

Exploring the Impact of Consumer Vanity on Money Attitude and Compulsive Buying of Branded Products in Indonesia

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Abstract

Branded products have become a prominent focus for young consumers in Indonesia, often leading to significant expenditures and the development of compulsive buying behaviors. This study explores the mediating role of consumer vanity in the relationship between money attitudes and compulsive buying among undergraduate students in Surabaya, Indonesia. Data were collected from 276 participants using a purposive sampling method. The analysis, conducted with Hayes' Process Model 4, examined the influence of three money attitude dimensions—power prestige, distrust, and anxiety—on compulsive buying. The findings reveal that consumer vanity significantly mediates the relationships between power prestige ($\beta = .16$, $CI = .08, .24$), distrust ($\beta = .23$, $CI = .10, .37$), anxiety ($\beta = .35$, $CI = .21, .52$), and compulsive buying. These results suggest that young consumers use branded product purchases to project success and align themselves with an affluent lifestyle. Compulsive buying emerges as a behavior through which individuals display power and status, reinforcing the role of consumer vanity in driving such purchases.

Keywords: *Branded Products, Consumer Vanity, Compulsive Buying, Money Attitude, Young Consumers.*

Introduction

The global democratization of luxury has broadened access to high-end brands, allowing a more significant segment of the population, including the middle class, to consume luxury goods. In Indonesia, this shift is particularly evident as rising middle-class consumers redefine the meaning of luxury. With increasing income, Indonesian consumers have been able to purchase branded products that were previously beyond their reach (Mayasari & Wiadi, 2017). This expansion of disposable income has directly influenced consumer spending patterns, further shaping Indonesia's economic environment (Dahlia, 2023). This convergence of factors underlines the complexity of consumer behavior and the socio-economic landscape in Indonesia.

Luxury brands fulfil utilitarian and socio-psychological needs, providing consumers with more than just functional value (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). While traditionally associated with wealthy people, middle-class and lower-class consumers increasingly buy luxury brands. In Indonesian society, where displaying wealth is a social norm, acquiring luxury brands has become a method of signalling social status. Young consumers, in particular, use luxury brands to showcase their wealth through visible exhibitions of what they wear and buy (Debby et al., 2024). As such, the procurement of luxury brands has become intertwined with the desire to demonstrate social standing.

Research has demonstrated that the primary drivers of luxury brand acquisition include vanity, functional value, and social utility (Schade et al., 2016). Consumers' physical vanity, in particular, plays a crucial role in their intention to purchase luxury goods (Soh et al., 2017; Wong & Malone, 2016). As vanity increases, so does the desire to engage in purchasing behaviors that reflect one's achievements and professional success. Compulsive buyers, who are highly conscious of their physical appearance, often exhibit an insatiable desire to acquire luxury brands, even if they exceed their needs (Bhatia, 2019). The convenience of technology further amplifies this behavior, making it easier for young consumers to engage in compulsive buying to keep up with trends (Ramadhan & Simanjuntak, 2018; Santoso & Triwijayati, 2018; Walenta et al., 2022).

Compulsive buying has been characterized by a lack of control over purchasing behaviors, leading to excessive spending despite the negative consequences for personal, social, or professional life (Zheng et al., 2020). Psychological factors, including attitudes toward money, also play a crucial role in compulsive buying

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tendencies (Abdullah et al., 2019; Devi et al., 2017; Ong et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2023; Utkarsh et al., 2020). Attitudes toward money, encompassing feelings, motives, and beliefs about money, are often more closely related to spending habits than financial planning. Self-control and self-confidence are essential in shaping these attitudes and managing compulsive buying behaviors (Putri et al., 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature on luxury consumption and compulsive buying, there still needs to be a gap in understanding the dynamics of compulsive buying among young Indonesian consumers, specifically from the perspective of money attitudes and consumer vanity. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the role of consumer vanity as a mediator between money attitudes and compulsive buying of luxury-branded products among undergraduate students in Indonesia.

Objective

This study investigates consumer vanity's role as a mediating factor between money attitudes and compulsive buying behavior among young consumers in Indonesia. By examining the influence of vanity on compulsive buying, this research seeks to answer the question, "Is compulsive buying driven primarily by money attitudes, or does consumer vanity play a significant mediating role?"

