

Does Envy, Self Esteem and Social Norms on Instagram Lead to Conspicuous Consumption and Overspending?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how envy of others affects the conspicuous consumption and overspending habits of Instagram users. Additionally, the study aims to examine the effect of self-esteem and social norms on conspicuous consumption and overspending. This empirical study used a proposed model, which was tested through the distribution of questionnaires to a sample of 346 Turkish Instagram users. Path analyses were performed to validate the research hypothesis. The study findings elicited the effect of Instagram users' envy towards others has a significant and positive effect on both conspicuous consumption and overspending. Additionally, the study found that injunctive norms, which reflect the perceived social approval or disapproval of others, have a direct and positive effect on conspicuous consumption. On the other hand, descriptive norms, representing the perception of others' actual behavior, did not have a direct effect on conspicuous consumption. Regarding self-esteem, the results did not support the hypothesis that self-esteem has a direct and positive effect on conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, the study found a significant and positive relationship between conspicuous consumption and overspending, indicating that individuals who engage in conspicuous consumption are more likely to exceed their budget limits and engage in impulsive buying behaviors.

Keywords: *Envy, Conspicuous Consumption, Overspending, Social Norms, Social Media.*



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1. INTRODUCTION

Through social media tools like Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, and Facebook, communication breaks down virtual boundaries and enables people from different parts of the world to instantly be aware of one another. As of 2024, the number of social media users worldwide has surpassed 5 billion, indicating the profound integration of these platforms into daily life. The average user now spends over 2 hours and 23 minutes per day on social media, engaging in various activities such as sharing content, communicating, and consuming media (We Are Social, 2024). As a result of this interaction, a large virtual community is emerging that is increasingly alike and influencing each other, with a growing number of people can be observed wearing the same brands, visiting the same places, and applying the same makeup. Studies have shown that people's influences on others are important determinants of their consumption behavior (Abrams, 1994; Lascu et al., 1995; Terry & Hogg, 1996; Taylor & Strutton, 2016; Gümüş, 2019; Güneş, 2023; Loureiro et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2024). Due to the opportunities provided by the digital world, individuals' consumption, communication, self-expression, sharing, and ways of interacting with others are changing.

Recently, social media has become a place where users showcase a luxurious lifestyle, which is assumed to be an indicative of a wealthy lifestyle. According to Lehdonvirta (2010), consumers are increasingly showcasing their material possessions and lifestyles online. As a result, we observe that the effect of social media on consumer behavior, consumption, and self-expression is increasing (Heinonen, 2011; Thoumrungroje, 2014; Stephen, 2016; de Vries et al., 2017, Güneş et al., 2023). Users of today's social media are meticulously working on their accounts to highlight their characteristics, to present an ideal self-image, and to make a favorable impression on other users (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011; Güneş et al., 2023). In their effort to create their own self-brand and a persona, people use social media, especially Instagram, by digitally displaying their consumption habits through images and videos (Belk, 2013; Çadırcı & Güngör, 2019). Moreover, people use social media not only spread desired impressions but also display their status symbols (Lyu, 2016).

It is known that individuals prefer goods and services that have the power of reflecting the identity they desire to have (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Studies by Christen and Morgan (2005) and Drèze and Nunes (2009) have shown that low-income individuals are more inclined to consume in a more attention-grabbing manner to reflect the identity they desire, to keep up with others and overcome the envy resulting from comparing themselves with what they see on the social media. Thus, social comparison occurring on social networks has a potential to direct consumers toward more conspicuous consumption.

Although there are many studies on conspicuous consumption and luxury consumption (Dubois & Laurent, 1996; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014; Jacob et al., 2020; Ülker, 2021; Turancı et al., 2022; Boylu, 2023; Bulut et al., 2023; Unal, 2023), a few has explored how envy, self-esteem and social norms influence consumers' display of their consumptions on their social media accounts. Moreover, there is

a significant gap in the literature regarding how these three dimensions (envy, self-esteem, and social norms) jointly.

The present study aims to fill a significant gap in the literature by investigating how envy, self-esteem, and social norms collectively influence conspicuous consumption behaviors on social media. This research provides a holistic understanding of these interrelated factors, which have been underexplored in previous studies. By focusing specifically on social media platforms, the study addresses the contemporary relevance of digital environments in shaping consumer behavior. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for marketers to develop targeted strategies that account for the psychological and social dynamics of conspicuous consumption, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Furthermore, this research contributes to broader consumer behavior theory by illuminating the motivations and behaviors associated with self-presentation and social comparison on social media, which affect consumers' spending on these platforms.

In sum, the aim of this study is to investigate how conspicuous consumption affects consumer expenditures and if consumer's envy and self-esteem work together to lead conspicuous buying. It is thought that comprehending these links might help marketers decide on their marketing tactics and provide insights into consumer behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Media

Social media is a component of everyday life that has grown to be crucial for consumer behavior, consumption, and expressing ourselves (de Vries et al., 2017; Heinonen, 2011; Stephen, 2016; Thourmrunroje, 2014, cited in Siepmann et al., 2022), and it can be used for other purposes while providing effective opportunities to connect with others. Muntinga et al. (2011) stated that social media is used for multiple purposes such as personal identity formation or strengthening, social interaction, information acquisition, and sharing of memories. Social media has begun to be seen as a platform that changes people's lives by helping them express their personalities through social networks. Ellison et al. (2007) stated that social media changes the nature and scope of social networks by allowing users to express their identities and establish and maintain these networks (Taylor & Strutton, 2016). More consumers are using social media to display their statuses and spread positive perceptions of themselves (Lyu, 2016, cited in Siepmann et al., 2022).

