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University of Southampton

Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences

Department of Psychology

**Do Narcissists Gain Meaning in Life Via
Conspicuous Consumption?**

by

Natalie Berry

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November, 2024

University of Southampton

Abstract

Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences

Department of Psychology

Doctor of Philosophy

Do Narcissists Gain Meaning in Life Via Conspicuous Consumption?

by

Natalie Karin Berry

Grandiose narcissism, a multifaceted personality trait characterised by self-absorption, vanity, and entitlement, has been positively associated with luxury consumption. Previous theorising suggests that narcissists' luxury purchases are socially motivated, thus reflect conspicuous consumption; the consumption of luxurious products to display one's status, wealth, and self-image to others. Given narcissists' desire to maintain a grandiose self, their extravagant and fashionable purchases are thought to serve as a kind of self-regulatory strategy to signal status, uniqueness, and trendiness to others. Until now, this has not been empirically tested. My research addresses the contradictory findings that extrinsic goals, such as conspicuous consumption, are consistently negatively associated with well-being, yet narcissists appear to be psychologically healthy. Specifically, in a series of studies I examine whether narcissists benefit psychologically from pursuing extrinsic goals because they gain meaning in life (MIL) from them. Although one study has demonstrated that the extrinsic goal of wealth predicted higher MIL in narcissists, no study had assessed whether narcissists gain state MIL from conspicuous consumption. In a programmatic sequence of five studies, I delve into the complexity of what aspirations are meaningful for narcissists, demonstrate that narcissists' luxury purchases are indeed socially motivated (thus reflects conspicuous consumption), and analyse whether narcissists can gain meaning from their conspicuous consumption. The implications that this may have at the individual, societal, and environmental level are discussed, as are the strengths and limitations with the range of methodologies used. Throughout the studies, two distinct forms of grandiose narcissism (admiration and rivalry) are assessed. Their often-opposing associations, both with aspirations and with the presence of meaning in life, reveal potential explanations for past inconsistent findings (in studies that have only assessed overall grandiose narcissism). This highlights the importance for research on narcissism to control for these relatively adaptive and maladaptive forms.

Key words: Grandiose Narcissism, Conspicuous Consumption, Meaning in Life

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Natalie Berry

Title of thesis: Do Narcissists Gain Meaning in Life from their Conspicuous Consumption?

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission
8. Signature: _____ Date: 21/11/2024

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Chapter 1 Literature Review – Do Narcissists Gain Meaning in Life via Conspicuous Consumption?

1.1 Introduction

Narcissists are prone to conspicuous consumption, defined as the purchasing of luxurious products (Sedikides & Hart, 2022). Characterised by their high agency and low communion (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Hogan, 1982; Hyatt et al., 2018; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), such purchasing behaviours allow narcissists to fulfil their agentic desires (e.g., their aspirations for power, fame, and wealth). Throughout this thesis, I examine reasons why narcissists conspicuously consume and expand upon previous work by exploring the consequences of their consumer choices, that is, whether narcissists buy what they buy to derive meaning in life (MIL).

MIL refers to the way people experience and generate purpose, coherence, and significance (Costin & Vignoles, 2020; Kashdan & Mcknight, 2013; Martela & Steger, 2016). MIL is positively associated with psychological and physical well-being (Brassai et al., 2011; Czekierda et al., 2017, 2019; Steger et al., 2009). Typically, meaning arises from intrinsic and communal aspirations (i.e., personal growth, community, and relationships; Kasser et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2013; Schlegel et al., 2011; Stillman et al., 2010) as opposed to extrinsic and agentic aspirations (i.e., fame, wealth, and image; Kashdan et al., 2007).

Narcissists, however, have been shown to derive meaning from their extrinsic pursuits (Abeyta et al., 2017). Given narcissists' propensity for low communion (i.e., low empathy, low morality, low warmth, exploitativeness, belittling others; Abele & Gebauer, 2018; Ang et al., 2010; Campbell & Foster, 2007; Holtzman et al., 2010; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Park & Colvin, 2015; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Reijntjes et al., 2016), they are less likely to value and gain a sense of purpose from communal meaning-making sources such as caring for others (Morf et al., 2000). These types of sources do not always align with personal

agentic pursuits, such as getting ahead. Although a lack of communion is generally linked to low well-being (Baumeister & leary, 1995), narcissists demonstrate high levels of psychological well-being (Sedikides et al., 2004; Watson & Biderman, 1993; Zuckerman & O'Loughlin, 2009) and this has been demonstrated in a recent meta-analysis that included 55 studies ($n=26,252$; Blasco-Belled et al., 2023). Narcissists high well-being might be linked to their higher MIL perhaps attained through agentic pursuits. Well-being is a multi-dimensional construct, however, and thus narcissists' elevated well-being could be attributed to factors other than MIL, such as subjective vitality, a sense of competence, feelings of autonomy (Su et al., 2014).

Limited research has addressed whether extrinsic pursuits such as luxury consumption provides narcissists with MIL. It is important however to understand narcissists' motivation behind their luxury consumption, as such consumer behaviour can have negative consequences in several domains, such as environmental, financial, interpersonal, and mental health, for the narcissists and others. Understanding narcissists' motives will allow future researchers to test whether interventions can curtail their consumer behaviour and its associated consequences.

Below, I review the broader literature on luxury consumption, including motivations for, and consequences of, it. I then zero in on the narcissism literature, examining the characteristics of narcissists and what might motivate them to prefer luxury over mundane products (i.e., self-enhancement, positive distinctiveness, sexual signalling, materialism, inner fragility, impulsivity). In doing so I consider the forms of grandiose agentic narcissism, namely narcissistic admiration and rivalry (Back et al., 2013). Although I hypothesise that both forms are associated with luxury consumption, motivations behind this behaviour may vary, as narcissistic admiration is driven by self-enhancement, whereas rivalry is driven by self-protection and the desire to be better than others. Furthermore, given that narcissistic admiration is predictive of positive psychological well-being (i.e., self-esteem) and narcissistic rivalry is predictive of negative psychological wellbeing (i.e., depression; Back et

al., 2013; Fang et al., 2021), the distinction between these forms is useful when examining the relationship between narcissism and various sources of MIL.

Finally, I examine whether narcissists' proclivity for luxury consumption provides them with MIL, which may motivate their tendency to engage in such behaviours. This issue has been addressed in one study (Zhu et al., 2021). However, the researchers did not address narcissistic admiration and rivalry, nor did they assess luxury consumption via materials high in mundane realism (to increase external validity).