Literature Review

Compulsive Buying

Compulsive buying, often described as a "maladaptive absorption with buying" characterized by repetitive behaviors and a lack of impulse control, leads to various adverse outcomes, including depression, anxiety, remorse, guilt, and financial distress (Awais et al., 2014; Nanda et al., 2023; Villardefrancos & Otero-lópez, 2016). These behaviors often stem from short-term gratification, yet they leave long-lasting emotional and financial consequences (Achtziger et al., 2015; Ergin, 2010; Harnish & Bridges, 2015; Lawrence et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2016; Villardefrancos & Otero-lópez, 2016). Compulsive buyers also experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety, frequently seeking relief through material goods to boost their self-esteem and enhance their social status (Khare, 2014).

The rise of consumerism has amplified compulsive buying behaviors globally, with prevalence rates in different countries ranging from 3.4% to 6.9% and even higher among university students, where rates range from 2% to 16% (Maraz et al., 2016). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among young adults, who use compulsive buying as a coping mechanism to manage negative emotions and assert their identity (Khare, 2014). Compulsive buying is linked to the symbolic meaning of goods, social visibility, and an individual's need for self-affirmation through expensive or branded products (Mulyono & Rusdarti, 2020).

Materialistic values play a significant role in compulsive buying behavior, where individuals acquire luxury items for utility and their differentiation from society, allowing consumers to create a new social identity (Ahmed et al., 2014). According to Mishra et al. (2014), a desire for power, prestige, and exhibitionism frequently drives the pursuit of luxury brands. Younger consumers, in particular, compulsively buy to enhance their self-belief and satisfy their vanity (Bhatia, 2019). Research demonstrates that compulsive buyers are more likely to overspend on luxury goods, particularly in industries like apparel, where 95.8% of compulsive buyers seek rewards through fashion and appearance (Shehzadi et al., 2016), further emphasizing the connection between materialism, consumer vanity, and compulsive buying.

Given the increasing influence of consumerism in Indonesia, the risk of pathological buying behaviors among younger populations is rising (Pérez de Albéniz Garrote et al., 2021). The link between money attitudes and compulsive buying—especially concerning materialistic values, social status, and self-esteem—suggests that consumer vanity may be critical in understanding this behavior.

Money Attitude

Money attitudes play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior, influencing various aspects of individuals' lives, such as saving habits, spending patterns, charitable contributions, workplace performance, and even political and environmental ideologies (Putri et al., 2023; Susiloadi & Renanita, 2023). The seminal work of Yamauchi and Templer (1982) established a four-dimensional scale for understanding money attitudes: power prestige, retention time, anxiety, and distrust. Each dimension highlights how individuals perceive and interact with money, impacting their financial decision-making processes. For instance, power prestige correlates with perceiving money as a symbol of success, while retention time reflects careful financial planning. Anxiety, on the other hand, denotes using money as a coping mechanism for stress, and distrust reflects scepticism toward financial matters, often manifesting in price sensitivity.

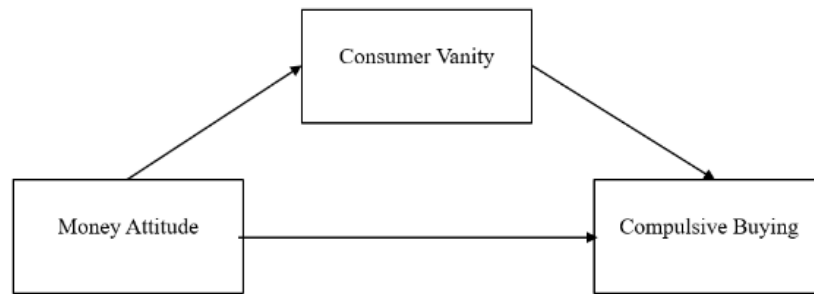
Much research has explored the relationship between money attitudes and compulsive buying, underscoring the complex interplay between these psychological drivers and consumer behavior (Abdullah et al., 2019; Ganiah & Simanjuntak, 2019; Utkarsh et al., 2020). However, the findings remain nuanced, as cultural and societal norms seem to moderate these relationships. Some studies, such as Phau & Woo (2008), found no significant connection between money attitudes and compulsive buying.

Consumer Vanity

Vanity, as a psychogenic attribute, plays a significant role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the context of purchasing branded and luxury products. It is deeply rooted in an individual's financial, cultural, and social preferences, driving the pursuit of self-enhancement and status through conspicuous consumption (Ahmed et al., 2014; Awais et al., 2014; Sharda & Bhat, 2019). This literature review investigates how avarice, driven by societal expectations and personal aspirations, manifests in consumer decisions, particularly in the purchase of branded goods, where the desire for social recognition and the ostentatious display of wealth are paramount (Soh et al., 2017; Susiloadi & Renanita, 2023; Wong & Malone, 2016).

