

Claremont Colleges

## Scholarship @ Claremont

---

Scripps Senior Theses

Scripps Student Scholarship

---

2023

# Conspicuous Wellness: How Acquired Identities Affect Conspicuous Consumption

Katherine S. Eu  
*Scripps College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps\\_theses](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses)



Part of the [Behavioral Economics Commons](#), [Econometrics Commons](#), and the [Sociology of Culture Commons](#)

---

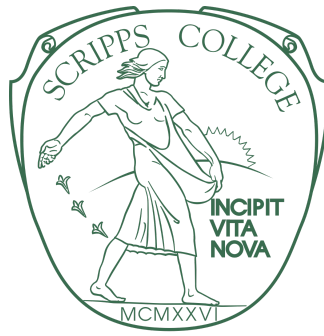
### Recommended Citation

Eu, Katherine S., "Conspicuous Wellness: How Acquired Identities Affect Conspicuous Consumption" (2023). *Scripps Senior Theses*. 2205.  
[https://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps\\_theses/2205](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/2205)

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Scripps Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scripps Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

**CONSPICUOUS WELLNESS: HOW ACQUIRED IDENTITIES AFFECT  
CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION**

**by  
KATHERINE EU**



**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

**PROFESSOR NICHOLAS KACHER  
PROFESSOR SEAN FLYNN  
PROFESSOR VICTOR CORONA**

**DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2022**

**Abstract**

This research provides evidence that individuals will conspicuously consume based on their acquired identities, which parallels similar conclusions drawn for conspicuous consumption based on ascribed identities. Using data from 653 respondents, I found positive marginal effects of the “that girl” wellness identity on product choices, accounting for an individual’s potential higher willingness-to-pay, demographics, and speed of making product choices. I conclude that the more an individual associates themselves with an identity, the higher the likelihood of choosing products which align and signal membership in an identity subculture.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Professor Kacher, Professor Flynn, Professor Corona, the entire Scripps College economics department, and my friends and family for their continued support throughout my time at Scripps and on this project.

Professor Kacher — I would not have been able to complete this thesis without your months of mentorship and support through all stages of this project. You have truly made an impact in my career in economics and I will never be able to put my gratitude into words.

Professor Flynn and Professor Corona — Thank you for your feedback and guidance throughout the writing process. Your comments have been invaluable to the creation of the final product.

Professors Bose, Pedace, and Van Horn — Your offices have provided a safe space for me to stress and vent my frustrations with this process. Thank you to each one of you for your support and interest, both with my thesis and with me as an individual.

My friends and family — I don't say this enough: thank you for your unconditional support and love. Everything you have done for me over the years has not gone unnoticed.

I could not have done this without each and every one of you.

## Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Literature Review.....</b>	<b>7</b>
	A. CONSUMPTION.....	7
	B. IDENTITY.....	11
	C. IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.....	13
<b>III.</b>	<b>Method.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Preliminary Analysis.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Data and Results.....</b>	<b>25</b>
	A. SINGLE PRODUCT CHOICES.....	26
	B. TWO PRODUCT CHOICES.....	28
	C. SINGLE PRODUCT CHOICES WITH TIME CONTROL.....	29
	D. PRODUCT CHOICES CONTROLLING FOR GENDER.....	32
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>33</b>
	A. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION.....	33
	B. CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRESENT RESEARCH.....	33
	C. FURTHER STUDY.....	34
<b>VII.</b>	<b>References.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>40</b>
	A. APPENDIX I: SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	41
	B. APPENDIX II: INFORMED CONSENT/DEBRIEF.....	46
	C. APPENDIX III: EXAMPLES OF “THAT GIRL” ON INSTAGRAM.....	49

## I. Introduction

The definition of identity in academic economic literature has broadened to encompass both predetermined attributes, like race, ethnicity, and gender, *and* chosen habits and personality traits (my paper will refer to habit-based identities as ‘acquired identities’).

Being health and wellness conscious isn’t a new idea: the lifestyle habits of working out, cooking healthy recipes, and engaging in outdoor activities have been around for as long as humans have been. However, “wellness” as an acquired identity is a recent phenomenon.

The coronavirus pandemic has witnessed a rise in ‘identity subcultures--clothing and lifestyle changes that have been popularised by mainstream media. Now, engaging in healthy habits aren’t considered ‘just habits,’ they encompass a new type of identity. “That Girl,” a term coined by the users of the social media application TikTok, is a phrase used to denote individuals who place their health at the forefront of their lives. Laura Pitcher, a writer for Vice Media’s culture and lifestyle magazine *i-D*, describes the identity as “encompassing a life based on mainstream notions of wellness” (2021). Explained by Urban Dictionary, “‘That Girl’ is a girl (or any gender) that gets up at 5am, meditates, drinks smoothies, showers every day, journal[s], eat[s] only healthy food, goes to [the] gym every day, and is successful in many ways” (2021). Someone who is wellness-conscious can identify as “that girl” on top of the traditional intersectional identities they already hold. The idea of identity-based habits has been popularised by James Clear in his book *Atomic Habits* (2018), and there is some literature from psychology exploring the relationship between habits and feelings of self (Verplanken and Sui, 2010; Gardner et al, 2011).

Akerlof and Kranton (2000) provide theoretical insight as to how identity, defined as a person’s sense of self, affects economic outcome. They examine how different identities will affect purchasing behaviour, and conclude that there is no concrete consumption preference based on identity. The fluidity of identity alters the conclusions of previous published literature on purchasing preferences. O’Cass and McEwen (2004) expand on the intersection of economics and identity by examining consumption habits. They find that young consumers will purchase products as long as the two conditions of conspicuous consumption (non-verbal signal of wealth and status through products) hold true (Veblen, 1899). Firstly, the brand is visible, meaning that people other than the user would see the brand. Secondly, the brand can

non-verbally communicate status and prestige to large groups of people. (Think of a designer bag. The item and brand communicates a level of status without the user explicitly saying they are well off.)

Current literature provides evidence that identity affects consumption behaviour and also sheds light on the two factors conspicuous consumption depends on. These studies exist in different realms, and no single study has examined how the new type of identity formation (i.e. identity formed based on lifestyle, or acquired identities) affects conspicuous consumption.

I focus on how a specific acquired identity--the “that girl” identity<sup>1</sup>, which I will use synonymously with the term ‘wellness’ identity--impacts an individual’s likelihood to conspicuously consume. I use control factors including place of residence (only the U.S.) and age (currently enrolled college students over the age of 18) to narrow my scope. My paper includes an original three-part survey, with questions about personal demographics, self-identity congruence, and personal purchasing preferences. For the experimental portion, I have included a set of control products to determine if there is a relationship between high identity congruence and certain products, or if an individual has a high willingness-to-pay regardless of product.

This two-part paper will first examine how the acquired identity of wellness (“that girl”) is formed through activities, habits, and lifestyle. With a new understanding of identity formation, the latter half of the paper will connect how habit-based identity impacts the way individuals consume. My study incorporates theory from disciplines including sociology, psychology and economics to spearhead an interdisciplinary approach to identity formation and consumption behaviour.

The main findings of my paper demonstrate a statistically significant positive relationship between Identity Salience (IS) scores<sup>2</sup> and product choices. This conclusion was drawn through four regressions, and the combination of these regressions demonstrates that IS scores positively predict the likelihood of choosing premium products that are associated with

---

<sup>1</sup> Examples of “that girl” can be found in Appendix III.

<sup>2</sup> Briefly, my self-designed survey required participants to rank their interest in, knowledge of, and participation in tasks for various identities. I then compiled their answers to 14 identity relevant topics to assign a value from 1 to 10 which represents how closely a participant identifies as “that girl” or holding the wellness identity.

“that girl.” Furthermore, IS score has a larger marginal effect with premium “that girl” products compared to their placebo counterparts for both the overall regression and regressions that account for decision time. This research provides evidence that individuals will conspicuously consume based on their acquired identities, which parallels similar conclusions drawn for conspicuous consumption based on ascribed identities.



## II. Literature Review

This section analyses and reviews literature on consumption, identity, and other topics in order to theorise how conspicuous consumption relates to acquired identities.

### A. Consumption

#### *What Is Consumption?*

Classical economists believe that a product's value is derived from the cost of the materials plus the cost of labour. Neoclassical economists believe that "a consumer's first concern is to maximise personal satisfaction. Therefore, [consumers] make purchasing decisions based on their evaluations of the utility of a product or service" (Kenton, 2021). Put more simply, consumers factor in personal preference into their valuation of an object. The neoclassical theory relates to the rational behaviour theory, which explains how consumers make choices that result in the optimal level of benefit or utility. Rational behaviour implies that individuals would rather take actions that would benefit them, as opposed to actions that are neutral or would harm them (Hayes, 2020).

The academic sociological study of consumption is not limited to consumption itself; rather, it is the stratification of consumption decisions on the social responsibilities of marketing, social norms, public policy, environmental impact, cultural values, and mass-advertising to name a few (Nicosia and Mayer, 1976). However, consumption as we understand and define it today can largely be attributed to Western society's shift in interest from production to consumption (Bauman, 2001). Our daily lives can be defined through the consumption of goods and services--from the food we purchase at the supermarket and hold in our fridge to our daily commute using public transportation, we consume an increasing amount when compared to 50 or even 100 years ago. While jobs are still a common talking point to understand who a person is, the way an individual presents themselves provides more insight to their personality than their job. As Warde puts it, "consumption comprises a set of practices which permit people to express self identity, to mark attachment to social groups, [...] to exhibit social distinction, [...] and [...] more things beside" (Warde, 1996, p. 304). While economists are interested in how individual behaviour affects the economy, sociologists study individual choice and broader social influences that affect personal consumption decisions (Warde, 2019, p. 23).

### *Identity Economics*

Economists have included the theory of identity and have extensively studied the impact of acquired traits with consumption decisions (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Oyserman et al 2007; Davis, 2014; Wisman, 2014), but very few papers link acquired identities<sup>3</sup> and consumption behaviour (Kettle and Häubl, 2011; Kleine et al., 1993).

Modern, neoclassical economics believes that an individual will make a decision that maximises their utility (benefit) after weighing all available options (Knoll, 2010). One aspect of this model includes the predicting of an individual's personal goals or preferences, which ultimately will affect the shape of their personal utility function<sup>4</sup>. A factor relevant to this prediction which influences decision making is personal identity. Some common applications of identity in economics include stratification economics and identity economics, which both approach economic preferences through an intersectional lens. Stratification economics studies how external social systems, including race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality, affect economic outcomes (Darity Jr., 2005; Davis, 2014).