1.1 Luxury Consumption

There has been a worldwide steep rise in luxury consumption over the last two decades (Das & Jebarajakirthy, 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Souiden et al., 2011; Zhang & Wang, 2019). Luxury consumption can range from products that are worn (e.g., branded/designer clothes, jewellery) or used (e.g., top-range car, phones, makeup) to products which are experience-based (e.g., holidays, yachts, spas, fine-dining). Despite the sharp contraction in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, luxury spending has come "roaring back" (Onurdongel, 2022). Accordingly, the personal luxury goods market (i.e., clothes, skincare) is set to hit its pre-Covid record (Onurdongel, 2022) of €283 Billion (1% increase from 2019; D'Arpizio et al., 2020). These projections are expected to continue to rise with the spending growth of Generation Z and Y dominating the global luxury market, from 44% in 2019 to 65% by 2025 (BCG, 2021). Reports indicate that demand for fashion luxury items is steadily rising among consumers in the age group of 25-40 in the Asia-Pacific region (D'Arpizio, 2019).

Yet "Luxury is no longer the embrace of the Kings and Queens of France but the mass marketing phenomenon of everyday life" (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2011, p.1). Indeed, luxurious products have become more accessible and desirable to the masses (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006). Although luxury consumption still refers to the purchasing of flamboyant, exclusive, and expensive products, which are symbolic of wealth and status (and therefore fit for a King or Queen), a relatively new form of luxury consumption has emerged. Partly due to

Chapter 1

the goal of increasing revenues (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012), many brands have developed strategies to sell a huge amount of luxury products (Catry, 2003; Okonkwo, 2009). These are known as 'masstige' (i.e., a hybrid word of 'mass' and 'prestige'), as they are mass-produced and marketed as prestigious (Stępień, 2018). Such products, therefore, are not exclusive, expensive, and scarce, but are popular and accessible (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2010). For example, brands (e.g., Tommy Hilfiger, Lacoste) produce accessories that can communicate symbolic meaning without being too expensive (Cesmeci & Burnaz, 2020), therefore reaching a wider market. The definition of luxury, therefore, is subjective (Kapferer & Laurent, 2016). For some people, Ralph Lauren is a luxury product, but for others it is not unique or rare enough (Kapferer & Laurent, 2016). This of course might be due to differences in wealth. Individuals with less money may buy cheaper luxury brands or counterfeit versions. They may also have the option for luxury brand rentals (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012) and fast-fashion versions of luxury styles. Furthermore, what is viewed as luxury in developing countries might seem ordinary and common for developed countries (Stępień, 2018). Similarly, to differences between cultures, the perception of luxury also differs within cultures. For example, a rich older family may perceive a gold ring as luxury, whereas a trendy young individual instead may view an I-phone as luxury (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2010). It is not the purpose of this thesis to distinguish between different levels or standards of luxury products. Therefore, regardless of the luxury product, whether it is a limited-edition Gucci bag, or a Calvin Klein T-shirt, luxury consumption will refer to the purchase of goods that are perceived as exclusive/limited edition, flashy/attractive, fashionable, and or expensive/branded/designer (Husic & Cicic, 2009).

Although luxury products tend to be of higher quality (Husic & Cicic, 2009) and consumers use the brand to indicate the quality of the product, they are often designed to emphasise their symbolic over practical value. Symbolic value refers to products that are social tools, given that they serve as a means of communication between the individual and others (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). For example, see the diamante clutch bag, on the left, below (**Error! Reference source not found.**). This is an example of a product that has s

superior symbolic features, including a glitzy design and the pearl and crystal dome clasp. However, it is inferior in terms of practicality, with limited space for possessions and in being uncomfortable to carry. The second clutch bag, on the right (**Error! Reference source not found.**) is less symbolic, with a plainer appearance. However, it can be considered more practical, as it has space for belongings and is more comfortable to hold (i.e., with a handle). Of course, luxury products can be practical too. The degree to which an individual prioritises the symbolic over practical value of products may be underlain by their motivations to signal their status. However, this is not always the case, given that there are both social and personal motivations for owning luxury items (Pham et al., 2016).

Figure 1.1

Example of Symbolic and Utilitarian Features of Products



1.1.1 Motivations For Luxury Consumption

Why are luxury products desired? Traditional models of consumer behaviour, which focus on rational economic consumption, struggle to explain luxury consumption, as they suggest that consumers are driven mostly by utilitarian motives such as functionality, practicality, and affordability (Babin et al., 1994; Deaton & Muellbauer, 1980; Geller, 1989; Peattie, 2010). These models have been criticised as they neglect the emotional needs of the consumers (Ratchford, 1989) and only consider the evaluation of what products can do based on functional attributes rather than on what they mean symbolically to consumers (Bettman, 1993). For many luxury products, attractive aesthetics are often prioritised over

practicality and functionality. Furthermore, traditional rational economic models are based on the idealistic assumption that consumers are always aware of alternative products, which is a prerequisite that will allow them to make such rational comparisons (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). Therefore, there is a consensus that rational theories are simplistic and lack empirical support (Erasmus et al., 2010). For example, they cannot explain the Veblen effect, which describes an increased desire for products that cost more and are superfluous (Berry, 1997; Kastanakis et al., 2011; Stępień, 2018) even when cheaper alternatives are available.

Researchers addressing luxury consumption beyond traditional economic models (Gentry et al., 2001; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998) have distinguished between socially and personally oriented motivations behind luxury consumption (Tsai, 2005). For example, Vigneron and Johnson (2004) created the Brand Luxury Index (BLI), which consists of social (non-personal) and personal values underlying luxury consumption. This distinction between social and personal values was also supported by Vickers and Renand (2003), who defined luxury as symbolic of social and personal identity. Further, the distinction between social and personal motives was highlighted by Kapferer and Bastien (2009), who reported two facets of luxury: for others (e.g., appearance, sign of power) and for oneself (i.e., pleasure).

1.1.1.1 Social Motives

Underlying many luxury purchases is the desire to fulfil social motives. Material possessions can play a key role in social communication (James, 1890). According to Stępień (2018), prestige and social recognition are important values in consumer perceptions of luxury goods. Luxury products tend to be highly conspicuous; they are expensive, attractive, and often ostentatiousness (Amatulli & Guido, 2011). Such products may catch the eye of observers and in doing so fulfil the purchaser's desire to attract attention, signal wealth, impress others, and prove their social status to observers. Publicly consumed and used products are therefore better able to convey symbolic meaning about an individual (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). For example, Western fashion luxury items are often perceived as materialistic symbols of achievement and success (Das & Jebarajakirthy, 2020; Madinga et

al., 2016). This is consistent with the work of Veblen (1899), who termed buying expensive goods as ‘conspicuous consumption,’ now widely defined as the consumption of luxurious products to display one’s status, wealth, and self-image to others (Chaudhuri et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2008; Veblen, 2011). Zhu and colleagues (2021) also defined conspicuous consumption as consumer behaviour where individuals purchase expensive and fancy goods (e.g., high-end cars, jewellery, fashionable clothing). Conspicuous consumption has therefore evolved in the literature in that it does not only refer to expensive products but also reflects all kinds of luxury that have different symbolic meanings (e.g., fashionable, trendy, individuality, status).