According to Schlenker and Wowra, self-presentation is a situation in which individuals use the data they have to create desired impressions on others, control it, and achieve a specific goal (2003, p. 879). Individuals actively use some of the information they have while hiding some of it to create the desired image (Hong et al., 2020; Schlosser, 2020) when they present themselves on social media. According to Michaelidou et al. (2022), "The "ecosystem" of social media allows users to present "versions" of themselves to manage impressions and self-presentations". The reinforcing effect of social

media on envy triggers users to present their best selves when posting new updates. Belk (2013) describes a "re-concretization" process in this abstract world that "enables social media consumers to create an idealized version of themselves". Burnasheva and Suh (2021) demonstrate that consumers use social media to present themselves, as studies suggest that the consumption styles, they share are a part of their desired identity (Bauman, 1996; Giddens, 1991).

Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) argues that users often engage in a social comparison process when using social media because it facilitates peer contact and idealized media representations. For example, the users of Instagram or Facebook are exposed to the images of material possessions of others in their social network. People may try to showcase and announce the situations they want others to see about themselves through easily accessible and cost-effective channels such as Instagram since they are concern with the impressions that they have on others. Previous research has shown that social media is a powerful tool for increasing self-esteem (Widjajanta, et al, 2018; Steinfield et al., 2008; Gonzales & Hancock, 2011) and that increased self-esteem leads to positive feelings towards oneself, which in turn can lead to attention-seeking behavior and extravagant spending as individuals lose self-control and try to attract the attention of others (Widjajanta et al., 2018).

In sum, social media is proved to be a very effective tool for increasing self-esteem and image management. Estimates show that half of the global population is connected through social media (Burnasheva and Suh, 2020), and it is estimated that the number of people who is connected via social media will be about 5.85 billion in 2027 (Statista, 2023). This means that such a large number of the world's population can use social media as an operational self-support tool.

2.1.1. Instagram

Instagram is one of the social media platforms where anyone may upload content on any topic, gain likes and followers, follow other users, brands, and celebrities, and even start their own careers in fame (Verrastro et al., 2020). Due to its high number of users and continued growth, Instagram is considered one of the most attractive platforms and has become a very effective platform for both individuals and businesses (Nelson-Field et al., 2013). While Instagram offers a range of options for users such as posting photos, text, and commenting, it is primarily used for sharing photos and videos. Since presenting oneself online has become an important part of young people's daily activities (Chua and Chang, 2016), platforms that allow this have become increasingly attractive. Studies show that Instagram is one of the platforms where people spend at least thirty minutes a day (Verrastro et al., 2020). Instagram has become a platform where people can easily and comfortably showcase what they eat, drink, and wear, the products they use, and the places they visit. Along with these developments, Instagram also offers various ways to convey to users some unattainable points of interest with a perfect illusion. Although few people believe in the reality of what they see on Instagram, a significant majority still make an extraordinary effort to approach these irrational ideals. Studies examining the motivations

that lead consumers to social media platforms, including Instagram, have found that individuals seek to present their "best selves" and showcase their lifestyles and experiences by providing clues and signals to others (Hong et al., 2020).

2.2. Envy and the Social Comparison Process

Although jealousy and envy are generally used in different contexts in literature, it is very common to use these words interchangeably in daily life. Jealousy is a reaction given to protect the relationship we have, against threats, whereas envy is the desire of a person to have the qualities, success, and material opportunities that others have (Parrott & Smith, 1993, p. 907). Though the word 'envy' is used in its own meaning, it has been observed that the feeling of jealousy is used instead of the word 'envy'. Following the definition given by Parrott and Smith (1993: 907), this study is going to use "envy" as the situations when one person lacks another's excellence, achievement, or possession and desires it or wishes the other not to have it.

People tend to make purchasing decisions based on the belief that they should have what others have (Taylor & Strutton, 2016). The feeling of envy encourages social media users to advertise themselves by engaging in online consumption in a way that draws attention and sends a message to other users, to reduce feelings of inadequacy stemming from social comparisons.

According to the Social Comparison Theory, which suggests that people tend to compare themselves with others in terms of appearance, knowledge, and standard of living, individuals tend to compare themselves with certain criteria within a specific environment and with other environments (Yılmaz, 2015). As a result of this comparison, people define others as either a group member similar to themselves or as an outsider (Yılmaz, 2015). The power of social media to increase envy comes from the opportunity it provides to its users to share their happiest, most successful, and other best moments, as in Instagram (Taylor & Strutton, 2016). Content created on social media creates a rich collection that reflects who individuals are or what they think (Carroll & Romano, 2011, p. 3). Social media facilitates individuals' shaping and sharing of their self-congruity because they are concerned about how other users perceive them (Taylor & Strutton, 2016; Burnasheva & Suh, 2021). Considering that the social identity of an individual is relational and comparative (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16), it can be said that these comparisons have an effect on individuals' identity formation. Yu et al. (2013) have suggested that individuals tend to clarify their identities by consuming symbolic brands which match their self-images (Burnasheva & Suh, 2021). Conspicuous consumption displayed in online environments has become more attractive to users because it strengthens a positive self-image on social media (Duan & Dholakia, 2017).

Social comparison is a common and well-known phenomenon (Festinger, 1954) that plays a role in consumers' consumption patterns and social behaviors along with their self-esteem. While social comparisons can be effective in the formation of self-esteem, research has reported that individuals with

higher social comparison orientation have weaker self-perceptions, lower self-esteem, and more negative emotions (Jang et al., 2015). This trend has also been noted by Jiang and Ngien (2020) and Vogel et al. (2014) (Staniewski & Awruk, 2022). Social comparison can increase or decrease self-esteem depending on the direction of the comparison. Downward social comparison, which involves comparing oneself to those in a worse situation, can boost a person's self-confidence, while upward social comparison, which involves comparing oneself to those in a better situation with higher living standards, can lower self-esteem (Taylor & Strutton, 2016). Downward comparisons can increase narcissism, while upward comparisons can trigger envy. When individuals compare themselves to those in a better situation, they are motivated to act in a way that makes them feel more like the people they admire. Studies have shown that upward social comparison on social media is associated with higher levels of envy and lower life satisfaction (Chou & Edge, 2012; Krasnova et al., 2013). The situations individuals see on social media but do not possess yet desire will become goals or objectives to achieve. Consequently, individuals may change their behavioral patterns, even making purchases that exceed their budget, to attain these goals. This change will be evident in the holiday destinations visited, the clothes worn, the brands purchased, and the cafes/restaurants preferred. Wang & Wang (2024) contribute a relational maintenance perspective, exploring how being envied—whether benignly or maliciously—affects consumers' tendencies towards inconspicuous consumption. Their findings suggest that malicious envy increases inconspicuous consumption of luxury products and experiences, mediated by heightened social anxiety. Taylor and Strutton's (2016) research support the effect of envy on online consumption made to draw attention to oneself. Based on this, the first and second hypotheses of the study were formulated as follows:

H₁: Envy has a significant and positive effect on conspicuous consumption.

