali et al., 2005, 165). While normative influence involves obtaining the approval of others, informational influence involves consulting others (Bone, 1995, 216). Normative influence has two sub-dimensions: "value expressive", which emphasizes the individual's definition of his/her own image in the eyes of others, and "utilitarian", which emphasizes the desire to conform to the expectations of others (Kropp et al., 2005, 9). This distinction suggests that interpersonal influence operates both as a source of information and as a mechanism of social conformity, shaping not only what consumers know but also how they wish to be perceived. In this framework, while consumers' online or offline search for information about a brand is related to the informational dimension of interpersonal influence, the reference to the norms of others in consumption practice is related to the normative dimension.

Previous research suggests that attention to social comparison information is positively related to susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Clark & Goldsmith, 2006), normative influences lead to interest in fashionable clothing (Khare et al., 2011), peer normative influence has a relatively more substantial effect on both materialism and compulsive buying rather than parental informational influence (Roberts et al., 2008), susceptibility to interpersonal influence varies across cultures (Kropp, 2005), luxury consumption may be particularly sensitive to interpersonal influence

(Shukla, 2011), and consumers with high susceptibility to interpersonal influence have the potential to prefer status products (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012). These studies indicate that susceptibility to interpersonal influence is closely associated with status-oriented and socially visible consumption practices, making it a key antecedent of conspicuous consumption.

2.2. Conspicuous consumption (CC)

Conspicuous consumption is one of the oldest subjects in consumer behavior (Berger & Ward, 2010), and the pioneer of the concept is Thorstein Veblen (Stebbins, 2009). In his book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), which lays the foundation of the concept, Veblen emphasizes that the need to establish social networks and the desire to resemble high social classes underlie the demand for products (cited in Patsiaouras and Fitchett, 2012). The aforementioned work draws attention to people's efforts to achieve status and raise their social status in the eyes of others (Scott, 2010).

According to Veblen, conspicuous consumption plays a role in determining consumer behavior not only for the rich but also for all social classes (Trigg, 2001), and status concerns are at the forefront of conspicuous consumption (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2010). Therefore, conspicuous consumption is also a form of status consumption. Products and services can be consumed ostentatiously as an indicator of social status (Edgell, 1999). According to Eastman et al. (1999, 42), status consumption is "the motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolize status both for the individual and surrounding significant others." In this context, Sundie et al. (2011, 664) define conspicuous consumption as "attaining and exhibiting costly items to impress upon others that one possesses wealth or status." Both definitions emphasize that status is at the center of the practice of conspicuous consumption. Accordingly, consumption objects have two roles: reflecting status and acquiring status. High involvement products both reflect status and are a means of acquiring status.

Since entities play an important role in the formation and reflection of identity (Belk, 1988), individuals reflect their identities through consumption practices. In this framework, conspicuous consumption can be a way of reflecting identity and status. Witt (2010) claims that the expression of status is based on the symbolic value that some products have. Schiffman et al. (2014) argue that products that are visually striking and reflect status are more likely to be purchased based on the reactions of others. Therefore, by purchasing status-based products to make themselves more visible (Shukla, 2010), consumers enable others to make inferences about them (Berger & Ward,

2010). This visibility makes conspicuous consumption particularly sensitive to social influence, as consumers anticipate and respond to the evaluations of others.

Previous studies suggest that conspicuous consumption is an important component of materialism and is related to luxury consumption (Wu et al., 2017), the reasons for conspicuous consumption include the desire for uniqueness, attracting attention, and luxury (Griskevicius & Kenrick, 2013), interpersonal influence can affect conspicuous consumption (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999), and consumers with low socio-economic status may also engage in conspicuous consumption to compensate for their unmet status desires (Wang et al., 2022). These studies indicate that conspicuous consumption is inherently social and evaluative, making it strongly dependent on interpersonal influence and external validation.

