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Published in:
 Personality and Individual Differences

DOI:
[10.1016/j.paid.2021.111215](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111215)

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Document Version
 Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
 2022

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Bharti, M., Suneja, V., & Bharti, M. (2022). Mindfulness as an antidote to conspicuous consumption: The mediating roles of self-esteem, self-concept clarity and normative influence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 184, [111215]. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111215>

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Mindfulness as an antidote to conspicuous consumption: The mediating roles of self-esteem, self-concept clarity and normative influence

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Mindfulness
Conspicuous consumption
Self-esteem
Self-concept clarity
Normative influence
Meditation
Sequential mediation

ABSTRACT

Extant research in consumer behaviour has demonstrated the pervasiveness of conspicuous consumption as a means of psychological salve from inner conflicts such as self-discrepancies with regard to one's status, abilities, power or self-esteem. In this paper we propose mindfulness as an antidote to conspicuous consumption behaviour. Using structural equation modelling and survey responses of 588 consumers (312 non-meditators and 276 meditators), the current research examines the potential sequential mediation effects of self-esteem, self-concept clarity and consumer susceptibility to normative influence on the association between mindfulness and conspicuous consumption. The results reveal significant differences in conspicuous consumption between the two groups and show that dispositional mindfulness is negatively related to conspicuous consumption in both the samples. Further, mediation effects are confirmed and plausible feedback loops are also identified. The empirical investigation may be useful in understanding the mechanism through which mindfulness works as an antidote to conspicuous consumption, a behaviour which is often seen as detrimental to wellbeing.

1. Introduction

Over a century ago, Veblen (1899) coined the term “conspicuous consumption” as purchase of expensive goods to display one's status/wealth. It can be defined as deliberate usage of products/services that are “visible” and imbued with symbolism with a motive of communicating a certain self-image to others. It is a pattern of consumption focused on “systematic display or overt usage of products in presence of others” (O’cass & McEwen, 2004). Interestingly, it is a pervasive phenomenon that is not only limited to the affluent, as there is ample evidence of conspicuous consumption behaviour among the people of fewer means as well, especially in developing economies (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011).

Prior research has shown that consumers in emerging collectivist societies like India are more likely to indulge in conspicuous consumption (CC) for status, social approval and social identity salience (Bloch et al., 2004; Jain, 2020). Extant literature discusses the negative impact of CC at individual and society level. At the individual level, the transient filling of the empty self through CC offers an illusionary cure that does not lead to any long-term fulfilment (Cushman, 1990; Rosenberg,

2004). Further, it may create a negative externality of social anxiety due to loss of one's relative positioning vis-à-vis others (Mason, 1998). This ‘positional treadmill’ is especially unfavourable in developing economies where sometimes consumption of conspicuous goods is preferred at the cost of basic necessities. Linssen et al. (2011) reported lower subjective well-being for individuals who spent more on CC among low-income households in India. Additionally, there is ample evidence that consumer wellbeing is adversely affected by social comparisons (Guillen-Royo, 2011) which is the core driver of CC, particularly in collectivist cultures like India. Further, CC is widely seen as detrimental to environment and ecological sustainability (Mi et al., 2018).

CC is often viewed as a self-enhancement behaviour in response to impression management concerns (Mannetti et al., 2002) or a pursuit of self-defence to compensate for the incongruity between one's actual and ideal/ought self (Self-discrepancy theory; Higgins, 1987). Such a self-discrepancy may motivate individuals to restore their self-integrity by engaging in compensatory consumption (Mandel et al., 2017; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). Recent research in consumer behaviour has demonstrated the pervasiveness of CC as a means of psychological salve from inner conflicts such as self-deficits with regard to one's status, abilities,

Abbreviations: CC, conspicuous consumption; DM, dispositional mindfulness; SE, self-esteem; SCC, self-concept clarity; CSNI, consumer susceptibility to normative influence.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111215>

Received 30 March 2021; Received in revised form 9 August 2021; Accepted 16 August 2021

Available online 24 August 2021

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power or esteem. In their compensatory consumer behaviour model, Mandel et al. (2017) identify symbolic-self completion as a pervasive strategy used to offset self-discrepancies, for instance, lack of self-concept certainty may motivate possession of symbolic products (Morrison & Johnson, 2011), lack of social belongingness may lead to CC of goods signalling group affiliation (Lee & Shrum, 2012), feeling of powerlessness may lead to CC of high-status goods (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008).

Prior research has shown that mindfulness reduces the magnitude of self-discrepancies (Crane et al., 2008). Further, it may enable an individual to address the source of self-deficit, instead of resorting to compensatory conspicuous consumption (Gurel-Atay & Kahle, 2019, p.163). Thus, our research proposes mindfulness as an antidote to CC. Mindfulness has been consistently associated with high self-esteem and high self-concept clarity, both of which are associated with lower self-discrepancies (DeMarree & Rios, 2014; Klohnen & Mendelsohn, 1998) and reduced compliance on social cues (Mittal, 2015), making CC less prevalent in such individuals. Additionally, discrepancies associated with social self (Bizman & Yinon, 2004) stem from the need to confirm to social norms, encouraging CC for social identity salience.