Conspicuous consumption is driven by extrinsic motivation. As the name ‘conspicuous’ highlights, the external goal behind one’s luxury consumption is to gain something other than simply intrinsically enjoying the experience of luxury consuming, such as the reward of status or attention (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). Common measures of conspicuous consumption include the conspicuous consumption orientation scale (Chaudhuri et al., 2011) and the conspicuous consumption scale (Chen et al, 2008; Chung & Fischer, 2001). These are self-report measures that ask about participants’ views, beliefs, and motivations behind buying luxury products. There are different extrinsic motivations for luxury purchase decisions (i.e., to stand out, to fit in), which in turn relate to different types of luxury products preferred or consumed (i.e., exclusive/unique or fashionable/common). Below I discuss the motives behind conspicuous consumption to stand out and fit in.

1.1.1.1 Motive to Stand Out

An individual might conspicuously consume to stand out and be unique from others (Das et al., 2021). This motive reflects consumption referred to as the *snobbery effect*, according to which product preference increases the rarer or less common it is (Kastanakis et al., 2011; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). Consumers motivated by the snobbery effect may be more likely to seek luxury products that are rare/scarce, limited-edition, high quality, expensive, or exclusive, to distinguish themselves from the masses. Stylish, creative, or

'tasteful' purchases are also important and may enable those with less wealth to maintain status through careful product selection to stand out by appearing unique (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2010). Fujiwara and Nagasawa (2015) observed that differentiation from others was a critical factor in the purchase intentions of luxury car brands.

Conspicuous consumption might have evolved as a mating strategy (Griskevicius, 2007; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011; Sundie et al., 2011). The flaunting of luxurious, expensive, and unique products can signal an individual's wealth, resources, and attractiveness, which serve as a sexual signalling strategy to attract more potential mates (Buss, 1989, 1994; Koliototis, 2022; Lycett & Dunbar, 2000; Sedikides et al., 2018; Sundie et al., 2011). Owning such products allow those individuals to stand out and differentiate themselves from others (Park et al., 2021; Sanyal & Sharma, 2020). From an evolutionary perspective and according to the costly signalling theory, engaging in costly behaviours such as buying an expensive watch, communicates to potential mates ones' ability to acquire scarce resources and thus makes that individual more successful at attracting a mate (Griskevicius, 2007; Miller, 2011; Sundie et al., 2011). Indeed, conspicuous consumption can enhance a man's desirability as a short-term mate (Sundie et al., 2011). Additionally, woman who conspicuously consume are rated as more likely to be successful in attracting a mate (Zhao et al., 2017).

1.1.1.1.2 Motive To Fit In

An individual might conspicuously consume to fit in, gain approval, and identify with others. This pattern of conspicuous consumption, known as the *bandwagon effect* (Niesiobędzka, 2018), is defined as the extent to which the demand for a product is increased because others are also consuming the same product (Leibenstein, 1950). Luxury consumers motivated by the bandwagon effect may be more likely to seek popular luxury products that are in trend or are made by fashionable brands (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020; Parilti & Tunç, 2018). Stępień (2018) found that bandwagon-prone participants viewed *masstige* products as luxurious. Individuals can gain status through an association with a

product's popularity that provides them with a sense of membership to the desired status group (Lascu & Zinkhan, 1999).

The bandwagon effect is in opposition to the snobbery effect, which predicts wanting to stand out by owning products that are distinct. The bandwagon effect predicts the desire for mainstream luxury. This is otherwise known as communal-brand connection (Fazil-Salehi et al., 2021), where brands can induce group-identity because ownership of such brands creates an association and belongingness to a large community of others who admire the brand (Strizhakova et al., 2008). Therefore, the bandwagon effect helps individuals to gain group status, whereas the snobbery effect helps individuals to gain individual status. Snob consumers are effectively trendsetters whereas bandwagon consumers are consumer copycats (Husic & Cicic, 2009).

Opposing views, however, highlight the heterogeneity of luxury products: they can be fashionable, accessible, and popular, but can also be scarce, unique, limited edition, and high-end. Therefore, the symbolic value of these luxury products can express individuality or social status depending on motivations to distinguish the self from others (i.e., snobbery effect) or affiliate and conform with others (i.e., the bandwagon effect). Further, bandwagon and snob consumers are not necessarily mutually exclusive; that is, the bandwagon style may be an antecedent of a snob consumer style (Husic & Cicic, 2009). The two motivations might also coexist when consumers purchase luxury products. For example, snob consumers might be motivated to fit-in with smaller, wealthy groups to gain social recognition and acknowledgement from insiders (i.e., ingroup members; Jiang et al., 2021; Stępień, 2018).

1.1.1.2 Personal Motives

Although luxury is often conceived as a symbol of ostentatiousness and conspicuousness (Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2014), it is important to note that not all luxury consumption is motivated by flaunting status to others (Silverstein & Fiske, 2005; Shahid & Paul, 2021). Luxury consumption can also be intrinsically motivated, meaning that it is fulfilled due to its intrinsic pleasure (i.e., happiness) rather than externally

motivated (i.e., for affiliative or superiority reasons; Deci & Ryan, 2015; Truong & McColl, 2011). Research has shown a growth in the number of luxury consumers who make intrinsically motivated purchase decisions. Tsai (2005) conducted an international investigation (i.e., Asia Pacific, Western Europe, North America) to establish the empirically verified 'personal orientation on luxury-brand purchase value' model. It was found that social motives, such as buying to display status and appear distinctive, are only part of the picture of luxury-brand consumption. Robust support is provided for the personal motive of hedonism and congruity with internal self (i.e., personal taste) as a reason for luxury consumption. It is not accurate to equate the term conspicuous consumption with luxury consumption (as is often seen in the literature), as conspicuous consumption refers to luxury consumption specifically for the purpose of displaying it to others. Conspicuous consumption, therefore, is only relevant to luxury consumption that is motivated by social motives (Chung & Fischer, 2001).