Netemeyer et al. (1995) introduced two domains of consumer vanity—physical vanity and achievement vanity—that offer critical insights into how individuals inflate their self-perception of appearance and accomplishments. These vanity dimensions often act as psychological motivators, reinforcing self-concept and driving consumer choices. Furthermore, Awais et al. (2014) suggest that consumer vanity can mediate compulsive buying behavior, where individuals seek to bolster their social image through material possessions, particularly in luxury brands, which symbolize status, success, and wealth (Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Zhang & Kim, 2013).

The review also highlights the significant interaction between money attitudes and consumer vanity. As individuals access resources, money becomes a psychological force that intensifies vanity, influencing buying decisions and shaping social behavior (Susiloadi & Renanita, 2023). This relationship suggests that consumer vanity drives compulsive buying and acts as a mediator between money attitudes and such purchasing behaviors. The study hypothesizes (1) that money attitudes correlate with compulsive buying and (2) that consumer vanity mediates the relationship between money attitudes and compulsive buying. By exploring these hypotheses, the review contributes to a broader understanding of the psychological drivers behind consumer behavior, offering valuable insights into how vanity and money attitudes intersect to influence compulsive buying patterns in contemporary society.

Conceptual Framework**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework****Research Methodology***Population and Samples*

The methodology employed in this study follows a rigorous and systematic approach to explore the relationship between money attitudes, consumer vanity, and compulsive buying behaviors among college students in Surabaya, Indonesia. A purposive sampling method was used to select 276 participants (67 male, 200 female) aged 18–25 years ($M = 20.92$, $SD = 1.20$), focusing on individuals who bought branded products at least once a month. Purposive sampling was chosen for its effectiveness in identifying individuals best suited to provide insights into the phenomena under investigation, which aligns with Creswell and Creswell (2018) guidelines.

Research Instrument

Three validated instruments were used to measure the variables of interest. Yamauchi and Templer (1982) created the Money Attitude Scale, which consists of 29 items on a 7-point Likert scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .889$) and includes items like "I bought the most expensive thing" to gauge attitudes toward money. The Vanity Scale by Netemeyer et al. (1995), measuring both physical and achievement vanity, comprises 21 items on a 5-point Likert scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .925$), with items like "I pay great attention to appearance." Finally, compulsive buying behavior was measured using Edwards (1993) Compulsive Buying Scale, which includes 25 items on a 5-point Likert scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .932$), featuring items like "I keep shopping." These instruments demonstrated internal solid consistency, ensuring reliable data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through online questionnaires using Google Forms, with informed consent obtained from all participants. For the data analysis, Hayes' Process Model 4 was employed using SPSS 21 to examine the direct and mediating relationships between the variables.

Result**Table 1 Demographic Data**

Characteristics	Total	%
Age		
18	13	4.9
19	13	4.9
20	49	18.4

21	125	46.8
22	52	19.5
23	9	3.4
24	2	.7
25	4	1.5
Gender		
Male	67	25.1
Female	200	74.9
Allowance (per month)		
Rp 1.000.000 – 2.000.000	80	30.0
Rp 2.000.001 – 3.000.000	67	25.1
> Rp 3.000.001	120	44.9
Average spending on branded products in one month		
1 – 3 times	244	91.4
4 – 6 times	23	8.6
Reasons to buy branded products		
Excellent quality	219	82.0
Trending brands	44	16.5
Follow friends	4	1.5
Product payment method		
Cash	39	14.6
Debit	214	80.1
Credit card	14	5.2
Sources of money in buying products		
From allowance	180	67.4
From parents	80	30.0
Working	7	2.6
The feeling when shopping for branded products		
Just normal	3	1.1
Anxious about spending money	165	61.8
Thinking about useless purchases	32	12.0
Happy to get compliments	67	25.1

The results of this study reveal insightful demographic and behavioral trends among the participants, as illustrated in Table 1. The majority of participants were aged 21 (46.8%) and predominantly female (74.9%), with a substantial proportion (44.9%) receiving a monthly allowance exceeding Rp 3,000,001. A notable 91.4% of the participants reported purchasing branded products 1-3 times per month, predominantly using debit payments (80.1%), with product quality cited as the primary reason for these purchases (82.0%).