H₂: Envy has a significant and positive effect on overspending.

2.3. Injunctive and Descriptive Norms

O'Cass and McEwen (2004) have pointed out that normative influence is the main determinant of individuals' conspicuous consumption behavior. Normative influence suggests that other people have an effect on an individual's own behavior. It can be said that individuals are influenced not only by their own attitudes and values but also by the behavior of others and the social norms around them (Ajzen, 1985; Cialdini et al., 1990). Literature most commonly distinguishes between two types of norms: injunctive and descriptive norms, and are evaluated within the framework of the planned behavior theory (Krause et al., 2019, p. 3).

Injunctive norms are the independent norms that reflect the moral principles of a society and the perception of individuals regarding which behaviors of others in their environment will be approved (Cialdini et al., 1991). Therefore, they indicate the existence of rewards or punishments for engaging in certain behaviors or avoiding them (Krause et al., 2019) hence, motivating individuals to behave in an

expected manner through rewards and punishments. An injunctive norm is defined as the individual's concern for what others think about their behavior and the desire to obtain their approval (White et al., 2009; Jacobson et al., 2011). A person who wants to be accepted and approved by those they value may try to resemble them by imitating their consumption patterns, thereby increasing the likelihood of being accepted by others. The perception of how important people approve of an individual's behavior, known as an injunctive norm (Park & Smith, 2007), is expected to influence consumer behavior and lead them to engage in conspicuous consumption.

Descriptive norms refer to “individuals' perceptions of what significant others in their environment are doing” (Cialdini et al., 1990; White et al., 2009). They provide guidance to the individual about what behavior makes sense in a given situation, for example, "if most people behave/think this way in this situation, it is rational to act in the same way" (Cialdini et al., 1991, cited in Karagonlar & Emirza, 2021, p.1006). Based on this theoretical basis, it is assumed that individuals will move in the direction of the behavior or consumption pattern adopted by the people around them or the environment they want to influence. The third and fourth hypotheses of the study were formulated from this perspective:

H₃: Injunctive norms have a direct and positive effect on conspicuous consumption.

H₄: Descriptive norms have a direct and positive effect on conspicuous consumption.

2.4. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem has been defined as a personality trait that has a strong influence on how individuals behave and can also trigger a large number of customer behaviors (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Self-esteem is also defined as “overall evaluation of the person’s value, expressed in a positive or negative orientation towards himself” (Minev et al., 2018) or the sense of personal worth that a person associates with himself (Campbell et al., 2002). Self-esteem can also be defined as “a person's positive or negative self-evaluation or the extent to which a person believes in their values” (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). A person develops an idea about himself by evaluating himself as a result of interaction with others (Leavitt et al., 2015; Rosenberg, 1965).

It has been discovered that self-esteem can affect people's behavior and can be considered as an incentive for some behaviors and is one of the most important driving forces of motivation on consumers' decisions and behaviors (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Self-esteem was also perceived as a level of human needs. Therefore, whenever an individual experiences low levels of self-esteem, they will tend to engage in activities that can help boost their self-esteem. Pyszczynski et al. (2004) found that self-esteem affects the way people behave and functions as a motivation for some of their behaviors. When consumers have low self-esteem, they tend to have a strong inclination to engage in activities that can increase their self-esteem (Giovannini et al., 2015; Burnasheva & Suh, 2021). Consumers who are on an identity quest consciously try to make others aware of their achievements,

showcase their talents, or convince themselves that their lives are better than they are in reality (Taylor and Strutton, 2016). Hausman (2000) also suggested that self-esteem affects consumers' impulsive buying behavior as it is a way for consumers to gain acceptance from others and satisfy themselves. It has been shown that individuals use material possessions and other elements to convey their identities to other members of society, and consumers consume branded products as the means of protecting their identities. Consumers who have brand awareness and who want to be socially accepted tend to buy expensive brands (Ismail, 2017).

Hanley and Wilhelm (1992) noted that individuals with low self-esteem tend to enhance their social prestige through the purchase of products. Individuals contribute to the formation of their self-esteem by displaying their financial power through conspicuous consumption (Campbell, 1995; Eastman et al., 1999). Additionally, Tenia et al. (2022) found a strong correlation between self-esteem, sense of belonging, and conspicuous consumption among Generation Z in Jakarta and Java. Academic research findings indicate a positive relationship between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Souiden et al., 2011; Lewis & Moital, 2016; Widjajanta et al., 2018). Based on this, the fifth hypothesis of the study was formulated as below:

H₅: Self-esteem has a direct and positive effect on conspicuous consumption.

2.5. Conspicuous Consumption

Conspicuous consumption first emerged in 1899 by Veblen, who stated that wealthy individuals spend a lot of money on luxury goods to showcase their social status (Veblen, 1899). Conspicuous consumption is defined as the consumption in which consumers buy products or services based on the status relationship (Nguyen et al., 2015), and it is claimed that this consumption focuses on certain signals to convey wealth, influence others, confirm and prove social status to others (Corneo & Jeanne, 1997). The rationale behind this consumption behavior is to give individuals the impression that they belong to a higher social class (Kaus, 2013; Trigg, 2001).