Luxury products tend to be made from higher quality materials. According to Vigneron and Johnson (2004), the desire for a luxury product for its' superior quality was considered a social motive because higher quality can communicate status. However, it can be argued that luxury products also attract individuals who are motivated to enjoy the superior quality of such products and not necessarily to show off (Gentry et al., 2001; Miquel et al., 2002). Tsai (2005) demonstrated that quality assurance was positively related to a personal orientation towards luxury-brand consumption. Niesiołędzka (2018) described the desire for higher-quality products as a personal motive, representing perfectionism (Hafstrom et al., 1992; Sundie et al., 2011). The definition of perfectionism is the need to 'be' or 'appear' perfect. Therefore, the desire for luxury due to its higher quality can be either a personal, and/or social motive.

According to Truong and McColl's study (2011), intrinsically motivated consumers of luxury goods tend to look more at the actual quality of the product and its ability to provide possible self-directed pleasure than at whether the product demonstrates conspicuousness. Additionally, a large-scale study (Gentry et al., 2001) found that consumers do not just buy

luxury products for conspicuous reasons but also for the superior quality. In contrast, those more extrinsically motivated may prioritise symbolic over utilitarian features of luxury products such as conspicuousness over quality. Of course, a prioritisation of aspects of luxury is an issue of wealth, as those with more money can buy luxury products that are both high quality and conspicuous, whereas those with less money who are extrinsically motivated may compromise on quality for a product's flashy aesthetics (i.e., counterfeit products). Many consumers refuse to buy counterfeit products due to inferior quality (Tsai, 2005). Those who are intrinsically motivated with less money may compromise on high-end aesthetics of luxurious products (i.e., Gucci brands) and prefer a luxury product based on its' higher quality and functionality than the symbolism of wealth. However, intrinsically motivated individuals may also prioritise aesthetics of a product too, as the aesthetics might satisfy personal motives including hedonism (i.e., providing a mood lift) or enabling them to feel like their true authentic selves. Tsai (2005) found that individuals with motives for hedonism (i.e., self-directed pleasure, self-gift giving) and congruity with internal self, were positively related to a personal orientation towards luxury brand consumption. These personal motives for luxury consumption (i.e., hedonism, congruity with internal self) will be discussed next.

1.1.1.1.3 Hedonism

Traditional rational-economic models of consumer behaviour do not account for emotive influences (Ratchford, 1989) or hedonic fulfilment, such as desire for fun and pleasure (Polese & Seliverstova, 2020). It has been claimed that the difference between a symbolic and utilitarian product is due to a symbolics product' aesthetic appeal (i.e., in the product's perceived hedonic value; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Researchers have recognised the significance of consumers' hedonic motivations, including experiencing fun, pleasure, thrill, fantasy, sensory stimulation, excitement, and amusement/entertainment (Babin et al., 1994; Cryder et al., 2008; Shahid & Paul, 2021; Tsai, 2005; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wakefield & Baker, 1998). Evidence has indicated an increase in the purchase of luxury for

the hedonic experience of benefitting the self (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2020). For example, buying for hedonic reasons might lead individuals who look for distractions from unpleasant emotions to help boost their mood. Consumers who spend money to compensate for negative mood tend to buy fashion products (Kacen, 1998). In so doing, they regulate their mood (Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999). For example, online shopping for fashion products improve participants' negative and even positive moods (Son & Lee, 2021). In all, hedonism can be considered an intrinsic personal motivation for luxury consumption (Truong & McColl, 2011).

However, hedonism is not limited to personal motives. For example, an individual may be motivated to buy a luxury product due to the desire, pleasure, or amusement related to others viewing them with such a product. For example, consumers of fashion luxury items enjoy the status reflected by such possessions (Kapferer & Bastein, 2009). In this case, hedonistic desires are also linked to social motives such as wanting to stand out or fit in. Therefore, hedonic and social motives may combine to encourage luxury consumption. For example, social recognition can help individuals enjoy their flashy public self-image (Stępień, 2018). Theoretically, then, all types of luxury products (e.g., popular, common, [bandwagon] or scarce, limited edition, [snob]) may be sought to fulfil such hedonistic motives. Stępień (2018) found that participants who had snobbish attitudes toward luxury consumption especially valued the hedonic facets including the fun factor of luxury products. Furthermore, Cho et al. (2022) reported that hedonism positively mediated the need for uniqueness and bandwagon effect on purchase intentions.

Personal hedonism specifically refers to the hedonic experience related to luxury products that are directed to one's own sake rather than the qualities derived from pleasing or impressing others (Tsai, 2005). Personal hedonism relates to feelings of bliss, and contentment for the self (LeBel & Dube., 2001). Individuals with such motives score high on items such as 'I can enjoy luxury brands entirely on my own terms, no matter what others may feel about them,' a hedonic scale (Kim & Lee, 2011) item. Those motivated by personal

hedonic pleasure therefore seek gratifications for the self and choose products that cater to their personal preference.

Additionally, luxury consumption can also fulfil self-gratification desires by rewarding oneself with self-gift giving. For example, consumers often buy luxury goods to treat themselves and to enjoy them, with little motivation to impress or show off their wealth and status to anyone (Husic & Cicic, 2009; Silverstein & Fiske, 2005). Instead, they buy luxurious, special indulgences are bought to enhance or regulate the self/emotions (Tsai, 2005) and satisfy their aspirations and fantasies/dreams (Mick & Demoss, 1990). Self gift-giving is also known as gratification shopping, which involves shopping for stress relief and escapism. For example, Babin and colleagues (1994) described respondents who view shopping as a mood-boosting activity when feeling low and depressed. Furthermore, a bad mood can lead to greater purchase and consumption of unplanned treats for the self (Atalay & Meloy, 2011; Goldsmith, 2016).

1.1.1.1.4 Congruity with Internal Self

People are motivated to create a good impression not only for social approval, but also for the intrinsic satisfaction of having a positive self-image (Schlenker & Scott, 1981). According to self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1986), luxury consumers may be motivated to buy luxury products because they perceive them as congruent with their self-identity. There are two facets of the self (Tsai, 2005); one is the external self (social), the other internal self (private). Although the external self refers to others' perceptions of oneself, the internal self refers to one's own perception of the self. Congruity with internal self is a personal motive for luxury consumption, as it refers to the consuming of luxury for reasons related to self-identity (Tsai, 2005) that relies on one's internal, not external self (Gil et al., 2012). Consumers, therefore, may buy luxury products because they regard them to be consistent with the way they perceive themselves, but not necessarily consistent with the way others perceive them. Congruity with internal self is also referred to as self-brand connection, which is the extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman,

2003; Fazil-Salehi et al., 2021). Consumers also buy branded products to protect their self-identity (Ismail, 2017). Further, congruity between a product's features and the consumers' internal self outweighs impression management considerations (Patrick et al., 2002). This reflects why congruity with the internal self is a personal motive for luxury consumption.