Similarly, identity economics builds on traditional economic understanding of decision-making, seeing decisions as based on both monetary incentives and an individuals' identity (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Davis, 2014). The aforementioned intersectional lenses of economics push back on traditional understanding of a 'utility maximising rational individual;' emotions, norms, social situations, and personal identities all influence consumer behaviour (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Darity Jr, 2005; White and Dahl, 2006; Ariely, 2009; Carter, 2013; Davis, 2014).

### *Conspicuous Consumption*

Thorstein Veblen, an economist and sociologist, is credited with pioneering the idea of conspicuous consumption. In his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions (1899)*, Veblen theorises that the forming of social communities resulted in individuals communicating their social class visually to strangers through objects and activities (Veblen, 1899, p. 86). The "consumption of food, clothing, dwelling, and furniture" would help to non-verbally signal wealth and status (Veblen, 1899, p. 68). Put more simply,

---

<sup>3</sup> Acquired identity is further explained in the 'identity' section of the literature review.

<sup>4</sup> A utility function refers to the measurement of satisfaction a consumer derives from the consumption of real goods. The equation is  $U(X_a, X_b)$  where  $a$  and  $b$  refer to two separate bundles of goods.

consumers derive satisfaction<sup>5</sup> from using a product or service. This satisfaction comes from a combination of the goods' serviceability, the functionality of the good, and the honorific, the display of status or wealth, aspects (Veblen, 1899). A good which is both functional and visually appealing provides the user a high level of utility; whereas a good which is only functional but aesthetically dull provides a lower utility. A high-value item obtains this description if the community around it can visually identify the item as such and have some understanding of the price or prestige of the designer brand. Therefore, conspicuous consumption can only occur if two things are true: consumption choices are visible<sup>6</sup>, and income level is linked to status (Clingingsmith and Sheremeta, 2017).

### *Conspicuous Consumption and Social Media*

The rise of modern-day social media applications, including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, has increased social visibility (Heffetz, 2011; Josiassen and Assaf, 2013). To put their best foot forward, consumers often post "highlight reels" -- glamorised versions of their life--to hint at different lifestyles and high-class experiences to their followers. The escalation of social media usage and the visibility of consumption has influenced consumer decisions, including vacation destinations and overall shopping habits (Hosany and Martin, 2011; Josiassen and Assaf, 2013). Furthermore, there is strong evidence that individuals use products and experiences to express themselves both publicly and privately; social media is an avenue of public image curation (Heffetz, 2011; Hosany and Martin, 2011). These consumption decisions are increasingly influenced by the image individuals want to publicly display, rather than their actual understanding of self (Hosany and Martin, 2011).

With more and more individuals basing their consumption decisions on perceived gains in social value, photo-sharing applications like Instagram have become a microcosm for conspicuous consumption. Hosany and Martin sampled 169 cruise ship travellers in their paper titled "Self-image Congruence in Consumer Behaviour" and concluded that experiences with high ideal-image congruence, anything that is complementary to an individual's own self-image, increases overall satisfaction in consumers (Hosany and Martin, 2011). Similarly, Bronner and Hoog (2018) conducted an experiment to examine the relationship between conspicuous consumption and experiential purchases and found that

---

<sup>5</sup> In economics, 'total satisfaction' is referred to as 'utility.' My paper will henceforth use the term utility to reference a users' satisfaction levels. A higher utility equates to a higher level of satisfaction, and vice versa.

<sup>6</sup> Visible consumption is a form of *signalling*, which is the non-verbal communication of an idea, event, or, in this case, an identity (Definition from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

experiences that are publicly consumed<sup>7</sup> are highly linked to identity-signalling. Put simply, consumers derive some utility from purchasing products and experiences that are in line with the public image they want to portray, regardless of the experience itself (Hosany and Martin, 2011; Bronner and Hoog, 2018; Charoennan and Huang, 2018). The existing literature tackles the relationship between conspicuous consumption and social media through experiences and luxury goods; however, there is no literature on the impact of everyday products as identity-congruent conspicuous consumption. My paper aims to address this.

### *Consumption and Identity: Veblen Effects and Fashion*

From Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption comes the term "Veblen Effects," which exist when a consumer is willing to pay a higher price for a good with honorific qualities when compared to a functionally equivalent good (Veblen, 1899; Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996, p. 349). This means an individual is paying for the functionality of the good, and then willing to pay *extra* for the status signalling appearance. One popular example of this is luxury goods: consumers pay a high price for the functionality of the (example) designer bag but, more importantly, for the label and the exclusivity of owning it (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004; Clingingsmith and Sheremeta, 2018). Since individuals define themselves and others in terms of their possessions (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004), luxury goods and other Veblen goods provide a permanent, socially acceptable, transparent exhibition of wealth (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996, p. 367; Rucker and Galinsky, 2009; Mazzocco et al., 2012).

The introduction of fashion and taste provides an additional layer to the theory of conspicuous consumption: individuals purchase clothing and accessories inline with the type of person they either want to be associated with or perceived to be. O'Cass and McEwen concluded in their 2004 study that "when consumers wear sunglasses, many do not wear them just to protect their eyes, but to fit in, or display an image" (O'Cass and McEwen 34, 2004). Conspicuous consumption has shifted away from Veblen's definition of using products to communicate wealth and status (Veblen, 1899), to a newly defined action where products are used as image management which may or may not include the perception of wealth (Wong, 1997; O'Cass and McEwen, 2004; Bronner and Hoog, 2018).

---

<sup>7</sup> Public consumption, or socially visible consumption, is defined by Josiassen and Assaf (2013) as any consumption that other people observe. This differs from social consumption, which is defined as any consumption in which other people take part in the experience or process.

## B. Identity

Psychologists and sociologists have often used the framework of identity to understand behaviour. Identity is interpreted as how individuals define themselves in social contexts. ‘Social identity theory,’ coined by Tajfel and Turner (1986), explains how an individual’s understanding of their identity is based on their membership, or lack thereof, in a certain group. An individual distinguishes themselves as both similar to (“I am like them”) and different from (“I am unlike them”) the people around them. Some common categorizations are sexual orientation, character traits, and personal abilities (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Carter, 2013).

Another established theory is how identity drives behaviour: a person who defines themselves a certain way will seek situations where their behaviour is congruent with their identity (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000). For example, someone who identifies as a student will study in the library. If this behaviour is encouraged by others who also hold the same identity, the individual experiences identity verification and feels positive emotions (Carter, 2013). There are multiple different theories which link identity and action, including salience hierarchies, perceptual control systems, and the impact of identity activation; however, all studies conclude that identity is proven to drive behaviour (Carter, 2013; Oyserman et al., 2007). My paper will use the term ‘self-identity’ to refer to an individual’s sense of self, including social identities (race, class, ethnicity) and self-identification.

### *Ascribed versus Acquired Identities*

Social identity theory separates group categorizations into two sections: attributes that were determined at birth, and attributes that are more fluid in nature (Huddy, 2001). The former is called ‘ascribed’ identities and refer to groups and identities that are ‘fixed,’ including sex, appearance, race, and familial socioeconomic status<sup>8</sup>. The latter is called ‘acquired’ identities, and refers to identities that are flexible by choice, and are defined as ‘who you think you are’ (Huddy, 2001).

Social psychology research demonstrates that members of acquired identity, or ‘self-identity,’ groups report higher self-esteem, group cohesion, and group commitment. In an experiment

---

<sup>8</sup> Socioeconomic status is both an ascribed and an acquired identity. The household that an individual is born into has a certain socioeconomic status; however, interlevel mobility is possible. Said differently, the socioeconomic status that one has in their adult life may or may not be the same status they were born into.

conducted by Turner et al. (1984), participants were either randomly assigned or asked to choose between one of two teams competing in a problem-solving exercise. Members who chose groups had a higher perceived personal responsibility to the group's success and failure, and were more likely to report high self-esteem and group cohesion when their group lost (Turner et al., 1984). A similar experiment run by Alstott et al. confirmed this theory: groups who shared acquired traits with the researcher had higher group cohesion than groups who shared ascribed traits with the researcher (Alstott et al., 2014). When group membership is voluntary, it increases ingroup identification, group cohesion, and overall self-esteem (Perreault and Bourhis, 1999; Huddy, 2001).

### *Social Media as a Performative Stage*

In his work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), sociologist Erving Goffman compares interpersonal interaction to theatre, and explains how individuals 'perform' like actors in order to project a desirable image (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). However, unlike theatrical actors, the 'mask' -- a presentation of self in any face-to-face interaction -- and the 'backstage' are two facets of the same individual (Hogan, 2010; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). In recent years, online environments including social media have provided individuals with the space to perform and present different identities; another 'mask' of sorts which functions similarly to face-to-face interaction. While some individuals embellish their online self, Baker (2009) theorises that the offline self informs the creation and performance of the online self, which then reinforces the offline self. In this concept of blended identity, the presentation of self on social media applications can first be performative, but eventually line up with, and inform, the offline self (Baker, 2009; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013).

Acquired identity trends, including "that girl," is a subculture on the internet representing an aspirational identity. The identity itself hinges on the process of becoming the 'best version' of yourself, and of transforming into a singular, idealised self that is prevalent on social media. However, it is not enough to hold this identity, one must display it on social media conspicuously for all to see. Using Goffman's framing, I argue that those who identify as "that girl" first begin with the intrinsic motivation to change their life (offline/backstage self) and showcase their process on social media (online/mask). The process of displaying their transformation then further informs their offline self, and reinforces the image and understanding of self as "that girl," or the best version of themselves. Once the process of

transformation is undertaken, most actions become habitual and individuals take on the ascribed identity of being wellness focused.

### C. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

#### *Consumption*

In March 2020, the United States went into lockdown due to the emerging coronavirus. With little understanding of the virus and its transmission abilities, governments urged everyone to stay home from school and work. This drastic change in society decreased consumption in all forms as many households experienced financial difficulties and 48 percent of establishments experienced a government-mandated closure (Bureau of Labor and Statistics). As the pandemic continued, government relief programs like the December 2020 COVID Relief Package and the American Rescue Plan Act helped with food hardship and rental assistance, which eased financial hardship on a lot of American households (CBPP). However, a preliminary study conducted by Barua (2021) still found that “personal consumer expenditure (PCE) contracted 3.9% last year [2020] compared to a 2.4% expansion in 2019” (Barua 2021).