Traditionally, individuals demonstrate their status by spending money on luxury goods and consuming them in a way that catches the attention of others. Those who consume brands that are signs of wealth, and do so openly to everyone, try to improve or maintain their position in society through conspicuous consumption (O'cass & Frost, 2002). Belk, while expressing that the things we have reflect us and that we can evaluate ourselves as the sum of what we have (1988, p. 139), actually talks about the embedding of the perception of external objects into the self. People's motivation to create a consistent and desired self-identity shapes their behaviors, which they believe will contribute to achieving their personal goals (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Thus, a "re-embodiment" process begins in this world that allows consumers on social media to create an idealized version of themselves (Taylor & Strutton, 2016).

Since people can share their wealth, the social status they have earned, or the status they maintain through social media via the goods they have acquired, social media increases the spending on luxury and conspicuous goods by consumers. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have become prominent arenas for conspicuous consumption, where individuals showcase their wealth, social status, and lifestyle through the goods they acquire (Özer Canarlan, 2022). Therefore, conspicuous consumption is defined as spending motivated by social factors such as influencing others, raising one's social status, and gaining prestige, rather than by quality concerns of consumers (Sundie et al., 2011; Krause et al., 2019). Individuals increase their self-esteem by demonstrating personal financial power through conspicuous consumption (Eastman et al., 1999; Campbell, 1995).

According to research, media plays a significant role in influencing consumer values and purchasing habits, especially in the context of materialistic consumption (Jacob & Belk, 1990; Gorn & Goldberg, 1977). However, studies investigating the role of media show limited effects of peer approval, acceptance, and group membership on consumers' preference for conspicuous consumption. Social comparison, known as the tendency for individuals to evaluate themselves in comparison to others, has become an important tool in today's age where people pursue social distinction and status. Previous studies have noted that wealth gives people status and that conspicuous consumption is one of the best ways to demonstrate this wealth and thus status (Cole et al., 1992; Arrow & Dasgupta, 2009). Chang et al. (2018) demonstrate that early economic research shows that people not only care about their own consumption but also care about their consumption relative to others and compare their consumption evaluations with others. According to Schlosser (2020), the number and composition of social media followers will affect a person's self-presentation. If the majority of followers are people who consume luxury goods and adopt a luxury lifestyle, it will pave the way for a person to present themselves in this way on social media.

Consumers determine their consumption patterns based on how they want to be seen by others and take action to create an image that fits that identity. Studies by Campbell (1995) and Eastman et al. (1999) have also demonstrated that individuals try to develop their self-esteem through conspicuous consumption. Burnasheva & Suh (2020) also highlight an indirect relationship between social media usage and conspicuous online consumption. Based on this, the sixth hypothesis of the study is formed.

H₆: Conspicuous consumption has a direct and positive effect on overspending.

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to determine the effect of envy towards others on the conspicuous consumption and overspending behavior of Instagram users. Additionally, another objective of the study is to reveal the influence of social norms (injunctive and descriptive norms) and self-esteem on conspicuous consumption and overspending.

The study is quantitative research. According to the research goal, it belongs to descriptive research. In this framework, firstly, a literature review was made regarding the variables in the model. In order to collect primary data, the "survey" instrument, which is frequently used in social sciences as a quantitative data collection method, has been chosen.

Within this framework, 346 Instagram users participated in the research in March 2022. Data were analyzed by SPSS 24 and AMOS 24. The first part of the survey included demographic questions such as age, gender, and education, as well as a question regarding the frequency of Instagram usage among the sample. The survey instrument consisted of a total of 43 statements, with 8 items for Overspending, 6 items for Envy, 7 items for Conspicuous Consumption, 6 items for Descriptive Norms, 7 items for injunctive Norms, and 9 items for Self-esteem. The questions for these scales were formulated based on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree - strongly agree). The variables of conspicuous consumption, overspending, self-esteem, injunctive norms, and descriptive norms in the conceptual model were taken from Wai and Osman (2019), and Krause et. al. (2019).

3.1 Numerical and Percentage Distributions of Participants

To evaluate the findings obtained as a result of the research, firstly, the demographic information of the 346 participants which is characterized as descriptive information regarding gender, age, education, marital status and occupation, are presented in Table 1 and the frequency of Instagram use is presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Demographic Frequencies of the Sample (N= 346)

Gender	N	%	Marital Status	N	%
Female	253	73.1	Married	191	55.2
Male	89	25.4	Single	255	44.8
Other	4	1.15			
Age	N	%	Graduation Status	N	%
18-25	82	23.6	High School	60	17,3
26-33	108	31.2	Undergraduate	187	54,0
34-41	112	32.3	Postgraduate	98	28,3
42>	42	12.1	Personal Income	N	%
Occupation	N	%	Minimum wage and below	157	33.69
Public Sector	96	27.7	Minimum wage up to double	62	17.9
Private Sector	68	19.7	Minimum wage up to three times	152	15.3
Student	92	26.6	Triple or more the minimum wage	95	21.4
Other	72	21.4			

Table 2. Frequency of Instagram Use of The Sample

Frequency of Instagram Use	N	%
Five hours a day or	40	11.6
3-4 hours a day	40	25.423.1
1-2 hours a day	140	1.1540.5
Less than 1 hour a	86	24.9

4. RESULT

In this part of the study, the findings obtained as a result of data analysis are presented.

4.1. Pre-analyses

Before proceeding with the analysis, the distributional characteristics of the data, independence checks of the answer choices, reliability analyses, descriptive statistics, and validity analyses were conducted to determine which conditions the data met the necessary conditions for hypothesis testing. First of all, it is important to check the independence of the answers in scales such as Likert, semantic, differences, and ordinal scales to test whether the participants can distinguish the answer options of the questions in the scale (Kavak, 2013, p. 252). Independence checks of the answers to all questions in the questionnaire were performed with chi-square analysis. The analysis was applied to all of the answer options used, and the chi-square results obtained as a result of the analysis revealed that the p-value could be distinguished from each other at a reliability level of 99%. Outliers in the research data set are values that should be investigated and removed from the data set before starting the analysis due to their role and impact on future statistical tests (Hair et al., 2010). The box plots created in SPSS were examined and no outliers were detected for the participants in the analysis results.