Extravagant, luxury, branded items can be perceived as having certain character traits that can help to express and define one's real or ideal sense of inner self (Bharti et al., 2022; Sirgy, 1986) and can therefore be an extension to one's authentic self-identity (Arndt et al., 2004; Bauer et al., 2012; Belk, 1985). When consumers find brands that share commonalities with their self-concept, they respond better to the brand (Tian et al., 2001). This aligns with James's (1890) notion that material possessions can play an important role in defining the self. Furthermore, Bharti and colleagues (2022) reported a significant positive effect of a sense of self-identity on luxury purchase intention.

Regardless, motivations for luxury consumption, social (i.e., conspicuous) or personal (luxury) consumption can have consequences for the environment as well as the consumers and those around them. I discuss these below.

1.2 Consequences of Luxury Consumption

There are both positive and negative consequences of luxury consumption. Arguably, the negative consequences outweigh the positive. Although the luxury consumption industry contributes to boosting the economy (Collins et al., 2015), with the revenue from the global luxury goods market standing at approximately 257 billion pounds in 2021 (Statista, 2022), luxury consumption may have negative implications at the inter and intrapersonal level of the purchaser and potentially harm the environment. I consider the consequences of luxury consumption below along with the relevance of the social and personal motives.

1.2.1 Impact at the Interpersonal Level

Individuals displaying luxury brands are treated more favourably than those not wearing a brand label (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Although luxury consumers may be treated better, such as receiving financial benefits, this does not equate to such individuals being considered more likable. For example, individuals wearing luxury products, such as an expensive Tag Heuer watch, are less likely to be preferred as a new friend (Garcia et al., 2019). Paradoxically, those same individuals thought that such high-status markers would help them to make close friends. Relatedly, luxury consumers are viewed as less warm and sociable because they are thought to try hard to impress and show off (Cannon & Rucker, 2019). Perhaps only luxury consumers with conspicuous social motives to show off are perceived less favourably, and therefore this judgement might not reflect those with more personal motives for luxury consumption. However, participants made judgments about the luxury consumers' impression management attempts based only on a picture of them wearing a luxury product. Therefore, it appears that regardless of the underlying motive (which is not always relevant or apparent), consumers displaying luxury are viewed less favourably.

Although luxury consumers may not be attractive as friends, they may be more successful at attracting romantic partners. A research model has proposed that males who engage in conspicuous consumption have higher reproductive success than those who do not (Collins et al., 2015). However, this might not be good for partners of conspicuous consumers, given that conspicuous consumption is driven largely by men with short-term (vs. long-term) mating motives who adopt a lower investment mating strategy (Sundie et al., 2011). Such consumers are also perceived as being interested in short-term mating and have enhanced desirability, but only as a short-term mate.

Luxury consumption, particularly of masstige products, has indirect negative repercussions for others, such as those working for low pay in low-cost offshore countries, due to drastic increases of mass production to keep up with the growing consumer demand

(Stępień, 2018). Furthermore, although consumers spend more on luxury items for themselves (i.e., the latest Gucci bag), they spend lower amounts of money on the less fortunate. Exposure to visible inequalities can negatively affect the well-being of those less fortunate (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015).

1.2.2 Impact at the Intrapersonal Level

One of the benefits of luxury consuming is that it can help to protect the self from future threats. Merely thinking about owning a luxury product can shield the self against the psychological sting of negative feedback (Dubois, 2021). For example, a study that gave participants negative personal feedback found that being asked to think and write about the hypothetical experience of owning a high-status product (i.e., BMW), as opposed to a low-status product (i.e., Kia), reduced negative affect (Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010). However, the sample size of that study was small ($n = 54$), rendering the results questionable. Further, luxury goods increase self-confidence (Amatulli et al., 2018; Husic & Cicic, 2009). Yet, in research aimed at assessing the relationship between consumption and happiness (i.e., life satisfaction), ownership of a luxury car did not contribute to greater happiness than owning a frugal car (Nash & Tursi, 2015). Despite this, the luxury car market has almost doubled from 2010 to 2019 (Wagner, 2021).

Although luxury consumers may be judged and treated similarly at the interpersonal level regardless of their motivations, it is likely that underlying social motives (i.e., conspicuous consumption), as opposed to personal motives (i.e., hedonism, congruity with internal self), are more predictive of poor psychological outcomes at the intrapersonal level. Such rationale is based on research that has linked extrinsic (vs. intrinsic) aspirations, which motivate conspicuous consumption, with poor psychological well-being (Kasser et al., 2007; Sedikides et al., 2013). Although conspicuous consumption is linked to subjective economic well-being (Jaikumar et al., 2018), another study found that individuals who spend more on conspicuous consumption report lower levels of subjective well-being (Linssen et al., 2011). This study is limited in ecological validity, as its sample was from a developing nation (i.e.,

India). Furthermore, having a materialistic mindset is positively associated with sadness (Cryder et al., 2008) and lower relatedness and MIL (Kashdan et al., 2007). High materialism in adolescence is a result of reduced self-esteem (Chaplin & John, 2007). Additionally, the desire for possessions (i.e., materialism) is negatively related to well-being, and this relationship strengthens when the assessment of materialism includes extrinsic desires for image and status (Dittmar et al., 2014). Luxury consumption has also been described as filling of the empty self, which does not lead to long-term fulfilment (Cushman, 1990; Rosenberg, 2004). Nonetheless, research on the link between conspicuous consumption and individuals' mental health is scarce. Although luxury consumption motivated by personal motives may not be predictive of lower well-being, unlike conspicuous consumption, personal benefits, such as immediate pleasure, happiness, or satisfaction (Goldsmith, 2016; Özdemir & Yaman, 2007) attached to such tangible purchases, are often short-lived and unfulfilling (Tatzel, 2014).

Conspicuous consumption can also have adverse consequences on financial well-being and is positively predictive of financial debt and distress (Greenberg et al., 2020; LaRose & Eastin, 2002; Pettit & Sivanathan, 2011). Individuals motivated by vanity demonstrate poor spending and saving habits (Netemeyer et al., 1995). This is not surprising, considering the cost of high-end luxury items and given that it is positively associated with compulsive buying (Ferman & Benli, 2019). This may negatively affect the individual (Hamilton et al., 2019; Richardson et al., 2021) and close others (family). Husic and Cacic (2009) found that individuals with an annual income of £30,621.50 (i.e., average annual income) spent the highest amount on luxury. Low income, however, does not appear to reduce the desire for luxury, as all income categories (i.e., below £5000 to above £50,000, annually) in their study used luxury brands. Low-income families tend to engage in conspicuous consumption (Elliott & Leonard, 2004). Adolescents from low-income households placed greater importance on status symbols, expensive brands, and money (Isaksen & Roper, 2012). Regardless of class, individuals aspire to the lifestyle of the rich (Truong, 2010). Belk (1988) argued that even people in developing countries often engage in

conspicuous consumption before having adequate food, shelter, and clothing. Those who are less wealthy and cannot afford expensive luxury items may buy counterfeit or fast-fashion high street versions of branded products or treat themselves to a few luxury products a year. Those who aspire to an affluent lifestyle with limited funds might be particularly at risk of poor mental health (Richardson et al., 2021).