Since this is a recent pandemic, there are changing and contradictory conclusions of the impact of disposable income on consumer spending and behaviour. However, most economists can agree that the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns decreased consumer spending on services and increased spending on goods. With the pandemic reaching an endemic classification, preliminary research shows the stickiness of pandemic-related behavioural changes, such as the increase in e-grocery shopping, the emergence of home nesting<sup>9</sup>, and an increase in virtual healthcare visits (McKinsey Global Institute, 2021). To summarise, the beginning of the pandemic resulted in a financial shock for households and businesses; however, personal spending stabilised later into the pandemic and has seen a 15.7% increase from the second quarter of 2021 to the second quarter of 2022 (BLS, 2022). Consumption saw a shift from services to goods, with home nesting related goods seeming to make a permanent behavioural change in society (McKinsey Global Institute, 2021). My paper will address conspicuous consumption in the context of goods, rather than services, as the identity subculture of “that girl” arose during the pandemic.

---

<sup>9</sup> McKinsey defines home nesting as the increase spending on items such as home gyms, backyards, gardens, and gaming equipment (McKinsey Global Institute 2021). With an increase in work-from-home and home lockdowns, it is no surprise that the beginning of the pandemic saw an increased spending on home-related products.

### *Social Media Usage*

With increased time spent at home, individuals spent an increasing amount of time using and viewing digital media and, more specifically, social media channels. According to a study conducted by Statista, 29.7 percent of individuals reported a 1 to 2 hour increase in daily time spent on social media platforms, with 67.6 percent of respondents spending a minimum of 1 additional hour on social media (Statista, 2022). This is important as the acquired identity “that girl” was created and gained popularity on social media applications like TikTok and Instagram. The mere exposure effect explains that increased exposure to stimuli results in increasingly positive feelings towards that stimuli (Montoya et al, 2017). Applying this theory to my paper: the more individuals are exposed to social media platforms that house “that girl” content, the more positively they will feel about this identity. This positive feeling may encourage individuals to adopt this identity for themselves.

### *Acquired Identities as Social Trends*

Identity and image-creation can be based on lifestyle and habits (Dunn, 2008, p. 129). Identity has shifted from a ‘project’ for one to discover towards a formation based on a strong element of ‘choice,’ and the notion that one can constantly reinvent oneself (Dunn, 2008, p. 161). In this sense, identity is a less rigid concept, and more people are leaning into acquired identities. As mentioned previously, the transition towards a consumption-based society has seen a rise of acquired identities: highly popularised and short-lived sets of characteristics that individuals can participate in through a consumption-based process (Berberick and McAllister, 2016). The ‘vsco girl,’ ‘e-girl,’ and, more recently, “that girl” identities all represent identity presentations popularised on social media. Individuals have the ability to participate in identity presentation through consumption; anyone can become “that girl” if they wear the corresponding articles of clothing (matching workout sets, athleisure, etc), say the correct phrases (“I’m manifesting...”), and replicate a certain lifestyle (pilates, green smoothies, perfectly made bed, etc). The “that girl” identity hinges not only on the physical presentation of self but also on the habits and lifestyle they personify, making social media-based identity trends the perfect example of acquired identities (Huddy, 2001).

### Conclusion

This review has tackled interdisciplinary concepts including identity formation, conspicuous consumption, the role of social media on both, and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on all three of these.



The “that girl” identity rose in conjunction with the increase of ‘working from home,’ and social media has seen the emergence of a spin-off trend titled ‘5 to 9’<sup>10</sup> as a close link to the “that girl” identity as well. The “that” in the “that girl” identity references any personal growth and wellness behaviour, including “waking up extremely early, taking aesthetically pleasing photos, working out, making your bed, and eating healthy” (Pitcher, 2021). As demonstrated in previous paragraphs, individuals use products and experiences to curate an online, public self image. This new mode of signalling in-group identities through products that aren’t necessarily branded,<sup>11</sup> and I theorise that this can be attributed to an increased use of social media and potentially the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>12</sup>. For example, VSCO girls, a popular identity trend which rose to fame in 2019, are connected with the water bottle brand Hydro Flask. Brands including Thermoflask and Iron Flask have copied the outward appearance of a Hydro Flask to provide cheaper alternatives to the popular brand. While Hydro Flask will remain a central part of the VSCO girl identity, any of the ‘knockoff’ water bottle brands can signal the identity as well.

Veblen (1899) theorised that individuals will purchase goods for both their functionality and their status-signalling aspect, and previous literature uses brand names as the status-signalling aspect of conspicuous consumption. Then, O’Cass and McEwen (2004) introduce the impact of taste and fashion on conspicuous consumption, moving the definition away from wealth and onto image management. Now, my paper furthers the conversation by arguing that individuals conspicuously consume to signal their acquired identities.

This paper is closely related to Bronner and Hoog’s “Comparing Conspicuous Consumption Across Different Experiential Products: Culture and Leisure” (2014), Kettle and Häubl’s “The Signature Effect: Signing Influences Consumption-Related Behaviour by Priming Self-Identity” (2011), and Kleine, Klein, and Kernan’s “Mundane Consumption and the Self: A Social-Identity Perspective” (1993).

---

<sup>10</sup> The ‘5 to 9’ trend refers to 5pm to 9am, the opposite of the 9am to 5pm workday. Content filed under the ‘5 to 9’ trend is largely wellness and personal growth based; however, this is more of a lifestyle example rather than a new acquired identity.

<sup>11</sup> Usually, identity signalling is performed through experiential purchases; however, with a global lockdown, the most prominent way for individuals to signal is through products. Furthermore, conspicuous consumption can occur not only through brand names (i.e. ‘Dior’) but also through the aesthetic of products. See: the VSCO girl identity in subsequent sentences.

<sup>12</sup> There is no literature supporting or refuting this claim, largely due to how recent the pandemic occurred. However, based on my previous literature review as well as my own experiences, I believe there is a strong argument for this hypothesis.

### III. Method

A total of 781 participants, undergraduate students at various U.S. universities, took part in this study. The survey was hosted on Qualtrics and no participant emails were recorded in a way which could be traced to their answers<sup>13</sup>. Individuals were recruited through Facebook groups, LinkedIn posts, Instagram stories, and word of mouth. The subjects were instructed to complete a survey “about [their] habits and consumption preferences” but were not informed about the identity studied until the debrief. Upon completion, participants had the option to participate in a separate raffle to win one of a dozen \$25 Visa gift cards. These gift cards were paid for by the Johnson Student Research Grant. The exact wording for informed consent and the debrief is included in Appendix II of this paper. After deleting ineligible and unfinished responses, the analysis reported below included responses from 653 participants.

My survey was divided into three parts: demographics, self-identity congruence questions, and an experimental portion. An individuals’ demographics and identity congruence (IS score) are both hypothesised to have intersecting and compounding effects on willingness to pay for identity relevant items.

#### *Demographics*

To ensure that my survey utilised verbiage similar to, or even identical to, that used by other researchers, the demographic questions were copied verbatim from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). Participants were asked questions relating to their gender, age, ethnicity, household income, and current employment status. The exact questions can be found in Appendix I.

#### *Identity Congruence*

The self-identity congruence questions were adapted from Study 2 in “The Signature Effect: Signing Influences Consumption-Related Behavior by Priming Self-Identity” by Kettle and Häubl (2011). The self-identity congruence questions include 8 tasks, 11 topics, and 11 statements. They are provided below.

---

<sup>13</sup> Participants had the opportunity to enter their email in a separate qualtrics form to be entered in a raffle to win one of twelve, \$25 Visa gift cards. These emails were stored separately from their answers and I had no way of matching answers to participant emails. Participation in the raffle was completely voluntary. The funding for the gift cards was received from the Johnson Summer Research Grant.

The survey question for identity relevant tasks was phrased as “How frequently do you do the following tasks?” with respondents choosing a number between 1, never, and 10, frequently. Respondents were asked to answer from the list in the following order, with identity relevant tasks italicised: *Workout*, *Read (for pleasure)*, *Journal*, *Skincare*, Listen to music, Watch television, Spend time with friends, Drink caffeinated beverages.

These tasks were chosen in conjunction with each other because working out, reading for pleasure, or having a skincare routine individually does not necessarily correlate to the wellness identity. However, as explained by Pitcher in i-D and through my own experiences, I believe that these four tasks in tandem provide an accurate measurement of a typical “that girl,” or someone who is wellness-focused.

I then asked participants to respond to two questions about the same eleven topics. The first question asked “How interested are you in the following topics?” with respondents choosing a number between 1, not interested, and 10, very interested. The second question asked “How knowledgeable are you about the following topics?” with respondents choosing a number between 1, not knowledgeable, and 10, very knowledgeable. Respondents were presented the topics in the following order, with identity relevant topics italicised: Travel, Modern Art, *Mental health*, Cryptocurrency, *Fitness*, Sustainability, Food. Current events, *Self improvement*, Sports, Pop culture.

These topics were chosen with the same intentions as the identity relevant tasks--taken individually, an interest in fitness could classify someone as a “gym bro” or “gym rat” and not necessarily in the wellness identity. However, someone who scores high in all three topics aligns with my understanding of wellness-focused individuals.

Finally, participants answered the question “How closely do you associate with the following statements” for eleven statements. Again, respondents were asked to rank their association on a scale from 1, distant, to 10, close. The statements were presented in the following order, with identity relevant statements italicised: *I eat balanced and healthy meals*; If I had the financial freedom, I would travel the world; I am motivated by my academic achievements; *I enjoy working out to improve my mental health*; My culture is important to me; I enjoy walking around museums; *I live an intentional life*; I have money invested in the stock

market; I am a ‘foodie;’ *I value self improvement*; Being environmentally sustainable is important to me.

The four identity relevant statements were chosen, again, they all provide a well-rounded analysis to the wellness identity. One large part of being “that girl” is the idea of intentionality--”that girl” is known to be emotionally intelligent and draw strong boundaries--so the phrases “I live an intentional life” and “I value self improvement” were included to differentiate those interested in mental health and those who may fall into the “that girl” category. Similarly, “I enjoy working out to improve my mental health” attempts to offset individuals who are passionate about fitness (and may have scored higher in the previous two questions relating to fitness) but not their own mental health. Finally, “I eat balanced and healthy meals” draws upon numerous TikToks of self-proclaimed “that girl”s meal prepping and eating according to the balanced 80/20 rule.

For the final data manipulation, only the identity relevant categories were used to generate an identity salience score. The identity salience score was calculated by adding 14 identity relevant categories and dividing the number by 14, and then rounded to the nearest tenth. This means that each of the 14 identity relevant categories are weighted equally in relation to each other. Each identity salience score is contained between the number 1 and 10. The survey questions can be found in Appendix I.

### *Experimental - Product Choice*

The experimental portion for identity relevant products was heavily inspired by Study 4 of the aforementioned Kettle and Häubl’s paper.