Interestingly, despite being college students, 67.4% of participants indicated that they financed their branded product purchases using their allowances. However, this financial behavior seems to induce post-purchase anxiety, with 61.8% of participants expressing feelings of anxiety after spending money on branded products. These findings highlight the psychological tension between the desire for high-quality branded goods and the emotional discomfort associated with financial expenditure, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of consumer behavior among young adults. This data is a foundation for further exploring the complex relationship between money attitudes, vanity, and compulsive buying in contemporary consumer culture.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis Between Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Compulsive Buying						
MA – Power Prestige	.707**					
MA – Retention Time	-.254**	-.094				
MA – Distrust	.437**	.518**	.027			
MA - Anxiety	.607**	.518**	-.062	.550**		
Consumer Vanity	.525**	.550**	.118	.220**	.388**	

**p < .01

The results in Table 2 demonstrate significant correlations between various dimensions of money attitude, consumer vanity, and compulsive buying behavior. Specifically, power prestige ($r = .707$, $p < .05$), retention time ($r = -.254$, $p < .05$), distrust ($r = .437$, $p < .05$), anxiety ($r = .607$, $p < .05$), and consumer vanity ($r = .525$, $p < .05$) were all significantly correlated with compulsive buying. These findings indicate that individuals who view money as a symbol of power and prestige, experience anxiety over financial matters, or exhibit distrustful attitudes towards money are likelier to engage in compulsive buying behaviors. Conversely, those who carefully manage their financial resources, as indicated by retention time, demonstrate a negative correlation with compulsive buying.

To further investigate the mediating role of consumer vanity in the relationship between money attitude and compulsive buying, hypothesis testing was conducted using Hayes' Process Model 4 in SPSS 21.0. The mediating effects were evaluated through bootstrap confidence intervals (CI), with the significance determined by ensuring that the CI did not exceed zero. The mediation analysis results confirmed the hypothesis that consumer vanity plays a mediating role, as the confidence intervals for both analyses did not exceed zero, indicating a significant mediation effect. These findings suggest that consumer vanity bridges money attitudes and compulsive buying, reinforcing the psychological drivers behind excessive consumption behaviors.

Table 3 Hypothesis Analysis

X	M	Total Effect			Direct Effects			Indirect Effects	
		β	95% CI	T	β	95% CI	t	β	95% CI
MA-PP	CV	1.05	.93; 1.18	16.29**	.89	.74; 1.04	11.84**	.16	.08; .24
MA-RT	CV	-.53	-.77; -.28	-4.27**	-.66	-.86; -.46	-6.54**	.14	-.02; .30
MA-D	CV	1.00	.75; 1.25	7.90**	.78	.75; 1.25	6.81**	.23	.10; .37
MA-A	CV	1.62	1.36; 1.88	12.42**	1.27	1.01; 1.52	9.73**	.35	.21; .52

**p < .01

The findings presented in Table 3 provide robust evidence for the direct and mediated relationships between money attitudes, consumer vanity, and compulsive buying behaviors. Specifically, money attitude-power prestige significantly impacts compulsive buying ($\beta = .89$, $p < .05$), and consumer vanity partially mediate this relationship ($\beta = .16$, CI = .08;.24). This suggests that individuals who perceive money as a symbol of power and success are more likely to engage in compulsive buying, with consumer vanity reinforcing this behavior.

Furthermore, money attitude ($\beta = .78$, $p < .05$) and anxiety ($\beta = 1.27$, $p < .05$) also have direct effects on compulsive buying. Consumer vanity acts as a go-between for money attitude-distrust ($\beta = .23$, CI = .10;.37), anxiety ($\beta = .35$, CI = .21;.52), and compulsive buying. The result shows how important vanity is in strengthening these psychological factors affecting consumer behavior. However, in the case of retention time, while it has a direct negative effect on compulsive buying ($\beta = -.66$, $p < .05$), consumer vanity does not act as a significant mediator ($\beta = .14$, CI = -.02;.30). This indicates that careful financial planning and

retention time reduce compulsive buying, independent of consumer vanity.

The results support the idea of partial mediation because the confidence intervals for direct and indirect effects do not go below zero. The result shows that consumer vanity plays a part in how people feel about money and their need always to buy things. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), this kind of partial mediation happens when the independent variables (anxiety and money attitude) keep affecting the dependent variable (compulsive buying) even when the mediator (consumer vanity) is taken into account.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the mediating role of consumer vanity in the relationship between money attitudes and compulsive buying. While the hypothesis that consumer vanity mediates this relationship was not fully confirmed, key findings shed light on how different dimensions of money attitudes influence compulsive buying behavior. Specifically, the power prestige dimension of money attitude, where money is seen as a symbol of power and success, was shown to have both direct and indirect effects on compulsive buying, with consumer vanity partially mediating the relationship. Individuals motivated by vanity tend to purchase luxury products to display wealth and status, reinforcing the link between vanity and materialistic consumption (Awais et al., 2014; Eng & Bogaert, Sharda & Bhat, 2019).