1.2.3 The Environment

Luxury consumption is damaging to the environment, as it contributes to pollution and exploitation of the planet's resources (Hirschnitz-Garbers et al., 2016; O'Neill et al., 2018). For example, the life cycle of luxurious, customisable products is bad for the environment, partly due to arriving in excessive packaging and often comprising of textiles that produce high pollution (e.g., leather goods, fur coats; Bijleveld et al., 2011). The propensity to luxury consumption is growing in emerging economies (Souiden et al., 2011; Zhang & Wang, 2019). This wasted material is often dumped in landfill and into the oceans: 13 million tonnes of plastic leak into the oceans each year (UN environment), 31% of which are microplastics. According to a report from the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 2017, 35% of all microplastics in the ocean originated from the laundering of synthetic textiles used for clothing.

Considering that conspicuous consumption is associated with compulsive buying (Ferman & Benli, 2019), luxury consumers motivated by social motives are particularly problematic. Luxury consumers that are motivated by personal motives, such as enjoyment, might also be prone to impulsive buying due to desires for hedonic pleasures. Hedonism has been associated with compulsive buying (Horváth & Adigüzel, 2018). The rise of compulsive buying within the retail industry, including fashion, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), and technology, is having a destructive influence on the environment (Ridgway et al., 2008). Such over-consumption with natural resource use, which is placing a strain on natural resources (UN environment, 2017), is predicted to double by 2050.

Chapter 1

In a meta-analytic review of 42 studies, conducted in 15 countries (across five continents) from 2000-2020, conspicuous consumption was a stronger driver of luxury purchase intention for fashion luxury products than other luxury products (Bharti et al., 2022). Luxury consumption is particularly relevant to the fashion industry that produces 10% of global carbon emissions (more emissions than all international flights and maritime shipping combined; Mc-Fall Johnson, 2020), is the second largest consumer of the world's water supply (due to the textile dyeing process using enough water to fill two million Olympic-sized swimming pools each year), pollutes the oceans with microplastics, and is responsible for 20% of all industrial water pollution worldwide (McFall-Johnsen, 2019, 2020).

In Europe, fashion companies went from an average of offering two collections per year in 2000, to five collections in 2011 (Chanel has a total of 6 collections per year; Mc-Fall Johnson, 2020). Conspicuously consuming with the motive to fit in (i.e., the bandwagon effect) results in a huge amount of wasted clothes, as consumers continuously update their wardrobes to match the 'in' season trends and fashions. For example, although people bought 60% more garments in 2014 than in 2000, they only kept the clothes for half as long (Mc-Fall Johnson, 2020). One-third of young women in the UK think an item of clothing is "old" after they have worn it once or twice (Radonic, 2022). A lot of this clothing ends up in the dump, and the equivalent of one skip of clothes is burned or dumped in a landfill every second, worldwide.

Individuals on a lower budget may resort to cheap counterfeit and fast-fashion high-street products to mimic the luxury look. Fast fashion is arguably even more detrimental to the environment, considering that high-street retailers such as Zara have 24 collections per year (Radonic, 2022). Moreover, due to the cheaper quality of materials, such products do not last as long. This means they are thrown away faster and are not always suitable for recent promising solutions such as reusing pre-loved fashion via applications like Vinted and Depop.

Low and middle-income countries (India, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam Uzbekistan, Cambodia, China, Bangladesh, Madagascar and Myanmar, etc.) produce 90% of the worlds

clothing and resultantly have made substantial economic progress (Khurana & Muthu, 2022), but due to poor political infrastructure and retailers pushing for lower production costs, safety standards in textile factories are not enforced (Anguelov, 2020). Low wages and poor working conditions lead to health hazards in terms of exposure to untreated wastewater from textile dyeing (which can adversely affect animals and nearby residents; Khan & Malic, 2014) and accidental injuries, to name a few (Sant'Ana & Kovalechen, 2012; Gebremichael, 2015). Developing countries are also the dumping ground for textile waste, leading to further health hazards for residents (Khurana & Muthu, 2022). The global environmental injustice of fast fashion (Bick et al., 2018) is highlighted by the fact that the United States and Europe are the biggest consumers of fast fashion.

Consuming with the desire to stand out is also problematic. Now that luxury is more accessible, individuals will work hard to find new ways to display superiority, uniqueness, and exclusivity. It has been suggested that snobbish luxury consumerism will drive the exploitation of animals. For example, there are now exclusive purses made from endangered albino alligator skin (Husic & Cacic, 2009). Trends like this might impact the homeostasis of crucial eco-systems.

Although the luxury consumption and fashion industry drives a significant part of the global economy (Collins et al., 2015; McKinsey, 2017) the consumption of luxury products has undesirable consequences. To begin to consider how to curtail luxury consumption, and in particular conspicuous consumption, it is important to understand what influences a person to consume luxury items. The social and personal motives (i.e., stand out, fit in, hedonism, congruity with internal self) already discussed are likely to be shaped by a range of external and internal influences.

1.3 External Influences of Luxury Consumption

External influences for luxury consumption motives include consumer capitalism, economic advancement, and marketing (both on and offline). Various marketing techniques are crucial in assisting consumer capitalism (Robbins, 2005).

1.3.1 Consumer Capitalism

Consumer capitalism refers to an economic system that creates consumer demand and has been described as “a system that can never envisage a moment when we have enough things” (Lewis, 2013, p.2). This system is to the advantage of businesses and governments as continuous consuming boosts profits and thus the economy. Consumers are manipulated by corporations and governments through media, news, and advertising, to keep them spending (Watkins, 2022). These various industries have helped to mould the misleading perception of consumption as ‘the only way to secure pleasure, popularity, security, prosperity, happiness, or fulfilment (Lewis, 2013, p. 76; Passini, 2013). As previously discussed, consumption is, on the contrary, negatively associated with well-being (Kasser et al., 2007; Sedikides et al., 2013), despite the immediate pleasure and satisfaction potentially gained from it (Goldsmith, 2016; Hudders & Pandelaere, 2012; Özdemir & Yaman, 2007). This consumerism culture produces dissatisfaction and ‘generates separation and estrangement from others’ (Passini, 2013, p. 383).