Participants were asked to choose between two products, one ‘generic’ product and one ‘premium’ product, for four different products total. The premium product price was accurate at the time of survey creation, and the generic product price was 65 percent of the original. Other information survey participants received included brand name, material, weight (if applicable), colour (if applicable), dimensions (if applicable), and ingredients (if applicable). Participants also saw a picture of the two products side by side. They were instructed to choose a product to purchase, assuming money is not a factor, and participants made a selection before moving onto a different product. The four products surveyed included two

“that girl” identity relevant products and two placebo household products. Each of the four product choices will be elaborated below, and the questions can be found in Appendix I.

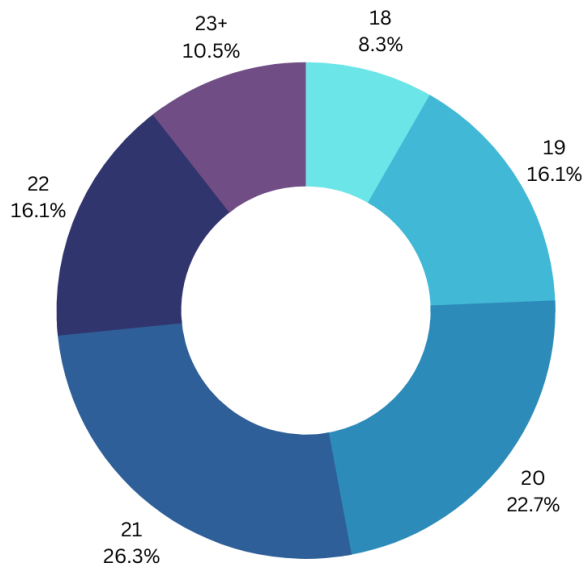
The two identity relevant products were the SET Active workout set in limited edition colour Cosmo and the Five-Minute Journal. I chose the SET Active workout set as, like the link between Hydro Flask and the VSCO girl identity, SET Active is a popular brand among the wellness community. Furthermore, the ‘generic’ product is an Amazon workout set which is almost an exact duplicate of the SET Active set in a very similar shade. Similarly, I chose the Five-Minute Journal for the same visual recognition quality. The Five-Minute Journal is a staple in “that girl” social media videos, and this product is likewise also attributed to the wellness identity. Although descriptions for each product are provided to consumers, I hypothesise that individuals with a higher IS score will recognise the brand SET Active and the Five-Minute journal and be more inclined to purchase the brand name as opposed to the generic version.

To ensure that the reason respondents chose both premium versions of the aforementioned products is not due to a higher willingness-to-pay (WTP), I included two control household products as well (which I will refer to as the ‘placebo’ products throughout the paper). In Kettle and Häubl’s paper, they run a similar experiment and use a digital camera as one of their placebo products. I also used a digital camera as a placebo product, along with two bottles of dish soap. I provided item descriptions and followed the same pricing method as the identity relevant products. While these items (Nikon, Canon, Dawn, and Gain) may have some brand recognition, I believe that there is a higher chance individuals will have no preference between these two products.

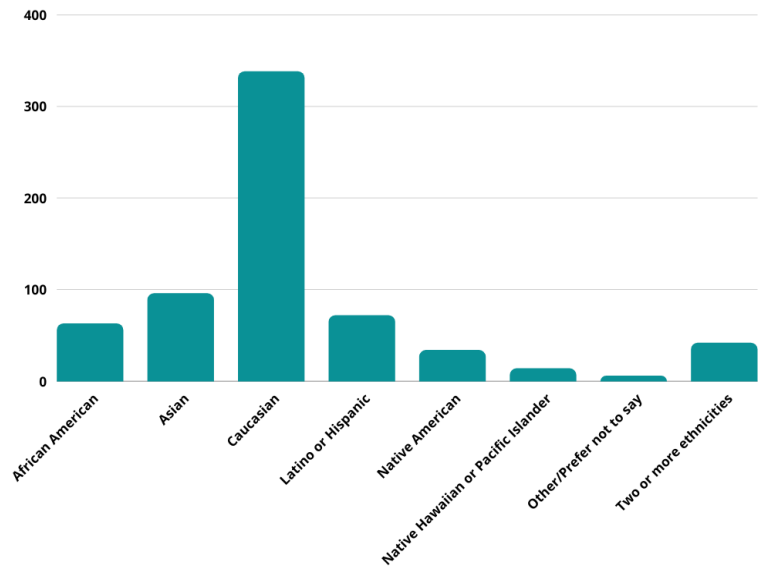
## IV. Preliminary Analysis

### *Descriptive statistics*

*Figure 1: Respondent Demographics Showing Percentage of Respondents by Age*



*Figure 2: Respondent Demographics Showing Number of Respondents by Ethnicity*



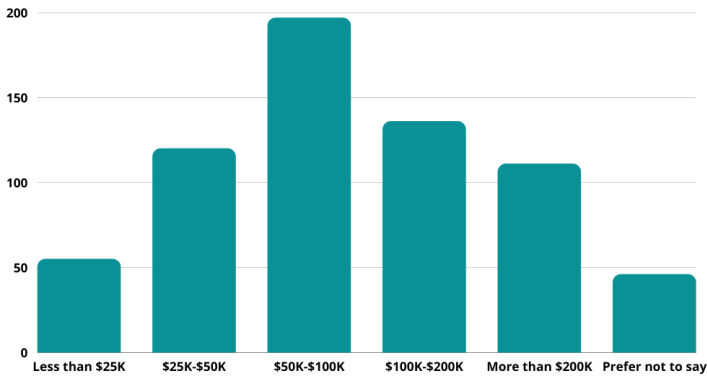
This study limited participants to individuals who are (1) over the age of 18, (2) a current college student, and (3) located in the United States (or attending a college in the United States). A typical respondent is a 21-year old Caucasian woman a

Figures 1-4 visually show the respondent demographics, broken down by age (Fig 1), ethnicity (Fig 2), gender (Fig 3), and household income (Fig 4).

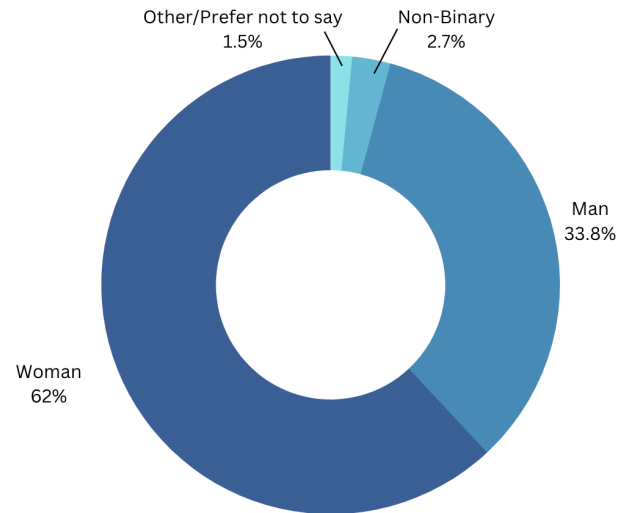
The average age of all respondents is 20.57, with a standard deviation of 1.42. The median age is 21. One limitation of this calculation is that one of the categories is '23+' which had to be modified to 23 for these calculations. Some participants may have been older than 23, which would potentially skew the average age. However, only 69 of the participants answered '23+' in the survey, which accounts for 1.5 percent of the responses. Furthermore, all participants are current undergraduate college students. Therefore, the impact of this limitation on the reliability of the age parameter is presumed to be small, and I kept these data points in my data analysis.

Another demographic category that I surveyed for was each respondent's ethnicity. The most common ethnicity is Caucasian, which encompasses 50.69 percent of respondents.

*Figure 3: Respondent Demographics Showing Number of Respondents by Familial Household Income*



*Figure 4: Respondent Demographics Showing Percentage of Respondents by Gender*

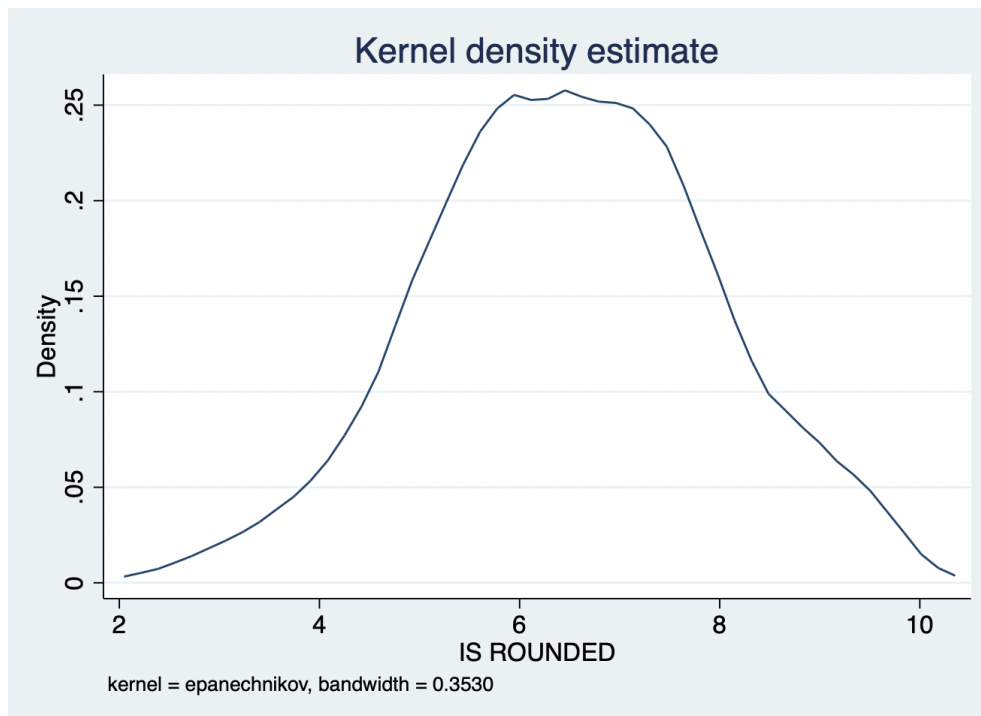


The final two demographic categories that I surveyed are gender and household income. Although the language of “that girl” is gendered, I believe that the wellness identity is not specific to one gender. Therefore, I did not drop any response due to gender.

A limitation for this section of the survey came from the wording of the household income answers. If someone’s income is on the margin of two answers, say \$50K or \$100K, they would have had to choose between two categories. This could have potentially skewed the data in favour of one option. However, this was the exact language used by the U.S. Census Bureau for their survey, and I wanted to keep the language consistent with other demographic surveys my participants may have encountered in the past.