Building on these findings, this research proposes that mindfulness has a negative influence on conspicuous consumption (CC), mediated by high self-esteem (SE), self-concept clarity (SCC) and reduced consumer susceptibility to normative influence (CSNI).

This research has significant theoretical and managerial contributions. First, extant research on CC has shown that it has adverse consequences for long term individual, social and ecological well-being. Thus, an investigation into the deterrents of CC deserves attention. This research proposes mindfulness as a simple antidote to CC. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to provide empirical evidence concerning this relationship. Second, this study is the first to explore group differences in CC and CSNI across non-meditators and meditators. Third, it demonstrates that mindfulness impacts CC through the sequential mediating effects of SE, SCC and CSNI in both meditators and non-meditators. Fourth, while self-concept has been extensively studied in consumer behaviour, the role of SCC in shaping consumer behaviour has rarely been explored. Finally, while socio-psychological antecedents of CC have received extensive attention from researchers, very limited studies have investigated the role of personality characteristics and individual differences in CC.

1.1. Mindfulness and conspicuous consumption

Mindfulness is defined as a non-reactive and a non-judgmental present moment awareness towards internal (emotions & cognitions) and external stimuli (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Extant literature differentiates between dispositional mindfulness (DM) and state mindfulness meditation. Growing evidence demonstrates that meditation induces increase in dispositional mindfulness as well if practiced regularly (Crescentini & Capurso, 2015).

Mindful individuals are less likely to experience a self-discrepancy or be influenced by social cues owing to objective awareness towards their experiences (Crane et al., 2008) and reduced automaticity to external influences (Rosenberg, 2004). Secondly, even if they do experience a discrepancy, mindfulness is expected to moderate the appraisal of such a discrepancy. Owing to the present moment, non-judgmental, non-reactive self-awareness and acceptance of a mindful individual (Baer et al., 2006), they are more likely to entertain discrepancies with a productive approach (for instance, working on self-improvement), instead of resorting to CC as a compensatory mechanism (Gurel-Atay & Kahle, 2019).

2. Mediators

2.1. Self-esteem as a mediator

Self-esteem (SE) refers to an overall evaluation of one's self-concept or feelings of self-acceptance or self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). Previous intervention/experiment-based studies have consistently confirmed the causal effect of mindfulness on self-esteem (Randal et al., 2015). Mindful individuals are more accepting of their real selves and less prone to negative self-appraisals. With high non-reactive present moment awareness, they are less likely to fight such appraisals defensively or engage with them (Baer et al., 2006) as these are usually based on past behaviour or future expectations, thus exhibiting high SE.

Extant research has shown that CC is linked to low SE (Souiden & M'saad, 2011; Truong & McColl, 2011). SE may impact the type of coping mechanisms used against self-discrepancies. Those high in SE may respond by either dismissing the self-discrepancy altogether or by reinforcing their competencies. In contrast, low SE individuals relatively carry a negative self-concept, so they may resort to other means of establishing their self-worth such as ostentatious display of material goods (Banister & Hogg, 2004).

2.2. Self-concept clarity as a mediator

Self-concept clarity (SCC) is defined as "the extent to which an individual's self-concept is confidently defined, internally consistent and temporally stable" (Campbell, 1990). Previous empirical investigations have demonstrated a positive association between mindfulness and SCC (Dummel, 2018; Hanley & Garland, 2017). A mindful individual may be less prone to patterns of habitual beliefs as the tendency to cater to present moment, may facilitate a deeper understanding of the self over time (Carlson, 2013). Non-judgemental and non-reactive stances should also help overcome barriers to self-knowledge by reducing defensiveness to ego-threatening stimuli.

Individuals low on SCC are more likely to engage in CC to seek solace in symbolic identity completion from the discomfort caused by a flickering self-cognition. They are more prone to using brand or group identity as identity bolsters (Mittal, 2015). Zheng et al. (2018) show that the impact of social comparison on CC is amplified for consumers low on SCC.

2.3. CSNI as a mediator

Consumer susceptibility to normative influence (CSNI) reflects the desire to enhance one's self-image through consumption choices that are explicit signals of association with a significant reference group. CSNI is an important predictor of CC (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012).

Rosenberg (2004) linked CC to one's inner void. When empty self-needs filling, it is easily attached to social tags, group affiliations that temporarily compensate for inner-emptiness (Cushman, 1990). In contrast, mindfulness may enhance one's awareness towards the source of emptiness (Didonna & Gonzalez, 2009) and facilitate a break in the habitual reactive pattern towards it. Mindful individuals are more aware of their underlying psychological thought processes, making them less susceptible to automatized behaviour, peer influence or normative pressures (Rosenberg, 2004). Thus, mindful individuals are expected to be less prone to CSNI.