In contrast, the distrust dimension, characterized by price sensitivity and careful financial management, also showed significant direct and indirect effects on compulsive buying. Participants expressed anxiety following their branded product purchases despite having high allowances (44.9% receiving more than Rp 3,000,001). Findings align with previous research, suggesting that individuals with higher resources and vanity tend to engage in compulsive buying behaviors (Ahmed et al., 2014; Durvasula & Lysonski, 2010). Even when individuals feel hesitant about spending, the symbolic value of luxury products can drive them to purchase, reflecting the strong influence of consumer vanity in enhancing the perceived need for these products (Esmailpour, 2015; Ong et al., 2021; Sharda & Bhat, 2019).

Anxiety emerged as another critical factor directly influencing compulsive buying. The findings support the notion that money can serve as both a source of stress and a means of alleviating anxiety, leading individuals to compulsively spend to reduce their psychological distress (Durvasula & Lysonski, 2010; Li & Chen, 2017). The "fear of missing out" and uncertainty surrounding money further exacerbate this behavior, with consumer vanity mediating in amplifying the relationship between anxiety and compulsive buying (Putri et al., 2023; Susiloadi & Renanita, 2023).

Interestingly, retention time, which reflects careful financial planning and future-oriented thinking, negatively correlates with compulsive buying. However, consumer vanity did not mediate this relationship. Individuals with solid financial planning tendencies were less prone to compulsive buying, likely because they prioritized long-term financial security over immediate gratification (Mishra et al., 2014). This suggests that retention time serves as a protective factor against impulsive consumption.

The study also highlights the demographic factors influencing compulsive buying. Females, particularly young adults, were more likely to engage in compulsive buying than their male counterparts, with 74.9% of the participants being female and 46.8% aged 21. Previous research has shown that women tend to be more focused on physical appearance and are more likely to purchase branded products to enhance their social status (Lee & Workman, 2014; Workman & Lee, 2011). Given their inability to resist buying stimuli and lack of financial management, younger persons are especially prone to compulsive shopping, manifesting their aspiration to project an affluent lifestyle (Ergin, 2010; Khare, 2014; Papastamatelou et al., 2016).

This study underscores the complex interplay between money attitudes, consumer vanity, and compulsive buying. While vanity partially mediates some dimensions of money attitudes, notably power prestige and anxiety, the findings suggest that individual financial behaviors and demographic factors must be considered when analyzing compulsive buying tendencies. Future research should explore these relationships to gain deeper insights into the psychological mechanisms driving consumer behavior across different cultural contexts.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, people in Indonesia frequently buy branded products out of a desire to improve their physical appearance and gain social recognition. Furthermore, perceiving money as a tool to maximize success is critical in fueling compulsive buying behaviors. The ability of individuals to recognize and regulate their self-image, along with their capacity to control spending, is essential in mitigating compulsive purchasing tendencies, particularly during early adulthood. Notably, the results indicate that the amount of money an individual possesses does not necessarily shield them from engaging in compulsive buying. Those with significant financial resources are susceptible if social pressures and vanity are the driving forces behind these behaviors. This study provides valuable insights into the psychological factors influencing consumer behavior in Indonesia, emphasizing the need for greater awareness of the underlying motivations that lead to compulsive purchasing. Future research should continue to explore the cultural and societal dimensions that contribute to this phenomenon, especially in emerging economies like Indonesia.

Suggestion

For future research, scholars should expand their investigation into the phenomenon of compulsive buying, particularly concerning branded products, which are increasingly popular in Indonesia. A broader analysis that includes the price per product and purchasing behavior would offer valuable insights into whether individuals save money over time to purchase or buy these items impulsively. Understanding how individuals make purchasing decisions can illuminate different behavioral patterns associated with compulsive buying.

For practitioners, this study underscores the importance of addressing consumer vanity as a significant mediator influencing compulsive buying behaviors. It is crucial to educate consumers, especially young adults, on cultivating a positive self-concept so that their sense of self-worth is independent of social perceptions or purchasing branded goods. By fostering a deeper understanding of self-identity, young people may be less inclined to seek validation through material possessions.

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