## Identity Saliency Scores

Figure 5: Graph Showing Identity Saliency Score Density



As mentioned previously, identity saliency scores were calculated by adding 14 identity relevant categories and dividing the number by 14, and then rounding to the nearest tenth. Each identity saliency score is contained between the number 1 and 10. The identity saliency scores, henceforth referred to as IS, fell between 2.4 and 10, with an average IS of 6.5. The standard deviation is 1.43. 101 or 15.44 percent of respondents earned a ‘high’ IS score, defined as an IS score of 8 or more.

Figure 5 visually depicts the range of identity saliency scores earned by all individuals in the study.

### Product Choices

I coded the experimental portion of my survey as dummy variables in Stata, where choosing the premium product was assigned a value of 1, and choosing the generic product was assigned a value of 0 for all 4 product choices. Using the Stata “count if” function, I calculated how many respondents chose both premium “that girl” products, which came out to 192 of the 653 participants, or 29.4 percent of respondents. I also calculated how many



respondents chose both premium placebo products, which was 147 participants, or 22.5 percent of respondents. 69 participants, or 1.5 percent of respondents, chose all four premium products.

#### *Regression Model: OLS*

To conduct preliminary analysis on the relationship between participant demographics and IS score, I used OLS regressions. My regression model was as follows:

$$ISScore = \beta_0 + \beta_1 i.Gender + \beta_2 Age + \beta_3 i.Ethnicity + \beta_4 HouseholdIncome + \beta_5 i.Employment + u$$

Gender, ethnicity, and employment were all coded into index variables using “i.[variable]” to ensure that Stata did not treat these values as rank observations. This means that if a 1 is coded for “man,” then all of my regressions will provide results in comparison to the base group (i.e. the group coded as 1).

#### *Relationship between demographics and IS scores*

Before I tested my hypothesis, I first wanted to gather more information about how demographics could potentially affect IS scores. As mentioned above, I used an OLS regression model to regress the identity salience score on all of my surveyed demographics both as one regression and separate regressions. OLS regression models demonstrate whether changes observed in the dependent variable are associated with changes in one or more of the independent variables. In these models, my dependent variable is IS score, and my independent variables are participant demographics.

In the OLS regression, the results demonstrated that a respondent’s income and ethnicity do not have an effect on their IS score; however, gender, and employment have a small impact on IS score. There was a negative effect on IS scores if a participant chose to withhold their gender (i.e. they chose the option ‘Other/Prefer Not To Say). This means that someone who chooses other would have a lower IS score when compared to the reference gender (male). Choosing ‘woman’ did not have a statistically significant impact on their resulting IS score, which I found interesting due to the gendered language of the “that *girl*” phenomenon.

Furthermore, being employed part time or not currently employed had a statistically significant positive correlation with IS score when compared to the reference employment status (full-time employment). A potential explanation for this could be that people who do not have full-time jobs have more time for the fitness and wellness habits I surveyed for, including ‘reading for fun’ and ‘journaling.’

To double check my regression results, I ran individual regressions in which I singled out each of the demographic variables as single independent variables in the regression. Put differently, I ran five regressions where the IS score was the dependent variable and one demographic was the independent variable. Both the individual and overall OLS regression results reported the same significance levels, which means my original model provides an accurate description about the influence of demographic variables on a respondents IS score.

In the first OLS regression (with all demographic variables), respondent demographics had an R-squared score of .0677, which means that 6.77 percent of variance in IS scores can be predicted by demographics. The results of these regressions, both individual (regressions with one dependent variable) and overall (regression with all five dependent variables), are reported below in Table 1.

*Table 1: Statistically Significant Regression Results using IS Score as the Dependent Variable*

		IS Score (Overall)	IS Score (Individual)
Gender	Other/Prefer Not To Say	-.1305**	-1.6204***
Employment Status	Employed Part Time	.5264***	.4615***
	Not Currently Employed	.3551*	.2989*

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## V. Data and Results

The number of observations for all regressions is 653.

### *Regression Model: Probit*

The method used for the rest of this study is the probit regression model. A probit regression is a statistical technique that relates a dependent dummy variable to one or more independent, explanatory variables. The probit model assumes:

$$P(Y=1|\bar{x})=\Phi(\beta_0+\beta_1X)$$

In this equation,  $P(Y=1|\bar{x})$  computes the predicted probability of  $Y=1$  occurring for the value of  $\bar{x}$ , or the mean. In this study, the independent variable is the Identity Salience (IS) score and the dependent variables are multiple variations of dummy variables obtained from the experimental portion. A normal regression would treat the independent binary outcome variables as values, whereas the probit regression model is specifically designed to account for dependent dummy variables. Therefore, the model for my regressions are:

$$P(\text{Premium}=1|IS)=\Phi(\beta_0+\beta_1IS)$$

This equation provides the predicted probability of a respondent choosing the premium version of a product if they had the mean Identity Salience (IS) score of 6.5.

However, the coefficients provided in the probit regression model are in log-odds, and all effects are non-linear. Therefore, to interpret my model in the probability scale, I used the Stata command “mfx” after the probit regression to calculate the marginal effects. This means my model now calculates the change in probability at the mean when the independent variable increases by one unit. For regressions that held demographics constant, I used the Stata command “margins, dydx(\*)” to generate the marginal effects. The marginal effect equation is as follows:

$$\log\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IS$$

$$p = \frac{e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 IS}}{1 + e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 IS}}$$

$$p = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 IS)}}$$

This equation approximates the average effect of the mean IS score on  $p$ , the probability of choosing the premium product (Perrailon, 2019). All coefficients are provided in the probability scale.

#### A. Single product choices

My main question of interest is whether a high identity salience score can predict product choices. If the scores do not predict choices, I expect to observe minimal to no marginal effects in all of my regressions. If the scores can predict choices, I expect to observe a larger, statistically significant marginal effect for “that girl” premium products in comparison to the placebo premium products.

Using the probit regression model, I calculated the marginal effects of IS on all four premium products. I also ran the same regressions controlling for my demographic variables. The results of the regressions are provided below in Table 2.

*Table 2: Probit Regression Results for Individual Product Choices using IS Scores as the Dependent Variable*

	Coefficient	Marginal Effects	Controlled for Demographics
Workout Set (TG)	.1363*** (.0348)	.0544*** (.0139)	
	.1395*** (.0374)	.0498*** (.0129)	X
Journal (TG)	.1319*** (.0348)	.0525*** (.0139)	
	.1332*** (.0365)	.0504*** (.0134)	X
Camera (Placebo)	.0536 (.0347)	.0203 (.0132)	
	.0375 (.0369)	.0135 (.0133)	X

Soap (Placebo)	.0908** (.0346)	.0355** (.0135)	
	.0853* (.0364)	.0314* (.0132)	X

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , standard errors are reported in parentheses

Firstly, I controlled for demographics to evaluate if my variables of interest have a similar significance and coefficient regardless of the controls. Table 2 demonstrates that controlling for demographic variables does not have an effect on the coefficients or their statistical significance. This means that IS scores can capture the variance different demographics might have on product choices.

From Table 2 it becomes clear that, as I expected, an individual's IS score has an impact on product choices. The purpose of Table 2 is to discern whether IS scores have a statistically significant effect on product choices, especially comparing the marginal effects of "that girl" products and placebo products. A positive coefficient means that a one unit increase in the predictor (IS score) leads to an increase in the predicted probability of purchasing the premium product. In all eight regressions, there were no negative coefficients. This means that there is no case in which an increase in IS score results in a decrease in the predicted probability of a product purchase. Furthermore, we can analyse the marginal effects in the following way: for a one unit increase in IS score at the mean (in this case, 6.5), there is a 5.4 percent increase in the predicted probability of an individual choosing the premium, "that girl" workout set. (This analysis can be generalised for all other marginal effects presented in Table 2).

Through analysing the marginal effects of the probit regressions, we can draw the following conclusions:

- I. There is a statistically significant marginal effect of IS score on both premium "that girl" products. The marginal effect is also larger, almost double, than their placebo counterparts.
- II. There is weak to no statistical significance in the placebo products.
- III. As mentioned before, there is not a large difference in my coefficients when controlling for demographics versus without the controls. The model is robust to the inclusion and exclusion of demographic controls.

### B. Two product choices

Another question of interest is whether a high identity salience score can predict if an individual chooses both premium “that girl” products. To answer this question, I created two additional dummy variables. The first dummy variable assigned a value of 1 to individuals who chose both premium “that girl” products, regardless of their placebo product choices. This meant that an individual could be assigned a 1 if they chose all four premium products. The second dummy variable controlled for their placebo product choices by using the “|” (or) command in Stata. It assigned individuals a value of 1 if they chose both premium “that girl” products *and* did not choose at least one premium placebo product. The results of those regressions are provided in Table 3 below.

*Table 3: Regression Results for Two Product Choices using IS Score as a Dependent Variable*

	Coefficient	Marginal Effects	Controlled for Demographics	Share of Respondents with an Outcome of 1
Both TG Products	.0234 (.0636)	.0018 (.0051)		3.6% (24)
	.0001 (.0703)	7.80e-06 (.0059)	X	
Both TG Products With Placebo Control	.0908* (.0404)	.0238* (.0106)		18.2% (119)
	.0876* (.0431)	.0222* (.0109)	X	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , standard errors are reported in parentheses

The sample for both dummy variables was small, with 24 participants assigned a 1 for the first iteration and 119 participants assigned a 1 for the second iteration. There was little to no statistical significance for these regressions. Overall, it seems that identity salience scores cannot predict if an individual chooses both products; however, the lack of significance may also be because of the small sample size.

C. Single product choices with time indicator variable

I then further manipulated my data in order to control for time in choosing products. I hypothesised that brand or product recognition would lead “that girl” individuals to choose the premium products more quickly than their counterparts.

I created four new outcome dummy variables to represent individuals who chose the premium product in an amount of time that is less than the median. The regression assigns a 1 to respondents who satisfy two conditions: (1) respondents chose the premium product, and (2) respondents submitted the page (i.e. ‘chose’) faster than the median. Like my previous regressions, I used the probit model, which explains the likelihood of satisfying these two conditions. The results of those regressions are provided in Table 4 below.