2.4. Sequential mediational pathways

2.4.1. Self-esteem and self-concept clarity

SCC can be seen as an essential concomitant of SE. This can be explained in light of self-verification theory- individuals high on SE cognitively accept the preferred positive feedback that reinforces their self-concept and makes it stable and clear over time, while individuals low on SE cognitively accept negative feedback, but tend to be in

constant conflict with that information as its easier to accept positive than negative feedback, thus exhibiting low SCC (Swann et al., 1987). This is in line with extant longitudinal studies suggesting that SE directionally affects SCC (Nezlek & Plesko, 2001; Wu et al., 2010). Thus, the hypothesised model considered the path direction from SE to SCC.

However, there is a possibility of a bi-directional relationship between SE and SCC (Campbell, 1990; Wu et al., 2010). It is plausible that low SCC may increase susceptibility to negative information, that leads to low SE. Thus, we also investigate an equivalent non-recursive model with reciprocal relationship between the two.

2.4.2. Self-esteem, self-concept clarity and consumer susceptibility to normative influence

SE and SCC have been shown to be negatively associated with CSNI (Mittal, 2015). Brockner's (1984) concept of "self-esteem plasticity" states that low SE individuals are usually more susceptible to self-relevant social cues than high SE people. Similarly, individuals that hold an unclear self-identity, may be more susceptible to external cues and use a reference group-identity as self-identity bolster. Thus, CSNI is expected to be negatively influenced by both SE and SCC.

Thus, apart from simple mediation paths, we propose four sequential mediation paths between mindfulness and CC. The hypothesised model is presented in Fig. 1.

3. The present study

The present research has three main objectives. First, to examine differences in CC between a demographically matched sample of meditators and non-meditators. We aim to provide an evidence into the benefits of meditation for consumer-wellbeing. Second, to examine the relationship of dispositional mindfulness (DM) with CC. Third, to identify the mediating paths in the relationship. We hypothesis that DM is negatively associated with CC and this relationship is mediated by SE, SCC and CSNI in both meditators and non-meditators.

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

We collected data from India for two samples: a group of relatively affluent generation Y regular meditators and demographically similar non-meditators (25–35 years). We chose India because India is leading in its generation Y population (Jain, 2020) and forms an important target market for luxury producers (Deloitte, 2018). We contacted a non-profit Indian organisation called Pyramid Spiritual Societies Movement (PSSM) to collect data for meditators. Their members follow a formal practice of breath meditation, referred to as "Anapanasati" (Rosenberg, 2004). For the purpose of current study, 276 meditators were included. Each of them reported a currently ongoing meditation practice (at least once a week) since the last 6 months or more. For the sample of non-meditators, 312 complete responses were received from participants that did not follow any mindfulness practice. Thus, a total of 588 generation Y consumers were included in the final analysis.

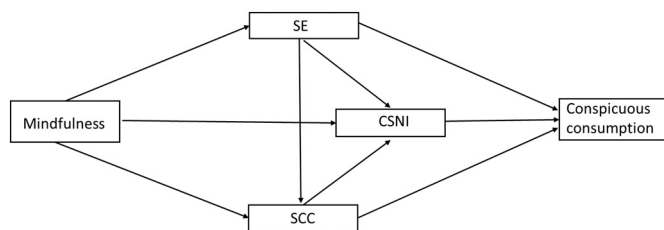


Fig. 1. Hypothesised multiple mediation model. Note: SE: self-esteem; SCC: self-concept clarity; CSNI: consumer susceptibility to normative influence.

Demographic characteristics of non-meditators and meditators are presented in Table 1. Age, gender and income are considered important correlates of CC. Group differences for these characteristics were not significant (F/ χ^2 test), presenting demographically matched samples of non-meditators and meditators, ensuring that DIF (differential item functioning) in FFMQ is minimal (Baer et al., 2011).

4.2. Measures

The survey questionnaire used the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006), a 39-item scale of the five mindfulness facets: observe, describe, acting with awareness, non-reactivity and non-judging of experience. The 10-item Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and the 12-item Self Concept Clarity scale (Campbell et al., 1996) were used to capture SE and SCC respectively. Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) was measured with the 12-item Bearden et al. (1989) scale. Conspicuous consumption (CC) behaviour scale was adopted from Chaudhuri et al. (2011). Seven-point scale was used for each of these measures.

4.3. Statistical procedure

First, group differences between meditators and non-meditators were investigated through between-group t-tests and a hierarchical regression. Second, to analyse the mediation effects, maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS was used (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). To manage model complexity, items were parcelled (after confirming their one-dimensionality). Each of the 9 latent constructs were randomly divided into three parcels, forming a total of 27 parcels.