2.3. Self-concept clarity (SCC)

Self is defined as "the beliefs, hypotheses and assumptions an individual has about himself/herself" (Coopersmith & Feldman, 1974, 199), "the qualities an individual attributes to himself/herself" (Kinch, 1963, 481) or "a thought or set of thoughts about who he/she is" (Oyserman, 2001, 500). The self has "informational components" such as traits, physical characteristics, roles, values, and goals, as well as "evaluative components" such as self-belief and self-esteem (Campbell et al., 1996, 141). The interaction between the individual and others is important in the formation process of the self (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967), and the self can be divided into two selves: the actual self and the ideal self. While the actual self is "the individual's perception of who he/she really is", the ideal self is "the individual's perception of who he/she wants to be" (Ross, 1971, 38). Self is influential on individual consumer characteristics (Malik et al., 2020), and consumers may satisfy their desire to achieve an ideal state through a product that is compatible with their ideal self rather than their actual self (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995).

One of the concepts related to the self is self-concept clarity. Self-concept clarity refers to "the extent to which beliefs about the self are clearly and confidently expressed, internally consistent and stable" (Campbell et al., 1996, 141). Although many aspects of the self are relatively stable, they can change in response to external circumstances and mood (Nezlek & Plesko, 2001). Previous studies assert that people with high self-concept clarity are physically healthier and have lower levels of loneliness (Light & Visser, 2013), low self-concept clarity increases concerns about others' evaluations (Wang & Yu, 2023), individuals with low self-concept clarity are more sensitive to socio-environmental feedback (Servidio et al., 2021), self-concept clarity strengthens

personal well-being (McIntyre, 2017), associated with self-esteem (Wu et al., 2010) and high life satisfaction (Na et al., 2018), and low self-concept clarity is related to depression and anxiety (Cicero, 2017).

In the context of consumer behavior, self-concept clarity plays a critical role in shaping how individuals respond to social influence. Within the scope of consumer psychology, self-concept clarity has been the subject of various studies. Lack of self-concept clarity leads to susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Mittal, 2015), following others' recommendations for products/services is negatively related to self-concept clarity (Lee et al., 2010), low self-concept clarity increases the tendency to consider price as a cue for product quality (Chung and Saini et al., 2022), materialism and compulsive buying are associated with low self-concept clarity (Reeves et al., 2012) and there is a negative relationship between self-concept clarity and social consumption motivation (Gil et al., 2017). Self-concept clarity may function as a boundary condition in the relationship between interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption. Specifically, when self-concept clarity is low, individuals are more vulnerable to interpersonal influence and more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption as a means of social validation. Conversely, when self-concept clarity is high, the impact of interpersonal influence on consumption behavior is expected to weaken.

2.4 Research model and hypotheses

Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) state that several psychological constructs explain conspicuous consumption. In this framework, it would be appropriate to position susceptibility to interpersonal influence and self-concept clarity as related psychological constructs.

Previous literature suggests that consumers who are open to interpersonal influence are more likely to purchase products that they think will lead others to make positive evaluations about them (Netemeyer et al., 1992), are attentive to the opinions of others (Cheng et al., 2013), and interpersonal influence is an antecedent of status consumption (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012). O'Cass and McEwen (2004) also state that interpersonal influence affects conspicuous consumption. Therefore, as susceptibility to interpersonal influence increases, the tendency towards conspicuous consumption may also increase. Susceptibility to interpersonal influence emphasizes the role of others in consumer decisions. Since external (social) influences play a role in conspicuous consumption (Eastman & Eastman, 2015), the evaluations of others are important for consumers with high susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Duan et al. (2021) state that individuals who do not have a clear sense of self feel unconfident in their judgments and, as a

result, they engage in more advice-seeking and receiving behaviors. This behavior related to seeking or receiving recommendations is also discussed in the online and offline word-of-mouth marketing literature.