There are opinions that measuring dependent and independent variables simultaneously with the data collected in the same questionnaire form may lead to the emergence of erroneous relationships between these variables and the problem of common method bias. Especially when measuring behavioral variables, attention should be paid to the existence of this bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In order to eliminate this bias, Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), which is an accepted and frequently used method in the literature, was used. According to Harman's single-factor test, if there is a common method bias, a single-factor will explain more than 50% of the variance. In the study, all variables in the questionnaire were subjected to explanatory factor analysis using principal component factor analysis without rotation and it was seen that the first factor explained 26.95% of the variance, thus the first factor did not explain more than 50% of the variance. The results of the analysis show that there is no common method deviation problem in the study.

The mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness values of the statements were analyzed to determine the general distribution of the data and whether they were normally distributed. As seen in Table 3, the kurtosis and skewness values of the statements are between 2.0 and -2.0 values recommended for normal distribution (Darren & Mallery, 2003, p. 98-99). Therefore, kurtosis and skewness values support the normal distribution of the data.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Statements	Mean	Std	Skewness	Kurtosis
Overspending_1	3,06	1.19	-.005	-.825
Overspending_2	3,32	1.17	-.154	-.929
Overspending_3	3,20	1.17	-.051	-.851
Overspending_4	2,93	1.25	.180	-1.062
Overspending_5	2,63	1.26	.486	-.780
Overspending_6	2,54	1.23	.566	-.607
Overspending_7	2,77	1.20	.260	-.843
Overspending_8	2,59	1.27	.483	-.767
Envy_2	2,01	1.18	.888	-.395
Envy_3	2,19	1.21	.563	-.928
Envy_4	2,86	1.42	.071	-1.287
Envy_5	2,83	1.34	.047	-1.241
Envy_6	2,46	1.34	.514	-.975
Envy_2	2,01	1.18	.888	-.395
Conspc_1	2,41	1.19	-.005	-.825
Conspc_2	2,21	1.12	.777	-.016
Conspc_3	2,19	1.13	.725	-.271
Conspc_4	2,21	1.12	.717	-.255
Conspc_5	2,46	1.25	.468	-.819
Conspc_6	2,52	1.21	.424	-.775
Des_Norm_1	3,93	.84	-1.06	1.739
Des_Norm_2	4,12	.78	-.926	1.294
Des_Norm_3	4,10	.82	-1.06	1.736
Des_Norm_4	4,03	.94	-1.24	1.679
Desc_Norm_5	4,10	.8	-.878	1.000
Desc_Norm_6	3,84	.94	-.838	.626
Desc_Norm_7	4,20	.69	-.762	1.038
Injunctive_Norm1	3,55	1.0	-.550	-.019
Injunctive_Norm2	3,58	1.0	-.342	-.403
Injunctive_Norm3	3,69	1.0	-.584	-.035
Injunctive_Norm4	3,69	1.0	-.528	-.132
Injunctive_Norm5	3,65	1.0	-.563	.090

Table 3. (Continued) Descriptive Statistics

Statements	Mean	Std	Skewness	Kurtosis
Injunctive_Norm6	3,77	1.0	-.673	.357
Injunctive_Norm7	3,90	1.0	-.933	.745
Self_esteem_3	3,79	1.0	-.899	.435
Self_esteem_5	3,96	1.0	-1.02	.621
Self_esteem_6	4,07	.98	-.857	.000
Self_esteem_7	4,12	.90	-.845	.138
Self_esteem_8	3,04	1.4	-.063	-1.39
Self_esteem_9	3,88	1.1	-.912	.065
Self_esteem_10	3,76	1.1	-.675	-.230

Before proceeding to hypothesis testing, the reliability and validity of the scales included in the study were also evaluated. Reliability coefficients were calculated to test the reliability of the scales, Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used in the calculation of the reliability coefficient since the scales were Likert-type. The generally accepted minimum Cronbach alpha coefficient is 0.7 (Hair et al., 1998, p. 118). Reliability analyses conducted using the SPSS program are presented in Table 5. In the reliability analysis, Envy1, Self-Esteem 1, 2, and 4 statements were found to decrease reliability, but at this stage, these statements were not excluded from the analysis since their Cronbach's alpha coefficients were above 0.7, and validity analyses were started.

Table 5. Reliability Coefficients of the Scales

Scale	Cronbach Alpha	Cronbach Alpha*
Overspending	,948	,948
Envy	,856	,881
Conspicuous Consumption	,935	,935
Injunctive Norm	,957	,957
Descriptive Norm	,923	,923
Self-esteem	,887	,902

*After removing statements that reduce reliability

To determine whether convergent validity was achieved, the average explained variance values of the scales were calculated in Excel program according to the technique of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Bagozzi and Yi (1988) reported that a mean explained variance value of 0.50 and above can be considered to ensure the convergent validity of the scale. In cases where the average explained variance value is below 0.5, a combined reliability coefficient above 0.6 can be considered to provide convergent validity of the scale (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). As seen in Table 6, all mean explained variance values are above 0.50 and convergent validity is ensured. To ensure discriminant validity, the square roots of the

calculated average explained variance values of each variable should be greater than the correlation values of that variable with other variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, p. 45; Hair et al. 2010, p. 710). As seen in Table 6, the square root of the explained variance values of each variable is greater than the correlation values of that variable with other variables, so the scales have discriminant validity.