5. Results

5.1. Preliminary analysis

Measurement models for both the samples exhibited sufficient reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. Correlations, reliabilities etc. are presented in Appendix A.

t-Test results for mean group differences (Table 2) indicated that meditators scored significantly higher on mindfulness, SE and SCC scales and significantly lower on CSNI and CC scales than non-meditators. Table 3 presents a series of hierarchical regressions with the pooled sample (n = 588) including dummy variable 'group' (1 = meditators and 0 = non-meditators). In the first two blocks the group differences in CC were significant. After adding dispositional mindfulness (DM) in the third block, the dummy coefficient became insignificant. Thus, we can infer that DM accounted (at least partially) for differences in CC between meditators and non-meditators. Further, within meditators, 'amount of meditation practice' (hours per week * no. of weeks of regular practice) had a significant negative association with CC and this relationship was partially mediated by DM. These results provide an evidence into the benefits of meditation for consumer well-being.

The five-factor hierarchical model of FFMQ fit the data very well and much better than one factor model in both the samples

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of non-meditators and meditators.

	Non-meditators	Meditators	F or χ^2	p
Age (years)	29.63 (2.815)	30.03 (2.821)	2.96	0.09
Gender (% female)	59.30%	54.30%	1.46	0.22
Monthly Disposable Income (INR)				
<50,000	31.1%	38%	3.14	0.08
50,000–100,000	54.8%	52.2%	0.40	0.52
>100,000	14.1%	9.8%	2.57	0.1

Table 2
t-Test for mean group differences.

	Non-meditators	Meditators	t
	M (SD)	M (SD)	
Mindfulness	145.94 (34.48)	174.72 (33.14)	10.31***
SE	41.28 (14.6)	47.99 (13.48)	5.79***
SCC	46.08 (16.08)	54.44 (14.27)	6.68***
CSNI	38.23 (10.09)	25.46 (10.75)	-14.78***
CC	36.51 (10.23)	28.57 (28.57)	-8.86***

*** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3
Hierarchical regression results for the pooled sample (N = 588).

CC	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Variables	Standardized coefficient (β)	β	β
Group (1 = M, 0 = NM)	-0.34***	-0.14**	-0.077
SE		-0.143**	-0.074
SCC		-0.157***	-0.105**
CSNI		0.233***	0.213***
Mindfulness			-0.258***
Age	-0.011	-0.041	-0.052
Gender (1 = female)	0.013	0.006	0.002
Income category 2	-0.007	0.045	0.053
category 3	0.07	0.093*	0.091*
R ²	0.124	0.253	0.3
Δ R ²	0.124	0.129	0.045
F	16.514***	33.196***	37.027***

Note: M: Meditators, NM: Non-meditators, CC: conspicuous consumption, SE: self-esteem; SCC: self-concept clarity; CSNI: consumer susceptibility to normative influence; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

(Table B.1 Appendix B). A multi-group CFA confirmed metric invariance of all the constructs, except the mindfulness construct. This necessitated a separate SEM mediation analysis for non-meditators and meditators.

5.2. Direct effects

The correlation between DM and CC was negative and significant for both non-meditators ($r = -0.39, p < 0.01$) and meditators ($r = -0.45, p < 0.01$). The path coefficients of the full mediation model are shown in Fig. 2a (non-meditators) and Fig. 2b (meditators). Both the SEM models exhibited a good fit: χ^2/df ratio = 1.21, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.03, TLI = 0.98 and χ^2/df ratio = 1.17, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02, TLI = 0.98 for non-meditators and meditators respectively. All the hypothesised relationships were significant in the proposed directions, except for the paths from mindfulness to CSNI and SE to CC in non-meditators.

5.3. Mediation analysis

Bootstrapping estimation procedure and user-defined estimands were used to test mediation paths. The indirect point estimates and their corresponding 95% confidence intervals are shown in Table 4a (non-meditators) and b (meditators).

Results indicated that all the simple and sequential mediation paths were significant in case of meditators. In case of non-meditators all mediation paths were significant, except for two simple mediation paths: Mindfulness → SE → CC and Mindfulness → CSNI → CC.

5.4. Alternative models

To make a stronger case for the proposed hypothesis, other theoretically plausible models were investigated (MacCallum et al., 1993). We investigated eight alternative models (detailed in Appendix C). Out of these, six were ruled out and the remaining two non-recursive equivalent models were considered. The significant mediation pathways identified in the original hypothesised model (Table 4a & b) were found significant with respect to two non-recursive models as well. Thus, the present research offers a substantial support to our hypothesis.