We can infer from previous studies that self-concept clarity negatively affects conspicuous consumption (Chakraborty & Chattaraman, 2025), social comparison increases the tendency of consumers with low self-concept clarity to engage in conspicuous consumption (Zheng et al., 2018), self-uncertainty increases the tendency towards conspicuous consumption (Wang et al., 2023), and individuals with low self-concept clarity are open to interpersonal influence (Isaksen & Roper, 2008). Mittal (2015, 108) emphasizes that low self-concept clarity leads to "susceptibility to interpersonal influence, materialism, use of shopping as escape and products as bolsters, opinion seeking and post-purchase doubt." These studies suggest that self-concept clarity is negatively associated with both susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption, as individuals with a less clear sense of self are more likely to rely on external evaluations and social comparison processes.

In line with the above inferences, the hypotheses of the study are as follows:

H1. There is a positive and significant relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption.

H2. There is a negative and significant relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and self-concept clarity.

H3. There is a negative and significant relationship between self-concept clarity and conspicuous consumption.

H4. Self-concept clarity moderates the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption.

In this context, susceptibility to interpersonal influence reflects the extent to which individuals rely on external inputs, whereas self-concept clarity may determine how strongly these inputs are internalized. At this point, the concepts of conspicuous consumption and self-concept clarity come to the fore. Interpersonal influence affects conspicuous consumption (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004), and those with an ambiguous self-concept are more likely to seek advice from others (Duan et al., 2021). Low self-concept clarity is associated with a high level of materialism (Noguti & Bokeyar, 2014), and a clear self makes consumers less sensitive to interpersonal influence (Mittal, 2015). In this framework, the purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between susceptibility to

interpersonal influence, conspicuous consumption, and self-concept clarity and to evaluate the moderating role of self-concept clarity in the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption. Figure 1 shows the model of the study. In the research model, we positioned the variables in a structure that susceptibility to interpersonal influence as an independent variable (X), conspicuous consumption as a dependent variable (Y), and self-concept clarity as a moderating variable (W).

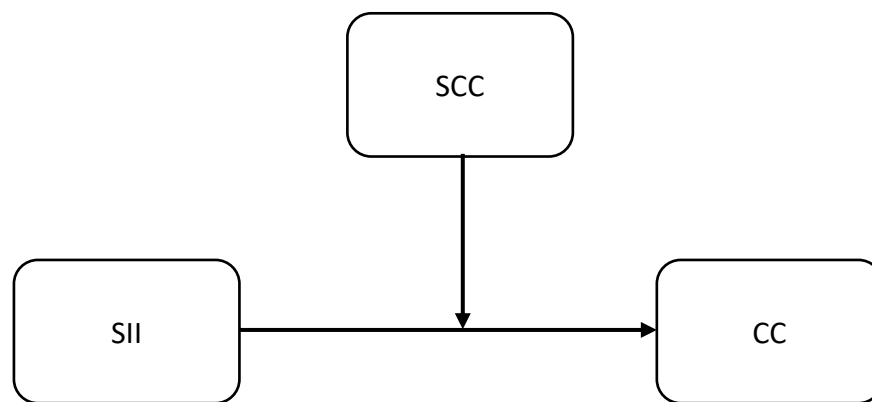


Figure 1. Research model

In this cross-sectional survey research, we aimed to examine the moderating role of SCC in the relationship between SII and CC. It is essential to note that all three variables included in the study are influenced by culture. Independent and interdependent social orientations are associated with individualism and collectivism across cultures (Kitayama & Salvador, 2024). As mentioned above specifically, an individual's cultural orientation-whether individualistic or collectivistic-affects their susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Kabir & Sarker, 2015; Kongsompong et al., 2009; Murali et al., 2005), self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996; Ma & Schoeneman, 1997), and conspicuous consumption (Zakaria et al., 2021). Thus, susceptibility to interpersonal influence, self-concept clarity, and conspicuous consumption are closely linked to cultural values.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is a cross-sectional survey research that adopts a quantitative research approach. In a cross-sectional study, the opinions of the participants are collected at a single moment (Ruel et al., 2016), and these studies offer the opportunity to determine the interrelationships between various

psychological phenomena (Dumont, 2008). Therefore, we conducted a research study to determine the relationship between dependent, independent, and moderating variables. In line with the requirements of this research approach (Burton, 2000), we defined the related concepts and constructs, established the hypotheses based on the theoretical framework, designed measurement tools, selected the participants, collected and analyzed the data, and reported the findings. The participants ($n=427$) responded to the online questionnaire. We analyzed the collected data using SPSS.