Table 6. Reliability Coefficients and Correlation Values of The Scales

	CR	AVE	√AVE	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1)	0.94	0.69	0.833	1					
(2)	0.87	0.58	0.767	,448**	1				
(3)	0.93	0.66	0.817	,388**	,437**	1			
(4)	0.95	0.76	0.872	,142**	,135*	,244**	1		
(5)	0.92	0.63	0.794	,264**	,342**	,162**	,390**	1	
(6)	0.92	0.59	0.77	-,35**	-,65**	-,33**	-,082	-,14**	1

Confirmatory factor analysis was applied to determine the construct validity of the previously dimensioned, valid, and reliable scales used in the research for this study. The purpose of confirmatory factor analysis is to test whether the previously dimensioned scales are similar in the sample in which the research is conducted (Meydan & Şeşen, 2011, p. 21). The measurement models were analyzed using the "maximum likelihood" method through AMOS 24.0 software. In the study, the measurement model consisting of 5 variables and 45 statements was tested. As a result of the factor analysis, Envy1, Self-Esteem1, Self-Esteem2, and Self-Esteem4 statements, which had factor loadings below 0.5 and were previously found to decrease reliability, were excluded from the analysis. Table 7 and Table 8 displays the findings of the confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 7. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Factor Loadings Results

Statement Codes	Factor loadings	Statement Codes	Factor loadings
Overspending_1	0.877	Des_Norm_7	0.754
Overspending_2	0.828	Des_Norm_6	0.721
Overspending_3	0.826	Des_Norm_5	0.797
Overspending_4	0.835	Des_Norm_4	0.773
Overspending_5	0.828	Des_Norm_3	0.836
Overspending_6	0.818	Des_Norm_2	0.87
Overspending_7	0.785	Des_Norm_1	0.801
Overspending_8	0.864	Des_Norm_7	0.754
Envy_6	0.763	Injunctive_Norm_1	0.811
Envy_5	0.81	Injunctive_Norm_2	0.816
Envy_4	0.827	Injunctive_Norm_3	0.948
Envy_3	0.717	Injunctive_Norm_4	0.927
Envy_2	0.712	Injunctive_Norm_5	0.903
Conspc_1	0.738	Injunctive_Norm_6	0.862
Conspc_2	0.927	Injunctive_Norm_7	0.83

Table 7. (Continued) Confirmatory Factor Analysis Factor Loadings Results

Statement Codes	Factor loadings	Statement Codes	Factor loadings
Conspc_3	0.886	Self_esteem_10	0.825
Conspc_4	0.868	Self_esteem_9	0.77
Conspc_5	0.809	Self_esteem_8	0.655
Conspc_6	0.707	Self_esteem_7	0.676
Conspc_7	0.763	Self_esteem_6	0.664
		Self_esteem_5	0.799
		Self_esteem_3	0.819

Table 8. Fit Indices

Fit Indices	CMIN/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Model values	2,94	0.774	0.889	0.075
Acceptable Model Values	≤3*	≤0.90*	≤0.90*	≤0.08*

* Schumacker and Lomax,1996;76

When the confirmatory factor analysis results shown in Table 7 are examined, it is seen that the factor loadings vary between 0.655 and 0.927 and these values are above the value of 0.50, which is accepted in the literature (Hair et al., 2010). This finding shows that the structure of the scale items is valid. When the fit indices obtained as a result of the analysis were examined (Table 8), it was seen that the ratio of the chi-square value to the degrees of freedom and RMSEA gave good fit values, while the CFI value was very close to the acceptable value. Shevlin and Miles (1998, p. 88) clarify that GFI is sensitive to sample size and factor loadings among the goodness-of-fit indicators and that the GFI value tends to be low due to low factor loadings or sample size, and that an estimation point such as 0.90 is not an appropriate estimation point for all situations. Based on this explanation, it was accepted that the model showed adequate fit based on the adequacy of other goodness of fit indices.

Before proceeding to structural equation analysis for testing the hypotheses, one of the prerequisites of structural equation model analysis is that the data constituting the variables should show multiple normal distributions. In multivariate normality analysis, skewness and kurtosis levels on a factor basis are examined. In the multivariate normality test, the assumption of multivariate normality is met when the multivariate critical ratio (c.r)<10.00 (Kline, 2005, p. 63). As a result of the analysis in the AMOS program, the multivariate critical ratio was calculated as 7.424 (Multivariate c.r.=7.424<10.00) and it was determined that the assumption of multivariate normality was met.

4.2. Testing the Research Hypotheses

When the assumptions regarding the measurement model were observed at acceptable levels, the structural equation model analysis was started to test the hypotheses of the study. The model was tested with the AMOS 24.0 package program using the maximum likelihood estimation method since the data were normally distributed. In the analysis process, firstly, the general fit of the model with the

data was evaluated by considering the fit indices, and then it was checked whether the hypotheses developed were suitable for the theoretical extension. Table 6 shows the fit indices of the model.

Table 9. Model Goodness of Fit Values

Fit Indices	CMIN/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Model values	3.056	0.982	0.987	0.077
Acceptable Model Values	≤ 3 * very good fit	≤0.95* very good fit	≤0.95 * very good fit	≤0.05*,very good fit 0.05 – 0.08* good fit

* Schumacker and Lomax,1996;76

As seen in Table 9, the goodness of fit values obtained as a result of the analysis are very good and good fit levels. Accordingly, it can be said that there is an acceptable goodness of fit between the data and the model. Based on this result, it can be said that the research model is a model at a good fit level. After explaining the fit between the data and the research model through the goodness of fit indices, the research hypotheses were tested. For this purpose, the table of unstandardized regression coefficients was used and the results related to the hypotheses were obtained. Table 10 presents the values and results related to the structural equation model.