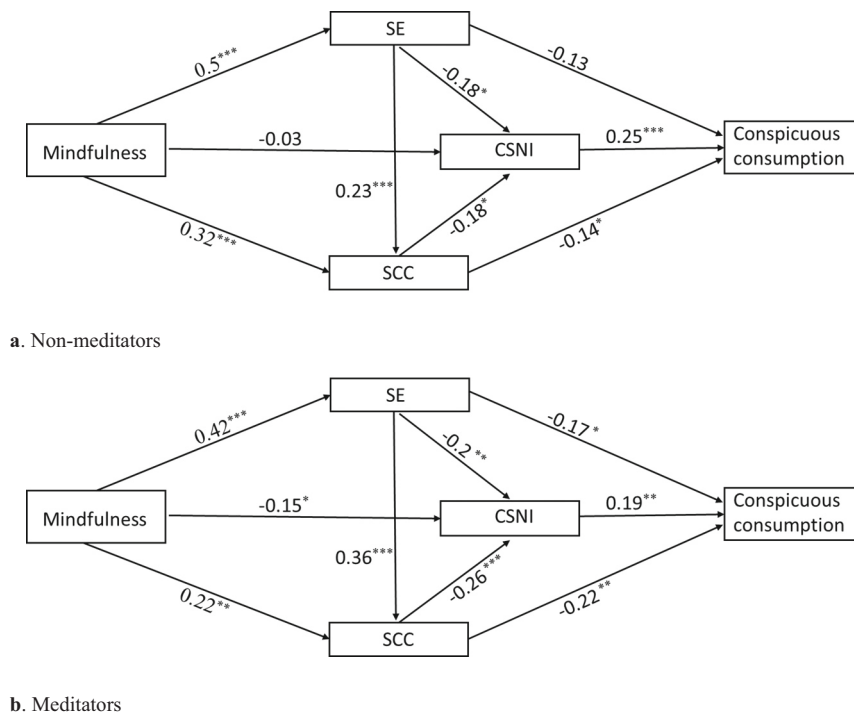


Fig. 2. a and b: Hypothesised model analysing sequential mediation role of self-esteem, self-concept clarity and consumer susceptibility to normative influence in the relationship between mindfulness and conspicuous consumption; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4

Bootstrapping indirect effects and 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the final mediation model.

a: Non-meditators			
Model pathways	Point	95% CI	
	Estimate	Lower	Upper
Mindfulness → SE → CC	-0.091	-0.224	0.013
Mindfulness → CSNI → CC	-0.009	-0.095	0.05
Mindfulness → SCC → CC	-0.066	-0.192	-0.004
Mindfulness → SE → CSNI → CC	-0.033	-0.087	-0.007
Mindfulness → SE → SCC → CC	-0.024	-0.069	-0.004
Mindfulness → SCC → CSNI → CC	-0.02	-0.061	-0.004
Mindfulness → SE → SCC → CSNI → CC	-0.008	-0.022	-0.002
b: Meditators			
Model pathways	Point	95% CI	
	Estimate	Lower	Upper
Mindfulness → SE → CC	-0.132	-0.325	-0.014
Mindfulness → CSNI → CC	-0.053	-0.186	-0.001
Mindfulness → SCC → CC	-0.091	-0.246	-0.017
Mindfulness → SE → CSNI → CC	-0.029	-0.089	-0.003
Mindfulness → SE → SCC → CC	-0.061	-0.144	-0.016
Mindfulness → SCC → CSNI → CC	-0.02	-0.067	-0.003
Mindfulness → SE → SCC → CSNI → CC	-0.014	-0.049	-0.003

6. Discussion

The current study is the first to investigate the relationship between dispositional mindfulness (DM) and conspicuous consumption (CC). The results of group comparison between meditators and non-meditators provide an empirical evidence into the benefits of mindfulness practice for consumer well-being. The results indicate that individuals practicing meditation (over a six-month period at least) exhibited higher DM, higher self-esteem (SE), higher self-concept clarity (SCC), significantly lower consumer susceptibility to normative influence (CSNI) and lower CC than demographically similar non-meditators. From hierarchical regression analysis, we can infer that DM accounted (at least partially) for differences in CC between meditators and non-meditators. Within meditators, the total hours of meditation practice seemed to play a significant role as well. Finally, SEM analysis confirmed hypothesised mediation paths.

Previous intervention studies have confirmed the causal effect of SE on SCC and mindfulness on both SE and SCC. However, the reciprocal relationship between each variable set cannot be ruled out. Thus, while our hypothesised model is parsimonious and highly plausible with best fit over a class of meaningful alternatives, two equivalent non-recursive models (detailed in Appendix C) seem plausible as well. Their estimates were based on the assumption of equal reciprocal effects (MacCallum et al., 1993) to solve identification issue- this technique has limitations and significant bi-directional results does not mean that a reciprocal causal effect exists, but it provides a substantive ground to investigate the feedback loops in future investigations.

Most importantly, the significant mediation pathways identified in the original hypothesised model (Table 4a & b) were found significant with respect to the two non-recursive models as well. Additionally, we can infer that there is a plausibility of a feedback loop between SE and SCC (SE ↔ SCC) along these identified paths. Further, feedback loops between mindfulness and SE (mindfulness ↔ SE) as well as mindfulness and SCC (mindfulness ↔ SCC) are also plausible along these paths for meditators. Overall, the present research offers a substantial support to our study hypothesis that mindfulness is negatively associated with CC and this relationship is mediated by SE, SCC and CSNI in both meditators and non-meditators.