Individuals over 18 years of age constitute the population of the study. Since it was not possible to reach all of these individuals due to the limitations of the study, the data were collected using a convenience sampling technique. In the convenience sampling technique, participants are included in the sample because they are accessible (Hek & Moule, 2006). Although this method is widely used in consumer research, it may limit the generalizability of the findings beyond the sampled population.

The study employed a survey and utilized three scales in the questionnaire form. The Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence Scale was adapted from the study of Bearden et al. (1989), and the scale consists of 12 statements. Four of these statements are informational, and eight are normative (value-expressive). The Conspicuous Consumption Scale was adapted from Roy Chaudhuri et al. (2011) and consists of 11 statements. The 12-item Self-Concept Clarity Scale (10 items reverse-coded) was adapted from Campbell et al. (1996). In addition, we asked the participants demographic questions regarding age, gender, monthly income, and education level. The scales were first translated into Turkish by three researchers and then back-translated into English to check the meaning, for creating the final Turkish equivalents of the scales. The scales were structured in 5-point Likert format.

We conducted a pilot study with 50 participants to test the statements in the scales and to conduct reliability analyses. The Cronbach's Alpha values of the Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence, Conspicuous Consumption, and Self-Concept Clarity Scales were .889, .877, and .833, respectively. Since the Alpha values were above 0.8, all three scales were reliable (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). Given that the data were collected using a self-report survey, common method bias was assessed. Harman's single-factor test was conducted by loading all items onto a single factor using principal component analysis. The results indicated that the single factor accounted for

31.566% of the total variance, which is below the 50% threshold. This suggests that common method bias is not a serious concern in this study.

We also applied a normality test to examine the compliance of the research data with the normality assumption. The mean and standard deviation values of the variables were as follows: susceptibility to interpersonal influence (2.88, SD=.79194), conspicuous consumption (2.78, SD=.82638), self-concept clarity (3.17, SD=.69756). Skewness and kurtosis values were between -1 and +1, so the data were normally distributed, and evaluated in line with parametric analyses.

4. RESULTS

We analyzed the data using frequency analysis, and Pearson correlation coefficient analysis. In the moderating variable analysis, we used Model 1 in the Hayes Process Macro.

4.1. Demographics

Of the participants, 274 were female and 153 were male. 320 of the participants were between the ages of 18-29, 56 between 30-39, 40 between 40-49, and 6 between 50-59. Bachelor's degree ranked first in the distribution of education with 39.6%. Overall, the sample is predominantly composed of young and relatively well-educated individuals.

4.2. Exploratory factor analysis of SII

We applied Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to determine the construct validity and factor structure of SII. In this context, principal components and direct oblique rotation methods were utilized. Table 1 presents the distribution of items according to the factors and their corresponding factor loadings.

Table 1. EFA of SII

SII	Factor Loadings	
	1	2
Normative (value-expressive)		
I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.	.886	
If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.	.830	
If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.	.824	
I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.	.797	

When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	.758	
It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.	.494	
Informational		
If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.		.869
I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class.		.832
I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy.		.829
To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.		.510
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Sample Adequacy: .852		
Bartlett Test X²: 2056.008; df: 45; p: .000		
Eigenvalue	4.563	1.827
Explained Variance	45.633	18.272
Total Variance Explained	63.905	

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy value was .852, indicating that the sample size is adequate for EFA. If the KMO value is .60 or above, the sample size is considered sufficient (Dimitrov, 2012). On the other hand, the Bartlett Test result was found X²: 2056.008; df: 45; p: .000 (p<0.005), and this finding emphasizes that the correlations between the items are sufficiently large for EFA. The EFA results revealed that SII consists of two sub-dimensions (factors) comprising 10 items¹ and explains 63.905% of the total variance. Therefore, the result indicated that susceptibility to interpersonal influence has a valid characteristic. However, the normative (value-expressive) dimension, which is the first sub-dimension, explains 45.633% of the variance, while the second, which is informational, explains 18.272% of the variance.