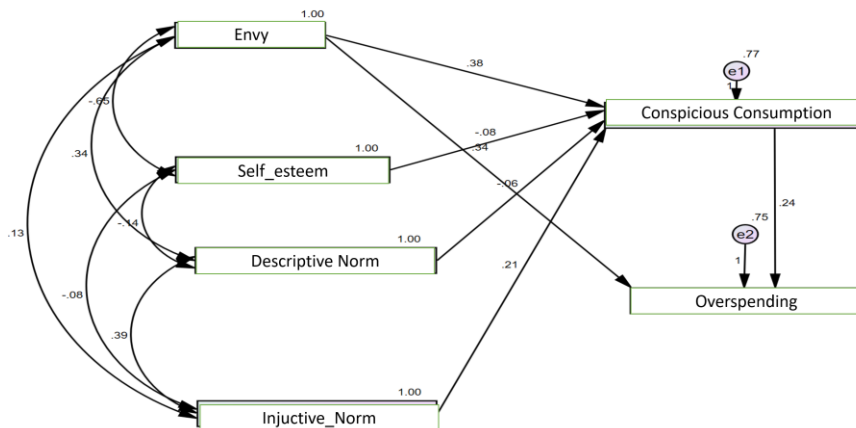
Table 10. Model Goodness of Fit Values

Hypothesis	Estimation Coefficient	St. Error	z-value	p-value	Hypothesis Result
H1: Envy --- Conspicuous Consumption	0.375	0.066	5.67	***	Accepted
H2: Envy --- Overspending	0.345	0.052	6,63	***	Accepted
H3: Injunctive norm--- Conspicuous Consumption	0.209	0.051	4,08	***	Accepted
H4: Descriptive norm --- Conspicuous Consumption	-.059	0.054	-1,0	0.276	Rejected
H5: Self-esteem --- Conspicuous Consumption	-.082	0.063	-1,30	0.193	Rejected
H6: Conspicuous Consumption --- Overspending	0.237	0.052	4,561	***	Accepted

When the detailed values of the structural model and relationships in Table 10 are examined, it is seen that the critical values of the relationships between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption and between descriptive norms and conspicuous consumption are below 1.96 and the relationship coefficients are not significant. Therefore, the hypotheses " Descriptive norms have a direct and positive effect on conspicuous consumption." and " Self-esteem has a direct and positive effect on conspicuous consumption." are rejected. All other relationship coefficients were found to be significant.

One of the criteria that express the paths between variables in structural equation models with numerical values is standardized estimation values. Kline (1998, p. 118) classifies the standardized estimation values according to the effect size as follows; values of 0.10 and below indicates a small effect, values around 0.30 indicate an average effect and values of 0.50 and above indicate a large effect. When we examined the significant relationships in the model, we found that all relationships had a moderate effect.

Figure 1. Structural Equation Model Standardized Values



5. CONCLUSION

This study proposes a model to examine how envy, self-esteem, descriptive norms, and injunctive norms affect conspicuous consumption and overspending on Instagram. The findings from the analysis of the structural equation model revealed several significant relationships, thereby providing valuable insights into the influence of these variables on consumer behavior.

The results confirmed that envy towards others has a significant and positive effect on both conspicuous consumption and overspending. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that individuals who are experiencing envy may engage in conspicuous consumption as a means to alleviate their feelings of inferiority or to present a desirable image to others (Taylor & Strutton, 2016; Zheng et al., 2018). Toprak et al. (2014) also noted that the new form of communication among consumers is now to see and show, to observe and be observed. Consumers tend to show others the beautiful things they have, especially their lifestyles and the products they consume. This creates competition among individuals following each other on social media, leading consumers to demand the things they see others have. Sabuncuoğlu et al. (2015) stated that social media is a very suitable environment for the display of conspicuous consumption, allowing individuals to highlight the social classes they belong to and differentiate themselves from lower classes through the content they produce. In addition, Loureiro et al. (2020) found that both benign and malicious envies significantly influence the desire to purchase luxury fashion items. Benign envy particularly predicts this desire due to its association with admiration, affiliation, and the enhancement of social status. Similarly, Liu et al. (2024) found that luxury

experiential consumption shared on social media triggers benign envy, which in turn increases consumption intentions among users. Additionally, Wenninger et al. (2021) note parallels between envy in social networking sites (SNSs) and offline contexts, emphasizing purchase intentions as a significant response due to the platforms' advertisement-driven revenue models. These results imply that envy-driven motivations can lead Instagram users to engage in conspicuous consumption and overspending behaviors, potentially contributing to financial strain and materialistic pursuits.

The study also discovered that injunctive norms, which represent perceived social approval or disapproval of others, had a direct and advantageous effect on conspicuous consumption. This implies that people are influenced by social norms and expectations that promote the display of prosperity and luxurious things. On the other hand, descriptive norms, which are perceptions of the actual behavior of others, did not directly influence conspicuous consumption. This unexpected finding suggests that individuals may not be significantly influenced by observing the behavior of others in relation to their own consumption patterns.

The findings regarding self-esteem did not support the idea that it has a direct and positive effect on conspicuous consumption. This finding is inconsistent with previous literature (Khan and Dhar, 2006; Souiden et al., 2011; Lewis & Moital, 2016; Widjajanta et al. 2018) suggesting a positive relationship between self-esteem and materialistic tendencies. A study by Güneş et al. (2023) found that individuals felt inferior when they compared themselves to wealthier people and sought to alleviate this negative emotion by consuming luxury, expensive, and ostentatious products. Another manifestation of this behavior is that individuals tend to portray themselves with better or superior qualities than they actually possess on social networks, thereby creating a new ideal self. Tenia et al. (2022) similarly found a strong correlation between self-esteem, sense of belonging, and conspicuous consumption among Generation Z in Jakarta and Java. Their results indicate that young adults engage in conspicuous consumption to compensate for low self-esteem and to secure a sense of belonging, viewing luxury consumption as a means to achieve higher social status. The complicated interactions between envy, conspicuous consumption, and self-esteem on Instagram require more study.