CSNI has been identified as one of the main antecedents of CC in marketing literature (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). The current

analysis shows that mindful individuals are less prone to normative influence. In meditators, the regular mindfulness practice may help them keep conditioned responses in check and in non-meditators this relationship is fully mediated by SE, SCC and their serial mediation effects. Thus, higher DM may reduce one's susceptibility to purchase products for group identity salience owing to an enhanced clarity about one's individual identity (SCC) and reduced need for peer impression management owing to high regard for oneself (SE). The outcome has implications for improved individual and social well-being (Brown & Kasser, 2005). The reduced need for normative compliance may also allow freedom to choose products/brands that are in coherence with one's self-identity, instead of relying on group identity, which could be more fulfilling psychologically.

The current study adds to the field of Transformative Consumer Research, an emerging area in marketing discipline that investigates the "dark facets" of marketing and the methods to remediate them. The current study extends the extant literature on negative consequences of CC and self-discrepancy theory, by investigating mindfulness as an antidote to the source of self-discrepancies, particularly lack of SE or SCC as well as to a pervasive consequence of such a discrepancy: compensatory CC. The findings of the present research show that mindfulness can be instrumental in inhibiting CC and the underlying socio-psychological drivers of such consumption.

The limitations in the current study must also be acknowledged. This study relied on a sample of generation Y consumers and results need to be extended to other groups. Second, cross-sectional design of the study precludes us from drawing conclusive casual pathways. Experimental manipulation or longitudinal studies are needed to establish causation among the hypothesised paths and to confirm the reciprocal effects that seem plausible. Self-report measures might be prone to social desirability bias, thus multiple assessment methods may be employed in future. Previous literature has shown that meditation leads to greater congruence between explicit and implicit self-esteem (Koole et al., 2009). Future research can investigate the role of implicit self-esteem and degree of congruency in mediating the relationship between mindfulness and CC. Further, boundary conditions need to be identified. Although there is very limited research on what motivates people to practice meditation (Sedlmeier & Theumer, 2020), but individuals who choose to meditate or join the organisation could inherently be more spiritual, religious or less materialistic and thus may exhibit lower CC than what is attributable to mindfulness. They offer avenues for future research.

To conclude, although there is ample research on dispositional mindfulness, very little sits within the discipline of consumer psychology and thus learning for both consumers and marketers from such investigations is currently untapped. The current study provides extensive evidence that individual differences in DM are associated with a reduced tendency to engage in CC. DM is associated with higher SE, greater SCC, reduced CSNI which may diminish the need for CC. The current proposal deserves further attention from researchers to better understand the underlying personality and individual differences that drive CC and the role of mindfulness-based interventions in addressing conspicuous consumption, a behaviour detrimental to individual, societal and ecological well-being.

Funding statement

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Megha Bharti: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft. **Vivek Suneja:** Supervision, Writing – review & editing, Validation. **Mehak Bharti:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Visualization.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Appendix A

The composite reliability, Cronbach's α coefficients and intercorrelations between study variables is presented in Tables A.1 and A.2. Two second order CFAs (confirmatory factor analysis) were conducted that exhibited a good fit: χ^2/df ratio = 1.11, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02, TLI = 0.99 (Meditators) and χ^2/df ratio = 1.16, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02, TLI = 0.99 (Non-meditators). Composite reliabilities (CR) exceeded 0.70, Average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.5 and Cronbach alpha values exceeded 0.7. The square roots of AVEs were greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients. Thus, the measurement models exhibited sufficient reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table A.1
Correlations, reliabilities and AVE (non-meditators, N = 312).

	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
Mindfulness	0.92	0.71	0.5	1				
SE	0.91	0.91	0.78	0.5**	1			
SCC	0.88	0.89	0.72	0.43**	0.39**	1		
CSNI	0.9	0.9	0.75	-0.18**	-0.26**	-0.25**	1	
CC	0.88	0.88	0.72	-0.39**	-0.24**	-0.25**	0.32**	1

** $p < 0.001$.

Table A.2
Correlations, reliabilities and AVE (meditators, N = 276).

	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
Mindfulness	0.92	0.83	0.62	1				
SE	0.91	0.91	0.78	0.41**	1			
SCC	0.86	0.86	0.68	0.36**	0.45**	1		
CSNI	0.9	0.9	0.76	-0.32**	-0.38**	-0.4**	1	
CC	0.89	0.89	0.73	-0.45**	-0.33**	-0.36**	0.33**	1

Note: SE: self-esteem; SCC: self-concept clarity; CSNI: consumer susceptibility to normative influence; CC: conspicuous consumption; α = Cronbach alpha; ** $p < 0.01$.