4.3. Correlation analyses

Table 2 presents the findings regarding the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence, conspicuous consumption, and self-concept clarity. Accordingly, 0.01-0.20 emphasizes a weak relationship, 0.21-0.50 a moderate relationship, 0.51-0.70 a strong relationship, and 0.71-1.00 a very strong relationship (Urdan, 2017, 166).

¹ The items “I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them” and “I like to know brands and products make good impressions on others”, which are included in the normative (value-expressive) dimension, were removed and reanalyzed because they belong to the “informational” dimension.

Table 2. Correlation analyses for the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence, conspicuous consumption and self-concept clarity

		Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence	Conspicuous Consumption	Self-Concept Clarity
Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence	Pearson	1	,607	-,514
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2- tailed)		,001	,001
Conspicuous Consumption	Pearson		1	-,466
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2- tailed)			,001
Self-Concept Clarity	Pearson			1
	Correlation			

There was a positive, significant, and strong ($r=.607$) relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption. This indicates that higher levels of interpersonal influence are associated with stronger tendencies toward conspicuous consumption. On the other hand, there was a negative, significant, and strong relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and self-concept clarity ($r=-.514$). As individuals' levels of self-concept clarity decrease, their levels of susceptibility to interpersonal influence increase inversely. In other words, individuals with high levels of self-concept clarity have low levels of susceptibility to interpersonal influence. There was a negative, significant, and moderate ($r=-.466$) relationship between conspicuous consumption and self-concept clarity. So, as individuals' levels of self-concept clarity decrease, their conspicuous consumption tendencies increase. Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 were accepted.

4.4. Moderation test

To determine the moderating role of self-concept clarity in the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption, we used Model 1 in Hayes Process Macro. In the model, susceptibility to interpersonal influence was the independent (X) variable,

self-concept clarity was the moderating (W) variable, and conspicuous consumption was the dependent (Y) variable (Hayes, 2018).

Table 3. The result of moderating effect

Model Summary							
R	R²	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.6453	.4164	.4013	100.6152	3.0000	423.0000	.0000	
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
CC	Constant	2.7487	.0328	83.6962	.0000	2.6841	2.8132
	SII	.3937	.0363	10.8552	.0000	.3224	.4649
	SCC	-.1624	.0359	-4.5235	.0000	-.2330	-.0918
	SII x SCC	-.0766	.0230	-3.3352	.0009	-.1217	-.0315

The results indicated that SCC moderates the relationship between SII and CC. Thus, H4 was accepted. The model was significant and $R^2 = .4164$, indicating that 41.6% of the variance in conspicuous consumption was explained by the aforementioned constructs. SII had a significant main effect on CC, $B = .3937$, $SE = .0363$, $t = 10.85$, $p = .0000$, suggesting that higher SII was associated with higher CC levels. However, SCC had a significant negative effect on CC, $B = -.1624$, $SE = .0359$, $t = -4.52$, $p = .0000$, stating that individuals with higher SCC engage less in CC. The interaction between SII and SCC was statistically significant, $B = -.0766$, $SE = .0230$, $t = -3.33$, $p = .0009$, asserting that SCC moderates the relationship between SII and CC.

The conditional effects of SII on CC were analyzed at three levels of SCC (-1 SD, mean, +1 SD). At low SCC levels, the effect of SII on CC was strongest and most significant, $B = .4703$, $SE = .0396$, $t = 11.86$, $p = .0000$, CI [.3923, .5482]. At the average SCC level, the effect was significant, $B = .3937$, $SE = .0363$, $t = 10.85$, $p = .0000$, CI [.3224, .4649]. At high SCC levels, the effect was weaker but still significant, $B = .3171$, $SE = .0460$, $t = 6.89$, $p = .0000$, CI [.2267, .4074]. Therefore, the positive relationship between SII and CC is weaker among individuals with higher SCC. Additionally, a simple slope analysis in Figure 2 shows that at low SCC levels, the effect of SII on CC is much stronger than at high SCC levels. Specifically, at low SCC levels (-1 SD), SII was a stronger predictor of CC, $b = 0.47$. At average SCC levels, the effect was moderate, $b = 0.39$, while at high SCC levels (+1 SD), the effect was weakest, $b = 0.32$. In other words, the effect of SII on

