



P404 Duff Roblin Building
190 Dysart Rd
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9338

Department of Psychology Action and Identity Laboratory

PERSONALITY AND SPENDING DECISIONS

The following information is related to a study you may have participated in during December 2021 – January 2022, via the University of Manitoba’s PSYC 1200 Introduction to Psychology Participant Pool. If you participated in this study, you completed an online survey concerning several personality traits and hypothetical spending decisions.

The main personality trait of interest to this research was self-compassion, or how kindly we treat ourselves during times of struggle. The study tested self-compassion’s relationship with spending decisions, while also acting as a trial run for new measures of spending behaviour. To hone new measures of spending, we compared their performance with that of established measures.

Our study attempted to answer three questions:

- a) What is the best way to identify people as materialists? Is it by identifying those with the strongest materialistic values relative to other people, or by identifying those who place the most importance on materialism relative to their other goals?
- b) Do all measures of spending correlate together in the same way, or does each measure capture a different aspect of spending behaviour?
- c) What is self-compassion’s relationship to spending?

KEY FINDINGS

All of the measures in this study passed a basic test of internal consistency, meaning that participants responded in a similar way to items that were intended to measure the same things.

What is the best way to identify people as materialists? We compared two measures of materialism, the Materialistic Values Scale (MVS; Richins & Dawson, 1992) and the wealth-importance dimension of the Aspirations Index (AI; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). The MVS compares individuals to each other on strength of materialistic values, whereas the AI compares individuals’ materialistic goals relative to their other goals. We found that the MVS and AI wealth-importance correlated strongly and positively with each other. However, MVS consistently predicted spending behaviours better than did AI wealth-importance.

Do all measures of spending correlate together in the same way, or does each measure capture a different aspect of spending behaviour? We found, at most, small correlations among

the spending measures in this research, which included self-reported tendencies toward compulsive buying, spending on oneself, spending on luxury items, and preferring products with conspicuous logos. Given the small or absent correlations among these measures, we infer that these aspects of spending behaviour are distinct – i.e., engaging in one form of spending does not mean that you are likely to engage in the others.

What was self-compassion's relationship to spending? Self-compassion appeared to influence spending decisions indirectly in this research. It was negatively associated with materialistic values, which in turn were positively associated with most forms of spending.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study shows that individuals' self-compassion may predict their spending behaviours, by indicating less materialistic values. We also learned that spending is multidimensional, meaning that a preference for luxury items does not also imply difficulty in controlling one's spending. Future research will therefore explore which aspects of spending are related to self-compassion. By better understanding the types of spending that are offset by higher self-compassion, we can better understand the deeper motivations that drive consumers to engage in such spending in the first place.

This research was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to Dr. Dan Bailis. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Abbey Hall (hallal@myumanitoba.ca) for more information.

Thank you again for your participation!