Appendix B

Table B.1
Goodness of fit of alternate models of factor structure of mindfulness.

Model fit	Non-meditators (N = 312)		Meditators (N = 276)	
	One factor model	Five factor hierarchical model	One factor model	Five factor hierarchical model
χ^2/df	20.62	1.06	15.5	1.3
CFI	0.53	0.99	0.56	0.99
RMR	0.21	0.044	0.18	0.061
GFI	0.53	0.963	0.56	0.94
AGFI	0.38	0.948	0.41	0.92
TLI	0.45	0.998	0.49	0.98
RMSEA	0.25	0.014	0.23	0.03

Appendix C

We investigated eight alternative models. The details are presented in Table C.1 and Fig. C.1 below. Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we tested six alternate models: M1, M2, M3, M4, M5 and M6. These six models were ruled out based on fit comparison with the original hypothesised model. They exhibited a significant drop in fit (χ^2 diff test). Based on the plausible feedback loops between the relevant variables, we investigated two equivalent non-recursive models: M7 and M8 (meditators). Previous literature suggests testing an equivalent (same fit as the original recursive) non-recursive model by substituting the recursive path with a feedback loop constrained to be equal (Hershberger & Marcoulides, 2006, p. 28; MacCallum et al., 1993). Without the equality constraint the non-recursive models M7 and M8 were unidentified. Based on this assumption of equal reciprocal effects, both models had significant feedback loops.

Table C.1
Alternative models.

Model	Theoretical rationale	$\Delta \chi^2$	Δdf	p
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(continued on next page)

Table C.1 (continued)

	Model	Theoretical rationale	$\Delta \chi^2$	Δ df	p
Constrained models	M1	The five first order mindfulness facets replaced the higher order mindfulness construct as exogenous variables.	398 (M), 425.9 (NM)	7	<0.0001
	M2	This model proposes an indirect relationship between mindfulness and CSNI (Mindfulness → CC set to 0).	4.4 (M), 0.1 (NM)	1	<0.05 (M), <0.05 (NM)
	M3	This model proposes that the influence of SE, SCC and their sequential effect on CC is through CSNI only (SE → CC & SCC → CC set to 0).	21.7 (M), 12.9 (NM)	2	<0.001 (M), <0.01 (NM)
	M4	This model proposes that the influence of SE on CC is through the sequential effects of SE on SCC and CSNI only (SE → CC set to 0).	5.6 (M), 3.6 (NM)	1	<0.05 (M), <0.05 (NM)
	M5	This model proposes that the influence of SCC on CC is through the sequential effect of SCC on CSNI only (SCC → CC set to 0).	8.4 (M), 3.9 (NM)	1	<0.01 (M), <0.05 (NM)
	M6	This model proposes that SE and SCC have no influence on CSNI (SE → CSNI & SCC → CSNI set to 0).	30.8 (M), 15.1 (NM)	2	<0.001 (M), <0.01 (NM)
Equivalent	M7	This model proposes a reciprocal relationship between SE and SCC based on the premise that low SCC may increase susceptibility to negative information, that leads to low SE (Campbell, 1990).	Significant feedback loops		
Non-recursive models (same fit as the recursive)	M8	For meditators, (apart from a plausible reciprocal relationship between SE and SCC), this model proposes reciprocal relationships between mindfulness and SE as well as mindfulness and SCC based on the premise that people with greater SE or SCC may have an easier time starting a meditation practice because their early experiences meditating bring up fewer unpleasant thoughts and fewer conflict, thus increasing the quality of their meditation.	Significant feedback loops		

Note: SE: self-esteem; SCC: self-concept clarity, CSNI: consumer susceptibility to normative influence; M: meditators; NM: non-meditators.