The study also discovered a substantial and favorable association between conspicuous consumption and overspending, suggesting that those who engage in conspicuous consumption are more likely to go over their budget limits and indulge in impulsive purchasing habits. This demonstrates that conspicuous consumption might be a role in the rise of consumer debt and the instability of personal finances.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

In a number of ways, this study contributes theory to the body of research on consumer behavior and social media. By analyzing the effects of envy, self-esteem, and normative influence on Instagram, the study advances our understanding of the psychological factors behind conspicuous consumption and

overspending behavior. The findings underline the need of taking social norms and their impact on consumer behavior, as well as the role of envy as a motivator for overspending, into account.

Firstly, the findings underscore the crucial role of envy in motivating conspicuous consumption on social media platforms like Instagram. Building upon previous research, this study confirms that both benign and malicious forms of envy significantly influence consumers' conspicuous consumption. This extends our theoretical understanding by highlighting how envy, particularly benign envy linked to admiration and social status enhancement, drives consumers to display their material possessions and lifestyles to gain social approval.

The results of this study indicate that Instagram is a significant platform for users to engage in conspicuous consumption, aligning with Özer Canarslan's (2022) findings that digital platforms have transformed consumption behaviors, allowing individuals to easily display their luxury consumption to a broad audience.

Moreover, the study provides new insights into the complex interactions between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption. Contrary to previous research (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Souiden et al., 2011; Lewis & Moital, 2016; Widjajanta et al., 2018), this study did not find a direct and positive effect of self-esteem on conspicuous consumption. This finding is complemented by the work of Güneş et al. (2023) and Tenia et al. (2022), which suggests that individuals with low self-esteem may engage in conspicuous consumption to alleviate negative emotions and secure a sense of belonging. These nuanced understandings challenge the assumption that higher self-esteem always leads to greater conspicuous consumption, pointing to the need for further research to explore these intricate relationships.

The study also clarifies how the effects of injunctive and descriptive norms on conspicuous consumption vary. It reveals that injunctive norms, representing perceived social approval or disapproval, exert a direct and influential effect on conspicuous consumption. In contrast, descriptive norms, which reflect perceptions of others' actual behavior, exhibit minimal direct impact. This distinction enhances our comprehension of the social mechanisms influencing consumer behavior, suggesting that perceived social expectations may be more influential than merely observing others' actions.

By integrating these findings, this study contributes to the broader theoretical discourse on consumer behavior, particularly in the realm of social media. It highlights the importance of considering social norms and psychological factors, such as envy and self-esteem, in understanding conspicuous consumption and overspending. These insights provide a more comprehensive framework for future research, aiming to unravel the complexities of consumer behavior in the digital age.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The results of this study have significant implications for social media platforms and marketers that want to shape customer behavior and control the harmful effects of unnecessary expenditure.

Marketers must be aware of the influence envy has on consumer needs and think of ways to satisfy those desires while fostering responsible purchasing. Additionally, knowing how injunctive and descriptive norms differ in their effects can assist marketers modify their social media marketing and messaging strategies. Marketers can foster positive social attitudes and behaviors while reducing the negative effect of conspicuous spending by adhering to injunctive norms that support ethical and sustainable consumption.

Furthermore, the connection between conspicuous consumption and overspending emphasizes the importance of consumer education and financial literacy initiatives. The negative effects of conspicuous consumerism can be lessened by encouraging people to adopt mindful spending habits and think about the long-term financial consequences of their purchasing choices.

The emergence of consumers' influence on each other provides important clues to businesses when designing their marketing strategies. Especially on social media everything is displayed as perfect, and this perfection may lead consumers to buy products that they did not even think of buying before as a result of their envy of the lifestyles they see as perfect, glittered and comfortable. Based on this, it can be concluded that emotions and hedonic benefits shape the purchasing behavior more than functional benefits. Businesses may increase the visibility of their products on social media and stimulate the demand by showing the users of their products and usage of their products. In the communication strategies they plan to implement, emphasizing that their products are considered among luxury product category or used by celebrities will allow businesses to reach out even more customers. As very well recognized, influencer marketing activities are increased, it seems that use of this strategy is going to increase in time. It can be said that use of social media as a marketing tool can increase brand values, polish brand images and help to promote or position the products as conspicuous products.

In summary, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by uncovering the relationships between envy, self-esteem, normative influence, conspicuous consumption, and overspending on Instagram. The findings provide valuable insights for both theoretical research and practical applications. They help marketers and policymakers understand and address the underlying mechanisms that drive consumer behavior in the social media era.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

The results of current study need to be acknowledged in light of a few limitations, and the consequent recommendations are suggested. One of the most important limitations of the research is the questioning of the personal income of the participants instead of their household income, because a person with no personal income may also tend to engage in conspicuous consumption with the income of a high-income individual in his/her household. It is important to design the research by considering this issue in future research.

In addition, the study was conducted with a specific demographic and may not be fully representative of the diverse range of Instagram users. Future research could consider broader demographic representation to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

The data collected relied on self-reported responses, which can be subject to biases and inaccuracies due to social desirability and memory limitations. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could provide deeper insights into the emotional experiences and motivations underlying conspicuous consumption behaviors.

The study focused on Instagram users, and the findings might be influenced by the unique features and culture of the platform. Other social media platforms could yield different results. In future studies, comparing the effects of envy and social norms on other social media platforms could reveal platform-specific differences in consumer behavior and motivations.

This study sample is 346 Turkish Instagram users. Considering the global nature of social media, in future cross-cultural studies could shed light on how cultural values and norms influence consumer behavior across different societies.

The Ethics Committee Approval Certificate with the number of E-22398675-050.02.04-54954 has been taken on 11. 04. 2022 from the Ethics Committee of Iskenderun Technical University.

The study has been crafted in adherence to the principles of research and publication ethics. AI tool called ChatGPT has been employed to enhance spelling and grammar, as well as augment the overall readability of the article.

The authors declare that there exists no financial conflict of interest involving any institution, organization, or individual(s) associated with the article. Furthermore, there are no conflicts of interest among the authors themselves.

The authors contributed equally to the entire process of the research.

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