1.3.2 Economic Advancement

Consumers in the 21st century generally have more disposable income due to advances in technology that have made necessities such as food and water cheaper (Robbins, 2005). Such an economic advancement has meant that acting on purchasing desires is not limited to the privileged few, but also to the middle and working classes (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006). The five richest countries in the world are the United States (US), China, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom (UK; Silver, 2022), but the five richest countries in terms of average disposable income are the US, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Germany, and Australia (Sebastian, 2022). Chinese consumers, however, are set to become the dominant nationality for luxury by 2025 (Onurdongel, 2022) and will represent between 40-45% of luxury global purchases. It is also projected that younger generations (Gen Y and Z) will represent 70% of luxury global purchases (Onurdongel, 2022). Notably, there are still

approximately 719 million people in poverty in the world (Peer, 2023), which is roughly 9.2% of the world's 8 billion population, and 61.4 % of the global population is in the low-income or poor category (Kochhar, 2021). Low income does not reduce the desire for luxury (Bauman, 1998; Pani & Biolcati, 2006). Lower middle-class debt is often derived from urges to purchase non-essential luxury goods (Passini, 2013). Counterfeit luxury products may enable individuals with less wealth to keep up with fast-moving trends (Chan et al., 2009).

1.3.3 Marketing and Advertising

Luxury products do not necessarily communicate high price, uniqueness, and scarcity on their own (Stępień, 2018). Purchasing desires are often generated from either conscious or subconsciously received information from adverts (Forest, 2015; Martin & Morich, 2011). Adverts are inescapable, and advertising outlets have expanded with the advancement of technology. They now range from posters, news ads (in newspapers and magazines), and billboards, to radio, TV, and the internet. Advertisers for various brands and fast fashion industries are increasingly spending money on the development of advertisements on and offline (Olmstead et al., 2015). It has been estimated that consumers are exposed to around 4000-10,000 adverts and brand exposure per day (Flynn, 2023). Such a large number is expected considering that global spending on digital advertising alone was around 422 billion (British) pounds in 2021 and is projected to reach 675 (British) billion pounds by 2026 (Statista, 2023).

1.3.3.1 Advertising Utilising the Snob Effect

Marketing often utilises the snob effect (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014) to persuade individuals who care about the superiority, exclusivity, and rarity/uniqueness of products. For example, brand name producers intentionally charge high prices, as high price communicates exclusivity (Solomon, 2022), and advertisers of conspicuous goods emphasize the exclusivity of their products (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005). Real-world firms also intentionally reduce supply quantities and cause shortages to facilitate the snob effect. For example, Apple often causes shortages as a marketing tactic to enhance the value of the

product (Chen et al., 2014). Furthermore, Ferrari recommended its employees to supply one less car than the market demands (DeBord, 2015). Such marketing strategies encourage consumers to stand out and be unique, with expensive, limited-edition products. However, these strategies can encourage one to conform with a small elite group who can afford such items. This is known as inconspicuous consumption, where an individual's product taste can be recognised by a small, prestigious ingroup (Berger & Ward, 2010; Shao et al., 2019), and can rarely be mimicked by the majority (Han et al., 2010).

1.3.3.2 Advertising Utilising the Bandwagon Effect

In contrast to snob advertising, the bandwagon advertising approach attempts to make the consumer feel as though they are the only ones who have not used or purchased the product (Ogah & Abutu, 2022). Companies often make use of the bandwagon effect by creating adverts that demonstrate popularity and fashionable trends. These adverts are often endorsed by aspirational reference groups, such as celebrities (e.g., Chanel's perfume advert with Brad Pitt; Martin et al., 2019), to persuade consumers to buy their product to fit in (Niesiobędzka, 2018). The effectiveness of this approach has been empirically demonstrated. For example, in three experiments, adverts for luxury products (e.g., iPhone, Ralph Lauren & Yves Saint Laurent T-shirts) were designed to activate the concept of aspirational reference groups (e.g., admirable famous people) by using slogans, such as "All your favourite stars already have it, and you?" and "Feel like a movie star," and direct references to celebrities, such as Beyoncé or Angelina Jolie (Niesiobędzka, 2018). Participants in these conditions were willing to pay significantly more for the product (iPhone), were willing to choose a T-shirt with a bigger Ralph Lauren logo, and prefer a clearly visible luxury logo on the Yves Saint Laurent T-shirt, respectively, than those in the control group (i.e., with no exposure to slogans). As per the bandwagon effect, participants showed a greater need for these products (i.e., willingness to spend more) and greater desire for conspicuous consumption (i.e., wanting a larger brand logo). However, there were several limitations. The consumer behaviours in all studies were hypothetical and thus the measures of willingness to spend, doubling of the logo, and increasing the size of the logo might not

reflect real life consumer behaviours. Furthermore, there was only one brand of t-shirt available in Experiment 2 (Ralph Lauren) and Experiment 3 (Yves Saint Laurent); more brands would ensure replicability. Finally, the experiments were underpowered.

In one study, the higher the exposure to marketing activities of luxury brands, the higher both bandwagon and snob luxury intentions were (Das et al., 2021). This study only included marketing activities such as TV, Newspapers, billboards, and advertising signs. Bandwagon and snob effects are likely maximised in the context of the internet and social media.

1.3.4 The Internet and Social Media

Many luxury brands use social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to communicate with consumers (Kim & Ko, 2010). The internet will be the largest advertising medium in 2024 accounting for a little over 65 percent of global advert expenditures that year (Navaro, 2023). Individuals are spending more time on their phones on social networking sites. Indeed, Facebook usage and self-promotion activity on social media conduces to conspicuous consumption (Niesiobedzka & Konaszewski, 2021; Taylor & Strutton, 2016; Wai & Osman, 2019; Widjajanta et al., 2018). Also, Instagram predicts conspicuous consumption (Kraus et al., 2019): Over 80% of Instagram users browse products and services (Schaffer, 2023). In one study, women's intentions to make online purchases were influenced by their involvement with social media, and Facebook usage influenced their internalisation of societal beauty ideals. This in turn was negatively associated with body satisfaction and self-esteem (Strubel et al., 2018). The use of social media is associated with upward comparisons and is positively related to depression via upward comparisons and lower self-esteem (Liu et al., 2017; Niu et al., 2016). In addition, social media usage is positively linked to online compulsive buying among women, and this is mediated by upward comparisons (Zheng et al., 2020). Furthermore, online is the only growing part of any retail business in many countries, and the online channel has nearly doubled since 2020 (albeit, partly due to

the Covid-19 pandemic; Onurdongel, 2022). Next, I turn to how social media influences shopping motivations: to stand out, to fit in, hedonism, congruity with the internal self.