*Table 4: Probit Regression Results for Individual Product Choices, Factoring in Decision Time, using IS Scores as the Dependent Variable*

	Coefficient	Marginal Effects	Controlled for Demographics	Share of Respondents with an Outcome of 1
Workout Set (TG)	.1484*** (.0383)	.0461*** (.0118)		24.5% (160)
	.1403*** (.0406)	.0408*** (.0116)	X	
Journal (TG)	.1613*** (.0386)	.0482*** (.0115)		22.9% (150)
	.1517*** (.0411)	.0427*** (.0113)	X	
Camera (Placebo)	.1213** (.0396)	.0328 (.0107)		19.3% (126)
	.1092* (.0430)	.0271* (.0106)	X	
Soap (Placebo)	.1259*** (.0371)	.0420*** (.0124)		27.8% (182)
	.1213** (.0390)	.0395** (.0124)	X	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , standard errors are reported in parentheses

To analyse these results, I compared Table 2 (no time control) with Table 4 (time control). I broke down my analysis into the four product choices below.

### *“That Girl” Products*

The workout set and journal are products that represent my identity of interest.

*Workout Set:* The coefficients and marginal effects are similar with and without time controls. This suggests that the decision time of someone with a median IS score has no influence on whether or not someone will choose the premium workout set. Put more simply, the speed in which someone chooses the product is not a factor in whether or not they will choose the premium version.

*Journal:* The marginal effects are similar with and without time controls. 150 respondents chose the premium journal faster than the median, which is 48 percent of the total number of people who chose the premium workout set. While the coefficient increases by .03 with time controls, the marginal effects decrease (5.25 percent in Table 2 versus 4.82 percent in Table 4). The decrease in marginal effects suggest that individuals who were quick to select a product have a smaller probability of choosing the premium version of the journal. This probability is still larger and more statistically significant than the placebo counterparts.

Overall, controlling for time does not seem to affect my original interpretation of IS score and consumption preferences -- individuals who are more likely to choose the premium version of “that girl” products will do so regardless of how much time they spent making this decision. The probability of choosing either the premium workout set or the premium journal are larger than their placebo counterparts, which is to be expected. These effects are slightly lower when I control for time.

### *Placebo Products*

The placebo products are two random household products. They should not have a strong connection to my identity of interest.

*Camera:* When controlling for time, the coefficient jumps significantly from .0536 (no control) to .1213 (with control), with the second coefficient being statistically significant at the .01 level. This increase in coefficient by more than double means that there is a large



increase in predicted probability of a respondent choosing a 1 when controlling for time. In other terms, a one unit increase in IS score increases the likelihood of someone choosing the premium camera faster than average. The marginal effects also increase; however, they are not statistically significant.

*Soap:* Like with the other placebo product, the coefficient and marginal effects increase when controlling for time. One possibility for this increase is the same explanation given for the journals: the brands used for the experimental portion are large household names. Therefore, some level of brand recognition and/or brand loyalty could have occurred within respondents, leading them to choose the placebo products quicker regardless of the price and specifications provided.

Overall, Table 4 suggests that there is an increased predicted probability of choosing the premium product for all products surveyed when controlling for the average response time. Respondents who answered questions faster than the median are more likely to choose the premium product when their IS score increased by one unit (i.e. marginal effect). These results are statistically significant for the workout set, journal, and soap; it is not statistically significant for the camera.

Based on literature about conspicuous consumption and brand recognition, I theorise that controlling for response time only controls for individuals with high existing brand recognition, regardless of their IS score.

#### D. Product Choices Controlling for Gender

Since the term “that girl” is gendered in language, I was curious to see if gender, in addition to IS score, played a role in determining product choices.

Of my 653 respondents, 220 respondents (or 33.7 percent) were male. The average IS score for male respondents is 6.62, with a minimum of 3.2 and a maximum of 10. The average IS score for respondents who are women is 6.49, with a minimum of 2.4 and a maximum of 9.9.

I ran all of the previous regressions -- both single and two product choices, controlling for only gender and also for all demographics -- and found that gender did not result in a statistically significant coefficient in any of the regressions. This means that a respondents gender is not a good indicator of their likelihood to choose a certain product.

This is not surprising, as there are many social media creators who fall into the “that girl” category but identify as male. Two such examples are Nico Rauchenwald (@nicorauchenwald) and Maximilian Warum (@maximilianwarum). Rauchenwald is known for founding SOM STUDIOS and Project 50, a wellness-lifestyle challenge modelled after Andy Frisella’s infamous ‘75 Hard.’ Warum is a digital content creator who is best known for his cinematic and motivational daily vlogs. Both creators fall under the definition of “that girl.” However, they cannot be referred to as “that boy,” as there is no such universal term for a male-identifying “that girl.” This is why I have been using the term “wellness” and “that girl” interchangeably throughout my paper -- they are synonymous with each other. The “wellness identity” is a gender neutral term for “that girl.”

## VI. CONCLUSION

### A. Summary and Discussion

Current literature demonstrates a strong relationship between ascribed identities, such as race and class, and conspicuous consumption. Expanding upon the existing literature, my paper aims to determine how acquired identities affect an individual's likelihood to conspicuously consume.

The analysis found a positive marginal effect of the “that girl” wellness identity on product choices, accounting for an individual's potential higher willingness-to-pay, demographics, and speed of making product choices. This conclusion was drawn through four regressions, which demonstrated that Identity Salience (IS) scores are positively correlated with the likelihood of choosing premium products. IS score has a larger marginal effect with premium “that girl” products compared to their placebo counterparts for both overall regressions, even for respondents who chose the premium product quickly. These findings demonstrate a relationship between acquired identities and conspicuous consumption for my chosen identity.

### B. Contributions of the Present Research

This research provides evidence that individuals will conspicuously consume based on their acquired identities for my chosen identity, which parallels similar conclusions drawn for conspicuous consumption based on ascribed identities. Overall, this research can be generalised to explain how Identity Salience scores have a larger marginal effect on product choices for identity-related products when compared to placebo products. Importantly, this relationship is not dependent on demographics or decision time; the model is robust to the inclusion and exclusion of both controls.

The present work also constitutes a novel theoretical advancement to the identity formation literature, which contains no instances wherein social media is a factor in acquired identity. The inclusion and evaluation of increased social media usage, as well as sticky pandemic-related behavioural changes, further the novelty of this paper. In other words, the present findings are important because they demonstrate a relationship between acquired identity and conspicuous consumption while factoring in identity formation, social media, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

### C. Further Study

These findings suggest a number of directions for further inquiry. In the present experiments, I measured the impact of the wellness identity on consumption habits and made conclusions on one's likelihood to conspicuously consume. Although these conclusions are grounded in theory, further research should attempt to address the potential difference between visual product recognition and brand name recognition, especially for non-designer products. In addition, further research can extend these findings by applying this theoretical framework and study to different identities in order to demonstrate a more robust link between acquired identity and conspicuous consumption.

Finally, future research can address whether the drive to conspicuously consume holds true for all acquired identities, or if this positive relationship only exists in the wellness sector. This study has assumed that the "that girl" wellness identity is a high-status identity, especially on social media; therefore, individuals are inclined to signal their membership in this identity through certain products. The extent in which consumers are aware of the implicit status-levels of acquired identities may affect their decisions to conspicuously consume.

## VII. REFERENCES

- Akerlof, George A., and Rachel E. Kranton. "Economics and Identity." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 115, no. 3, Aug. 2000, pp. 715–753., <https://doi.org/1.1162/003355300554881>.
- Alstott, Jeff, et al. "Homophily and the Speed of Social Mobilization: The Effect of Acquired and Ascribed Traits." *PLoS ONE*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2014, <https://doi.org/1.1371/journal.pone.009514>.
- Ariely, Dan. *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions*. Harper Perennial, 2009.
- Baker, Andrea J. "Mick or Keith: Blended Identity of Online Rock Fans." *Identity in the Information Society*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2009, pp. 7–21., <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12394-009-0015-5>.
- Barua, Akur. *A Spring in Consumers' Steps - Deloitte*. Deloit, June 2021, [https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/articles/6943\\_econ-economics-spotlight/primary/6943\\_Econ-Economics-spotlight.pdf](https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/articles/6943_econ-economics-spotlight/primary/6943_Econ-Economics-spotlight.pdf).
- Bauman, Zygmunt. "Consuming Life." *Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 1, no. 9, 2001, pp. 9–29., <https://doi.org/1.1177/146954050100100102>.
- Berberick, Stephanie N, and Matthew P McAllister. "Online Quizzes as Viral, Consumption-Based Identities." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 10, no. 6, 2016.
- Bronner, Fred, and Robert De Hoog. "Comparing Conspicuous Consumption across Different Experiential Products: Culture and Leisure." *International Journal of Market Research*, vol. 61, no. 4, 2018, pp. 430–446., <https://doi.org/1.1177/1470785318799898>.
- Bullingham, Liam, and Ana C Vasconcelos. "'The Presentation of Self in the Online World': Goffman and the Study of Online Identities." *Journal of Information Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, 4 Jan. 2013, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/016555151247005>.
- Carter, Michael J. "Advancing Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 76, no. 3, 2013, pp. 203–223., <https://doi.org/1.1177/0190272513493095>.
- "Changes to Consumer Expenditures during the Covid-19 Pandemic." *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 3 May 2022, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/changes-to-consumer-expenditures-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.htm>.

- Charoennan, Wanwisa, and Kai-Ping Huang. "The Antecedents and Consequences of Conspicuous Consumption of Luxury Fashion Goods in a Social Media Platform." *International Journal of Organizational Innovation*, vol. 11, no. 1, July 2018.
- Clingingsmith, David, and Roman M. Sheremeta. "Status and the Demand for Visible Goods: Experimental Evidence on Conspicuous Consumption." *Experimental Economics*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2017, pp. 877–904., <https://doi.org/1.1007/s10683-017-9556-x>.
- Corneo, Giacomo, and Olivier Jeanne. "Conspicuous Consumption, Snobbism and Conformism." *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 66, no. 1, 1997, pp. 55–71., [https://doi.org/1.1016/s0047-2727\(97\)00016-9](https://doi.org/1.1016/s0047-2727(97)00016-9).
- Danziger, Pamela N. "Luxury Brands, Get Ready: Wellbeing Will Emerge as a Huge Trend after Coronavirus." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 4 May 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2020/05/03/luxury-brands-get-ready-changing-consumer-priorities-will-result-in-a-trend-toward-the-new-luxury-of-wellbeing-after-coronavirus/?sh=5f220b443e04>.
- Darity, William. "Stratification Economics: The Role of Intergroup Inequality." *Journal of Economics and Finance*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2005, pp. 144–153., <https://doi.org/1.1007/bf0276155>.
- Davis, John B. "Stratification Economics and Identity Economics." *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 39, no. 5, 2014, pp. 1215–1229., <https://doi.org/1.1093/cje/beu071>.
- Dunn, Robert G. "Identifying Consumption Subjects and Objects in Consumer Society." Temple University Press, 2008.
- "Establishments That Continued Paying Employees Told Not to Work during the Pandemic." *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2021/impact-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic-on-businesses-and-employees-by-industry/home.htm#:~:text=Forty%2Deight%20percent%20of%20establishments,mandated%20closures%20of%20any%20industry>.
- Hayes, Adam. "Rational Behavior: Definition and Example in Economics." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 23 Oct. 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/rational-behavior.asp>.
- Heffetz, Ori. "A Test of Conspicuous Consumption: Visibility and Income Elasticities." *Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 93, no. 4, 2011, pp. 1101–1117., [https://doi.org/1.1162/rest\\_a\\_00116](https://doi.org/1.1162/rest_a_00116).
- Hogan, Bernie. "The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online." *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2010, pp. 377–386., <https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610385893>.