CC is strongest at low levels of SCC (blue line), moderate at average levels (red line), and weakest at high levels of SCC (green line). This indicates that SCC significantly moderates the relationship between SII and CC. This suggests that individuals with lower SCC are more susceptible to interpersonal influence and, consequently, more likely to engage in CC. In other words, when SCC is low, SII has a stronger effect on conspicuous consumption.

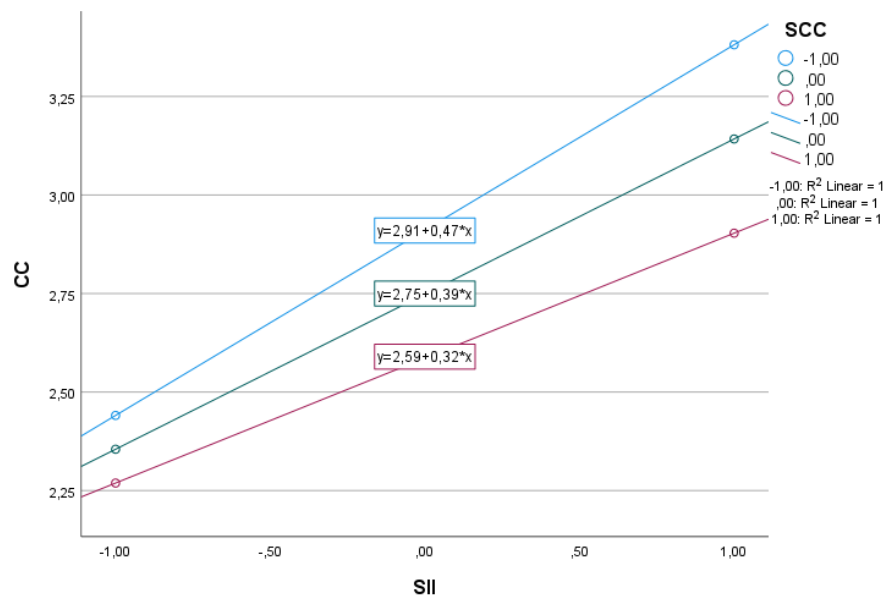


Figure 2. Simple slope analysis

5. DISCUSSION

Consumers influence each other by their recommendations, and especially with digitalization, online reviews have an impact on attitudes towards the brand and purchase decisions. In particular, consumers who are prone to conspicuous consumption, which implies "status consumption", are thought to be more likely to follow the recommendations of others. Psychological constructs can guide consumer behavior. Self-concept clarity, as one of these constructs, emphasizes the extent to which an individual defines himself/herself consistently. In this framework, the study analyzed the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence, conspicuous consumption, and self-concept clarity, and also the moderating role of self-concept clarity in the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption.

The research, which revealed a positive, significant, and strong relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption, is consistent with previous studies (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012). This finding reinforces the argument that socially driven evaluations play a central role in shaping conspicuous consumption behavior.

On the other hand, the negative, significant, and strong relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and self-concept clarity implies that the individual moves away from interpersonal influence as his/her self-concept clarity is high. An ambiguous self-concept clarity is positively related to interpersonal influence. This finding supports previous studies (Servidio et al., 2021; Wang & Yu, 2023), which explain that individuals with low self-concept clarity are more sensitive to other individuals' evaluations. Similarly, the negative and significant relationship between conspicuous consumption and self-concept clarity indicates that as individuals' levels of self-concept clarity increase, their tendency towards conspicuous consumption decreases. This finding is in line with previous studies (Chakraborty & Chattaraman, 2025; Wang et al., 2022) that draw attention to the negative relationship between these two variables.