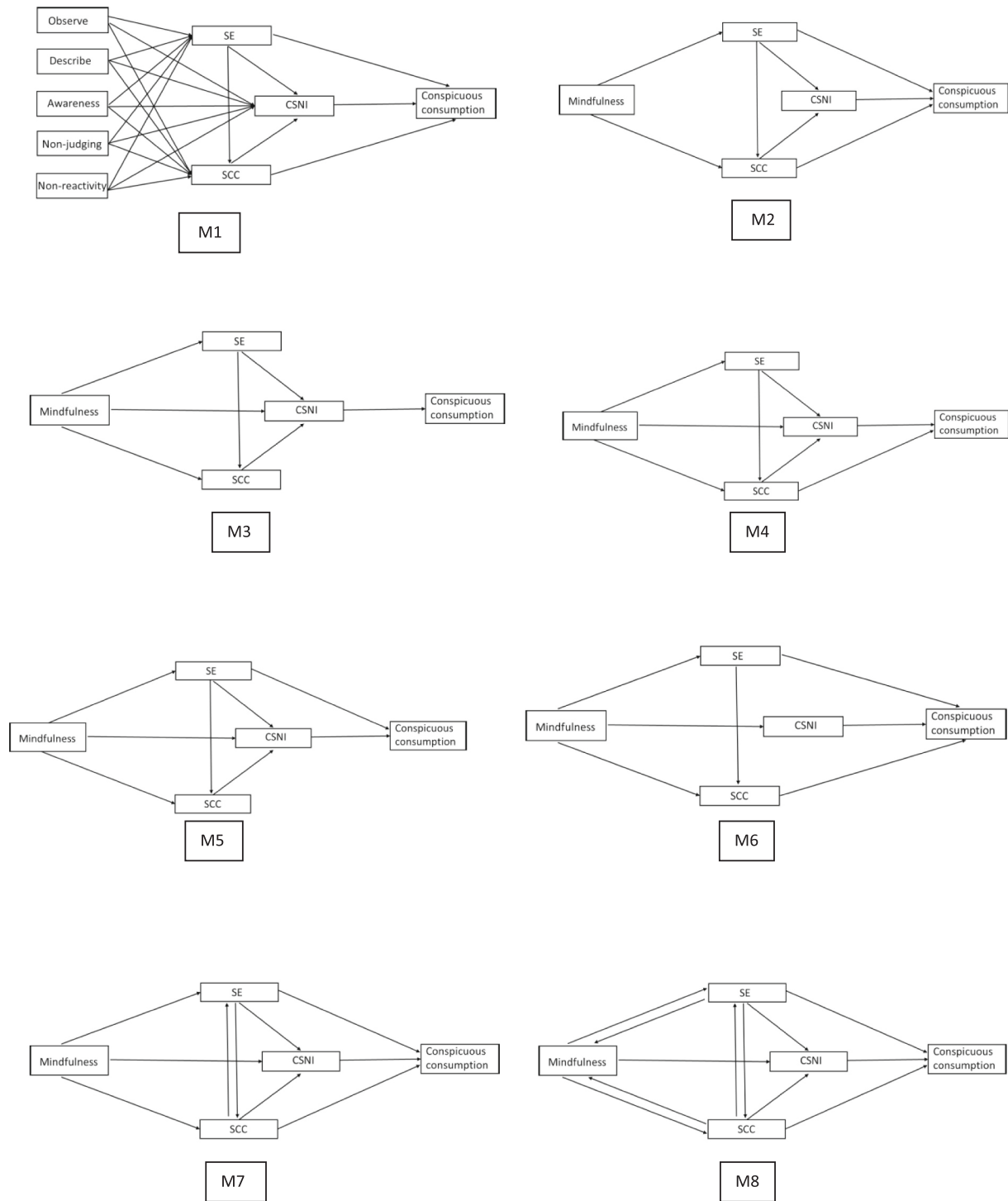


Fig. C.1. Alternative models M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7 & M8 (meditators).

Appendix D

Table D.1

Correlation table of the individual mindfulness facets and the study variables (Table D.1).

	Awareness	Non-judgemental acceptance	Observe	Describe	Non-reactivity	SE	SCC	CSNI	CC	Mindfulness
Awareness	1	0.471**	0.446**	0.409**	0.432**	0.19**	0.278**	-0.224**	-0.221**	0.729**
Non-judgemental acceptance	0.515**	1	0.447**	0.448**	0.395**	0.175**	0.131**	-0.14**	-0.192**	0.722**

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Table D.1 (continued)

	Awareness	Non-judgemental acceptance	Observe	Describe	Non-reactivity	SE	SCC	CSNI	CC	Mindfulness
Observe	0.319**	0.438**	1	0.525**	0.544**	0.351**	0.218**	-0.287**	-0.351**	0.766**
Describe	0.489**	0.525**	0.379**	1	0.61**	0.226**	0.238**	-0.141**	-0.298**	0.794**
Non-reactivity	0.438**	0.548**	0.429**	0.513**	1	0.358**	0.275**	-0.256**	-0.368**	0.79**
SE	0.404**	0.442**	0.257**	0.295**	0.202**	1	0.401**	-0.343**	-0.307**	0.34**
SCC	0.391**	0.326**	0.218**	0.252**	0.214**	0.36**	1	-0.359**	-0.33**	0.302**
CSNI	-0.174**	-0.134**	-0.141**	-0.091**	-0.112**	-0.238**	-0.232**	1	0.296**	-0.271**
CC	-0.255**	-0.276**	-0.189**	-0.286**	-0.278**	-0.227**	-0.221**	0.306**	1	-0.376**
Mindfulness	0.749**	0.805**	0.659**	0.772**	0.78**	0.427**	0.375**	-0.174**	-0.342**	1

Note: CC: conspicuous consumption, SE: self-esteem, SCC: self-concept clarity, CSNI: consumer susceptibility to normative influence. Below the diagonal values are for non-meditators; above the diagonal values are for meditators; ** $p < 0.01$.

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