- Hosany, Sameer, and Drew Martin. "Self-Image Congruence in Consumer Behavior." *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 65, no. 5, 2012, pp. 685–691., <https://doi.org/1.1016/j.jbusres.2011.03.015>.
- Huddy, Leonie. "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory." *Political Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2001, pp. 127–156., <https://doi.org/1.1111/0162-895x.0023>.
- Josiassen, Alexander, and A. George Assaf. "Look at Me—I Am Flying: The Influence of Social Visibility of Consumption on Tourism Decisions." *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 40, 2013, pp. 155–175., <https://doi.org/1.1016/j.annals.2012.08.007>.
- Kenton, Will. "Neoclassical Economics: What It Is and Why It's Important." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 25 Oct. 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/neoclassical.asp#:~:text=The%20term%20neocl assical%20economics%20was,of%20a%20product%20or%20service>.
- Kettle, Keri L., and Gerald Häubl. "The Signature Effect: Signing Influences Consumption-Related Behavior by Priming Self-Identity." *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2011, pp. 474–489., <https://doi.org/1.1086/659753>.
- Kleine, Robert E., et al. "Mundane Consumption and the Self: A Social-Identity Perspective." *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1993, pp. 209–235., [https://doi.org/1.1016/s1057-7408\(08\)80015-](https://doi.org/1.1016/s1057-7408(08)80015-).
- Knoll, Melissa A. Z. "The Role of Behavioral Economics and Behavioral Decision Making in Americans' Retirement Savings Decisions." *Social Security Bulletin*, vol. 70, no. 4, 2011.
- Mazzocco, Philip J., et al. "Direct and Vicarious Conspicuous Consumption: Identification with Low-Status Groups Increases the Desire for High-Status Goods." *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2012, pp. 520–528., <https://doi.org/1.1016/j.jcps.2012.07.002>.
- Montoya, R. Matthew, et al. "A Re-Examination of the Mere Exposure Effect: The Influence of Repeated Exposure on Recognition, Familiarity, and Liking." *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 143, no. 5, 2017, pp. 459–498., <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000085>.
- Nicosia, Francesco M., and Robert N. Mayer. "Toward a Sociology of Consumption." *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1976, p. 65., <https://doi.org/1.1086/208653>.
- O'Cass, Aron, and Hmily McEwen. "Exploring Consumer Status and Conspicuous Consumption." *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2004, pp. 25–39., <https://doi.org/1.1002/cb.155>.

- Oyserman, Daphna, et al. "Identity-Based Motivation and Health." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 93, no. 6, 2007, pp. 1011–1027., <https://doi.org/1.1037/0022-3514.93.6.1011>.
- Perraillon, Marcelo Coca. *Interpreting Model Estimates: Marginal Effects*. University of Colorado, July 2019, [https://clas.ucdenver.edu/marcelo-perraillon/sites/default/files/attached-files/perraillon\\_marginal\\_effects\\_lecture\\_lisbon.pdf](https://clas.ucdenver.edu/marcelo-perraillon/sites/default/files/attached-files/perraillon_marginal_effects_lecture_lisbon.pdf).
- Perreault, Stéphane, and Richard Y. Bourhis. "Ethnocentrism, Social Identification, and Discrimination." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1999, pp. 92–103., <https://doi.org/1.1177/0146167299025001008>.
- Pitcher, Laura. "Girlboss Culture Isn't Dead, It's Rebranded as 'That Girl' Now." *i-D*, 21 July 2021, [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/v7exm4/tiktok-that-girl-girlboss-trend](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/v7exm4/tiktok-that-girl-girlboss-trend).
- Published by S. Dixon. "U.S. Increased Time Spent on Social Due to Coronavirus 202." *Statista*, 28 Apr. 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1116148/more-time-spent-social-media-platforms-users-usa-coronavirus/>.
- Remes, Jaana, et al. "The Consumer Demand Recovery and Lasting Effects of COVID-19." *McKinsey & Company*, McKinsey & Company, 15 Dec. 2021, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/the-consumer-demand-recovery-and-lasting-effects-of-covid-19>.
- Rucker, Derek D., and Adam D. Galinsky. "Conspicuous Consumption versus Utilitarian Ideals: How Different Levels of Power Shape Consumer Behavior." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2009, pp. 549–555., <https://doi.org/1.1016/j.jesp.2009.01.005>.
- Shnayder-Adams, Michelle M., and Aarti Sekhar. "Micro-Habits for Life-Long Learning." *Abdominal Radiology*, vol. 46, no. 12, 2021, pp. 5509–5512., <https://doi.org/1.1007/s00261-021-03185-7>.
- Tajfel, Henri, and John C. Turner. "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior." *Political Psychology*, 2004, pp. 276–293., <https://doi.org/1.4324/9780203505984-16>.
- "That Girl." *Urban Dictionary*, 19 June 2021, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=That+Girl>.
- "Tracking the COVID-19 Economy's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 2022,



<https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-economys-effects-on-food-housing-and>.

- Turner, J. C., et al. "Failure and Defeat as Determinants of Group Cohesiveness." *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1984, pp. 97–111.,  
<https://doi.org/1.1111/j.2044-8309.1984.tb00619.x>.
- Veblen, Thorstein, and C. Wright Mills. "Conspicuous Consumption." *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 2017, pp. 60–79., <https://doi.org/1.4324/9781315135373-4>.
- Veblen, Thorstein. "4." *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, The Macmillan Company, 1899, pp. 68–101.
- Verplanken, Bas, and Jie Sui. "Habit and Identity: Behavioral, Cognitive, Affective, and Motivational Facets of an Integrated Self." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 10, 2019,  
<https://doi.org/1.3389/fpsyg.2019.01504>.
- Warde, Alan. "Afterword: The Future of the Sociology of Consumption." *The Sociological Review*, vol. 44, no. 1\_suppl, 1997, pp. 302–312.,  
<https://doi.org/1.1111/j.1467-954x.1996.tb03446.x>.
- White, Katherine, and Darren W. Dahl. "To Be or Not Be? the Influence of Dissociative Reference Groups on Consumer Preferences." *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2006, pp. 404–414., [https://doi.org/1.1207/s15327663jcp1604\\_11](https://doi.org/1.1207/s15327663jcp1604_11).
- Wisman, Jon D. "Household Saving, Class Identity, and Conspicuous Consumption." *Journal of Economic Issues*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2009, pp. 89–114.,  
<https://doi.org/1.2753/jei0021-3624430105>.
- Wong, Nancy Y.C. *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 24, 1997, pp. 197–203.

## VIII. Appendices

### A. Appendix I: Survey Questions

#### *PART 1 - DEMOGRAPHICS*

1. Where are you currently located? (If you are an international student currently studying in the United States, please check 'United States.')

  - a. United States
  - b. Other

2. Are you a current college student? (defined as being currently enrolled in a 2 or 4-year higher education program with the intention to graduate. If you are taking a leave of absence but anticipate graduating from college or university, please check 'yes.')

  - a. Yes
  - b. No

3. What gender do you identify with?

  - a. Man
  - b. Woman
  - c. Non-binary
  - d. Other/Prefer not to answer

4. What is your age? *ONLY SURVEYING COLLEGE STUDENTS*

  - a. 18
  - b. 19
  - c. 20
  - d. 21
  - e. 22
  - f. 23+

5. Please specify your ethnicity

  - a. Caucasian
  - b. African-American
  - c. Latino or Hispanic
  - d. Asian
  - e. Native American
  - f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - g. Two or more ethnicities
  - h. Other/Prefer not to say

6. What is your annual household income (parents + yourself, if you are a dependent)?

  - a. Less than \$25,000
  - b. \$25,000 - \$50,000
  - c. \$50,000 - \$100,000
  - d. \$100,000 - \$200,000
  - e. More than \$200,000
  - f. Prefer not to say

7. What is your current employment status? (Outside of academic responsibilities)

- a. Employed full-time
- b. Employed part-time
- c. Not currently employed

## *PART 2 - CORRELATION WITH WELLNESS*



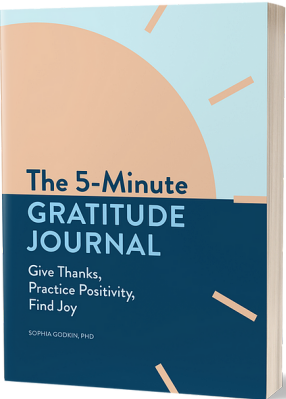

*The italicised tasks are used to calculate the identity salience scores.*

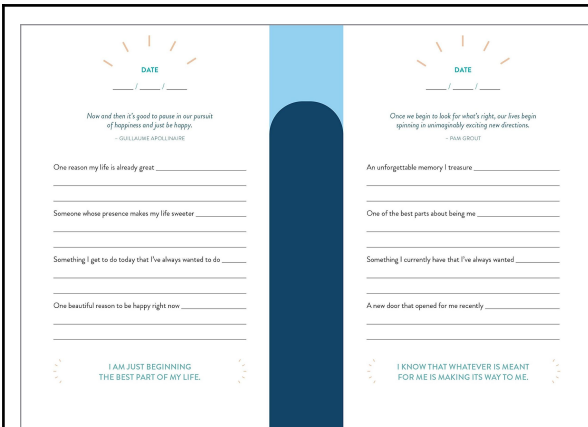
1. How frequently do you do the following tasks? (1 = never, 10 = frequently)
  - a. *Workout*
  - b. *Read (for pleasure)*
  - c. *Journal*
  - d. *Skincare*
  - e. Listen to music
  - f. Watch television
  - g. Spend time with friends
  - h. Drink caffeinated beverages
2. How interested are you in the following topics? (1 = not interested, 10 = extremely interested)
  - a. Travel
  - b. Modern Art
  - c. *Mental health*
  - d. Cryptocurrency
  - e. *Fitness*
  - f. Sustainability
  - g. Food
  - h. Current events
  - i. *Self improvement*
  - j. Sports
  - k. Pop culture
3. How knowledgeable are you about the following topics?
  - a. Travel
  - b. Modern Art
  - c. *Mental health*
  - d. Cryptocurrency
  - e. *Fitness*
  - f. Sustainability
  - g. Food
  - h. Current events
  - i. *Self improvement*
  - j. Sports
  - k. Pop culture
4. How closely do you associate with the following statements: (1 = distant, 10 = close)
  - a. *I eat balanced and healthy meals*
  - b. If I had the financial freedom, I would travel the world
  - c. I am motivated by my academic achievements