The study revealed that self-concept clarity moderates the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption. Therefore, as the level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence increases, the tendency to conspicuous consumption also increases, but self-concept clarity negatively affects this positive relationship. This moderating effect suggests that self-concept clarity functions as a psychological mechanism that regulates the extent to which social influence translates into consumption behavior. In other words, although consumers are open to interpersonal influence, as their level of self-concept clarity increases, their tendency towards conspicuous consumption will decrease. Susceptibility to interpersonal influence and self-concept clarity together explain 41.6% of the variance in conspicuous consumption. These findings highlight the complex and multidimensional nature of consumer behavior, which is influenced by several psychological constructs.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by integrating interpersonal influence and self-related constructs within a single framework and by demonstrating the conditional role of self-concept clarity in shaping conspicuous consumption. From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that marketing strategies based on social influence-such as influencer marketing, user-generated content, and social proof-may be particularly effective

among consumers with lower levels of self-concept clarity. This situation concretizes the importance of brands to understand consumers in terms of psychographic variables in their communicative activities. Since the opinions of others are important in the consumption practices of individuals with a high level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence, collaborative brand activities such as influencer marketing become increasingly important. The fact that most consumer behavior is "socially based" (Kirmani & Ferraro, 2017, 415) makes brand-influencer collaborations more meaningful.

Consumer behavior and the motivations behind it may differ across cultures, so this study provides an example from Türkiye to contribute to the consumer research. In terms of the social dimension of consumption, especially the individualist-collectivist culture difference and the power distance dimension are directly related to the phenomena examined in this study. In this regard, the findings also highlight the relevance of cultural context, as collectivist orientations may further strengthen susceptibility to interpersonal influence and its impact on consumption behavior. Turkish society is generally collectivist and has a high power distance (Hofstede, 2025). Collectivism-oriented culture affects consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Kabir & Sarker, 2015). High collectivist orientation involves a high level of social influence (Kongsompong et al., 2009). Although the values of susceptibility to interpersonal influence in the sample of this study were slightly above the average, particularly the values in the informational dimension of the scale were high. Therefore, the expected interpersonal influence in collectivist societies emerged in this study more in the informational dimension than in the normative dimension.

Conspicuous consumption is considered to be higher in individualistic cultures, but in collectivistic cultures as well, social status plays an important role in influencing consumers' self-esteem (Souiden et al., 2011). The conspicuous consumption tendencies of consumers with high power distance are mediated by status needs (Park et al., 2023). The cultural context may shape not only the level of conspicuous consumption but also the mechanisms through which it occurs. This study revealed the relationship between conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence, but highlighted the moderating role of self-concept clarity in this relationship.

6. CONCLUSION

We observed that individuals with low self-concept clarity were both more open to interpersonal influence and showed higher levels of conspicuous consumption tendency. These findings are important for understanding consumer trends in Türkiye and societies with similar cultural structures.

Today, social and symbolic values shape consumption practices in many societies. Digital platforms that enable user participation, particularly social media, have brought interaction opportunities, which were previously possible only through interpersonal communication, to new and more sophisticated environments. These interactions grow both the interpersonal influence behind consumption practices and the tendency towards conspicuous consumption, which is a consumer behavior compatible with this social environment. The moderating role of self-concept clarity in this relationship, as revealed in this study, offers meaningful implications for brands. This finding is especially important concerning consumers with relatively low self-concept clarity, such as young individuals. This study reemphasizes the importance of user content in different forms, from consumer reviews to influencer communication, for brands, particularly targeting such consumers.

Based on survey data, this study has demonstrated the relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence, conspicuous consumption, and self-concept clarity within a holistic model. Despite its contributions, the study has some limitations. First, the use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the cross-sectional design restricts causal interpretations. It will contribute to the field if future research examines these phenomena with a qualitative evaluation or experimental research with a clearer contextual framework. In addition, considering the cultural dimension of these phenomena, studies that focus on distinctive cultures, as well as studies that offer cross-cultural comparisons, would be extremely valuable.

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