- d. *I enjoy working out to improve my mental health*
  - e. My culture is important to me
  - f. I enjoy walking around museums
  - g. *I live an intentional life*
  - h. I have money invested in the stock market
  - i. I am a 'foodie'
  - j. *I value self improvement*
  - k. Being environmentally sustainable is important to me
5. On average, how many hours do you spend on social media in a regular week (all platforms, across all devices)
- a. 0-2.5 hours
  - b. 3-5 hours
  - c. 5.5-8 hours
  - d. 8.5-10 hours
  - e. 10+ hours
  - f. Other: [short answer]
6. Please rank the following social media applications based on how frequently you use each one:
- a. *Instagram*
  - b. *TikTok*
  - c. Twitter
  - d. Facebook
  - e. Yikyak
  - f. Snapchat

### *PART 3 - CONSUMPTION*

You will now be asked to choose between two items. Please take your time in reading the attributes of both items before you make your decision. For this exercise, assume you have adequate funds to purchase either item.

Generic	Brand name
 <p>From <a href="#">Amazon</a></p> <p>Brand: Amazon  Price: \$49  Material: 87% Nylon, 13% Spandex  Squat proof  Length: 7/8ths  Colour: Sakura Purple</p>	 <p>From <a href="#">set active</a></p> <p>Brand: SET Active  Price: \$75  Material: 75% Polyester, 25% Spandex  Squat proof  Length: 7/8ths  Colour: (Limited Edition) Cosmo</p>
	



### [The 5-Minute Gratitude Journal](#) by Sophia

Godkin

Price: \$21.5

Binding: Paperback or Spiral

Dimensions: 5.75 x 8.19 inches

Format: Day to Day Calendar

Color: Multi

Brand: Rockridge Prss

Weight: 8.3 ounces



### [The Five-Minute Journal](#)

Price: \$33

Binding: Hardcover

Cover: Linen

Dimensions: 5.8 x 8.3 inches

Format: Day to Day Calendar

Color: Original

Brand: Intelligent Change

Weight: 0.035 ounces



### [Canon EOS 250D](#)

Brand: Canon

Model: EOS Rebel SL3 EF-S

Price: \$682.5

Digital Camera Type: Mirrorless

Lens: 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6

Lens Model Number:

Maximum Video Frame Rate: Up to 24fps

Video Resolution: 4K

Image Sensor Size: ASP-C (22.3 x 14.9mm)

Viewfinder Type: Electronic

Screen Size: 3 inches

Touch Screen: Yes

Camera Body Weight: 0.99lbs



### [Nikon Z50 Mirrorless](#)

Brand: Nikon

Model: Z50 1633

Price: \$1050

Digital Camera Type: Mirrorless

Lens: 16-50mm f/3.5-6.3

Lens Model Number: 20084

Maximum Video Frame Rate: Up to 120 fps

Video Resolution: 4K

Image Sensor Size: APS-C (23.6 x 15.7mm)

Viewfinder Type: Electronic

Screen Size: 3.2 inches

Touch Screen: Yes

Camera Body Weight: 0.87lbs



### Gain Dish Soap

Brand: Gain

Price: \$3

Weight: 21.6 fl oz

Product: Ultra Original Scent Dish Soap

Ingredients: C10-16 Alkyldimethylamine Oxide (Boosts Cleaning), Colorants (Adds Color to Product), Fragrances (Adds Scent to Product), Methylisothiazolinone (Preservative), PEI-14 PEG-24/PPG-16 Copolymer (Boosts Cleaning), Phenoxyethanol (Stabilizes Formula), Sodium Chloride (Thickener), Sodium Laureth Sulfate (Provides Cleaning), Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (Provides Cleaning), Water (Holds Ingredients Together).



### Dawn Dish Soap

Brand: Dawn

Price: \$4.50

Weight: 28 fl oz

Product: Ultra Original Scent Dishwashing Liquid

Ingredients: Alcohol Denat., C10-16 Alkyldimethylamine Oxide, Colorants, Fragrances, Methylisothiazolinone, PEI-14 PEG-24/PPG-16 Copolymer, Phenoxyethanol, PPG-26, Sodium Chloride, Sodium Laureth Sulfate, Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, Water.

## B. Appendix II: Informed Consent/Debrief

### *Informed Consent:*

This project is being conducted by Katie Eu as part of a senior thesis at Scripps College. The following disclosure is made to give you an opportunity to decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this research study.

You are being asked to participate because you are 18 years or older, are in the United States, and are currently enrolled in a 2 or 4-year higher education institution with plans to graduate.

### Voluntary Participation and Right of Refusal:

To participate in this study, you must be 18 years or older. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may discontinue and withdraw your consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. Participants will be asked questions about their attitudes towards various topics, as well as their preferences between various products.

Background Information and Procedures: The purpose of the study is to survey an individuals' personal knowledge/interests and purchasing preferences for 18-24 year old college students in the United States. You will be asked to complete a survey, and I expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 25 minutes.

Benefits in participating: There are no direct benefits to the participant.

Risks in participating: There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study, and you are free to end the study at any time without consequences. The risks are minimal because the questions in this study are similar to questions that could arise in everyday conversations, and the purchasing decisions are similar to consumer decisions you make in everyday life. At the end of the survey, you will be asked to provide your email to be entered in a raffle. In the unlikely event that the survey where you provided contact information for the raffle is breached, you may be subject to spam or phishing emails. However, because your email address is stored separately from your survey answers, it is not possible to connect your study data to you or your email address.

Compensation: At the end of the survey, you may provide your email in a separate survey to be entered in a raffle for one of 12, \$25 Visa gift cards. Your email will be stored separately from your answers so that everything remains anonymous. Participation in this study is not required to enter the raffle.

Confidentiality: Measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality of participant responses to this questionnaire. Your survey responses are anonymous and will be stored on Qualtrics, a secure survey website. Only the researcher (Katie Eu), her faculty advisor (Professor Nicholas Kacher), and her first reader (a member of the Scripps College economics department) will have access to this folder.



Use of Results: The results of this research will be used as a part of Katie Eu's senior thesis and the write up will be uploaded to Scholarship@Claremont in accordance with the Scripps College Senior Thesis guidelines. (Scholarship@Claremont is an online repository of write-ups of scholarly studies conducted at the Claremont Colleges). Depending on the final results and quality of the paper, Professor Nicholas Kacher and I will work together to submit the paper to peer-reviewed journals and/or present it at student conferences. In the event that this paper is published, it will be accessible online. No personal information from the participants will be released with the paper. Any raw data used will be anonymous; there will be no identifying participant information.

Contacts: In the event of emotional distress, please contact the following institutions:

If you are a student of the Claremont Colleges:

Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services: 1-909-621-8202

For all other participants:

Mental Health America 24-hour Crisis Center: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line: text MHA to 741741

For any further questions or concerns, please contact:

Katie Eu (primary investigator): keu5271@scrippscollege.edu

Nicholas Kacher (faculty advisor): nkacher@scrippscollege.edu

This research study has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). You have the right to contact the Scripps College IRB directly at [irb@scrippscollege.edu](mailto:irb@scrippscollege.edu).

Statement of Consent: I have fully read the above disclaimer and consent to take part in this research. I acknowledge that I have read all of the explanations about the study above and agree to continue with the study.

A: I consent. I also affirm that I am at least 18 years of age and are voluntarily consenting to participate in the following study. / B: I do not consent. I would like to be taken to the end of the survey.

*Debrief:*

Thank you for participating in this study.

You will now be given the option to provide your email address to be entered in a raffle to win 12, \$25 gift cards. Your email has been stored separately from your survey answers. You do not need to complete the survey to enter in the raffle; however, participation is strongly encouraged. Although you have already completed the survey, your involvement is still

voluntary and you may choose to withdraw the data you provided prior to debriefing without penalty. Please check the box below if you wish to withdraw the data you have provided.

In order to maintain the integrity of the study, please do not discuss the contents of this study or your experience with others outside of the Investigators and the IRB, as this could affect the responses of potential participants.

The purpose of the study is to survey the impact of a ‘health and wellness’ (commonly referred to as “that girl”) on consumption habits for 18-24 year old college students in the United States. To review, you have completed an anonymous survey about your personal lifestyle habits and consumption choices.

The main researcher conducting this study is Katie Eu, an undergraduate student at Scripps College, as part of her senior thesis project. If you have questions later, or would like to know about the results of the study, you may contact Katie Eu at [keu5271@scrippscollege.edu](mailto:keu5271@scrippscollege.edu) or her faculty advisor Professor Nicholas Kacher at [nkacher@scrippscollege.edu](mailto:nkacher@scrippscollege.edu). This research study has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You have the right to contact the Scripps College IRB directly at [irb@scrippscollege.edu](mailto:irb@scrippscollege.edu).

In the event of emotional distress, please contact the following institutions:

If you are a student of the Claremont Colleges:

Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services: 1-909-621-8202

For all other participants:

Mental Health America 24-hour Crisis Center: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line: text MHA to 741741

A: I wish to withdraw the data I have provided.

B: I wish to provide my email address in a separate survey form for a chance to win one of 12, \$25 Visa gift cards.

C: I voluntarily consent for my data to be used in the study and I do not wish to provide my email address for a chance to win one of 12, \$25 Visa gift cards. Please take me to the end of the survey.

C. Appendix III: Examples of “That Girl” on Instagram

Instagram Handle	Reference Image
@merv.ozkn	 A close-up photograph of a hand with dark nail polish holding a light-colored, textured book. The book cover features the text "The FIVE MINUTE JOURNAL" in a serif font. The background is dark and textured, possibly a bedsheet.
@nicorauchenwald	 A photograph of a muscular man sitting on a gym floor, holding a smartphone. He is wearing white socks and white sneakers. The background shows a large window with a view of greenery and a cloudy sky. The text "Active Lifestyle AESTHETIC" is overlaid on the image.

@thatgirlgallery



@wellbycami