1.3.4.1 Standing Out and Fitting in with Social Media

Social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, fuel social comparison with others. They encourage one to take selfies (Fox & Rooney, 2015; Murray, 2020) and post pictures and videos of themselves. In posting pictures and sharing videos, individuals can display their clothes and products to a huge amount of real-life or online friends and potentially global audience of strangers. With such a huge online audience, one might thrive having a platform to show off and establish their uniqueness with their latest purchases and glamorous lifestyles. Users have direct access to admirers and adoring comments, and regular liking of their content, demonstrating how social media can promote the motive to stand out from others. The more people are involved in self-promotion activity on social media, the more they are prone to conspicuous consumption (Widjajanta et al., 2018).

Platforms like Instagram allow people to post the most glamorous or best part of their life, possibly engendering others' envy, and perceived pressure to fit in with unrealistic standards. Others might feel the need to post a picture wearing fashionable clothes to impress and fit in with real or desired social circles. Hence, social media also encourages the motive to fit in. Indeed, getting daily glimpses in others' consumer lives conduces to dissatisfaction with one's purchases (Ackerman & Macinnis, 2000; Passini, 2013).

On social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, it is easier for brands to communicate the products' credibility and popularity by bandwagon cues, such as social media advocacy behaviours (Kwon et al., 2017) including other consumers (likes, commenting, and shares of the products media content; Li et al., 2020; Sundar, 2008), but product promotions directly through influencers (i.e., company's pay influencers with a high following profile to promote their products). These bandwagon cues can be persuasive for purchase decisions (Sundar, 2008). This is a form of Word-of-mouth (WoM) advertising, as the advertising is done by people who are trusted or familiar (Kumar et al., 2017). Sixty four

percent of marketing executives believe that WoM is the most effective form of marketing (Whitler, 2014).

1.3.4.2 Hedonic Influence of Social Media

Social media encourages individuals to buy for pleasure. Frequent users of social media are exposed to more adverts, which may encourage buying. Also, social networking sites (e.g., Instagram) increase the number of products seen on live models such as influencers who leave links to directly buy what they are wearing. People who are impulsive and motivated by hedonic benefits may be particularly vulnerable to and other marketing tactics including pop up-adverts and trick banners. Furthermore, Amazon saves bank details; buying can be completed by clicking one button, making it tempting, convenient, and easy to buy products.

Advertising has focused on creating and selling the experiential and emotive aspects of its products. Hedonism-eliciting brand communication, such as virtual try on websites, help consumers imagine themselves with the product. Other companies seduce consumers by offering them to play a game like as 'spin the wheel' to win a shopping offer.

1.3.4.3 Targeted Advertising

Social media is a platform that allows personalised targeted advertising. The internet has also enabled marketers to personalise adverts to be consistent with the consumers' personal tastes, relying on the personal motive of congruity with the internal self. Before social media, companies would tailor their advertisements to certain audiences, like creating specialised luxury magazines. However, companies using social media have constant and more personalised access to their current and potential consumers via targeted marketing. With the cookies software, companies can create a unique newsfeed of adverts tailored to the individual based on browser shopping history and demographics.

Many external influences encourage individuals to buy luxury. The consequences of luxury consumption are likely to be exacerbated due to the internet and social media speeding the process of advertising and options for next-day delivery (and free returns). To assume that external influences are solely responsible for consumers luxury spending would

be reductionistic and undermine the agency of consumers. There are several internal influences that can explain why some consumers are more susceptible to advertising and may be more inclined to use luxury than others.

1.4 Internal Influences of Luxury Consumption

Internal influences for luxury consumption include self-enhancement, self-esteem, materialism, vanity, need to belong, need for uniqueness, and impulsivity. These variables predict whether an individual will be motivated to buy luxury and their susceptibility to social comparison—hence, their vulnerability to external influences (e.g., advertising).

1.4.1 Self-Enhancement, Materialism, and Self-Esteem

Individuals may consume luxury products due to self-enhancement, the tendency to secure, maintain, and maximise positive self-views (Alicke & Sedikides, 2011). Self-enhancement is a fundamental part of human nature (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). Self-enhancement has been described as, an observed effect, a personality trait (Seegerstrom & Roach, 2009), a psychological ongoing process, and an underlying motive (Dunning et al., 2004; Klein & Cooper, 2009; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). An individual can self-enhance by self-protecting (i.e., diminishing or avoiding the negatively of the self or self-advancing (i.e., adding to the positivity of oneself; Alicke & Sedikides, 2009). With regard to self-enhancement through luxury consumption, specifically conspicuous consumption, these different self-enhancement strategies (i.e., self-protecting vs. self-enhancing) may relate to different types of conspicuous consumption (i.e., fitting in vs. standing out). The self-protecting strategy may materialise as purchasing fashionable, bandwagon luxury items, which can help to reduce negative self-regard by fitting in with others. Alternatively, the self-advancing strategy through conspicuous consumption might relate to the desire to stand out with unique luxury products.

Chapter 1

Individual differences in self-esteem may influence which strategy is used more heavily to self-enhance (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Self-esteem refers to an evaluation of one's self-concept and self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). People are largely influenced by the need to maintain self-esteem (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). According to symbolic self-completion theory, some people buy luxury products to compensate for a threatened self-image and to boost and maintain self-esteem (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Lower self-esteem is linked with materialism, and inducing low self-esteem experimentally can promote a more materialistic orientation (Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Chaplin & John, 2007; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Sivanathan and Pettit (2010) found that, when participants' self-esteem was threatened, participants were willing to pay more for brand names and seek ownership of high-status goods (Study 1). In an attempt to repair their self-worth, those who were self-affirmed (i.e., by viewing a list of values such as health, family relationships, and well-being) offered to pay less than self-threatened participants who had not self-affirmed (Study 2). These studies did not have adequate sample sizes (e.g., 150, 65 respectively), thus these findings should be interpreted with caution as they may be under powered.

Individuals high on materialism value possessions and achievements more than they value people or relationships, and they also believe that the possession of certain goods will provide greatest life satisfaction (Wong, 1997). Those who are materialistic are therefore often extrinsically driven (Martin, 1993; Shao et al., 2019). Podoshen et al. (2011) reported a positive relation between materialism and conspicuous consumption, and Vevlov et al. (2014) found materialism to be a positive predictor of conspicuous consumption. Materialism is also related to greater impulsive buying (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004) and compulsive buying (Rose, 2007). Further, conspicuous consumption is linked to low self-esteem, and consumers often seek to enhance their self-esteem through acquisition of goods (Souiden & M'saad, 2011; Truong & McColl, 2011).

Wearing fashionable and branded clothing is an important strategy, among British adolescents, to maintain self-esteem (Isaksen & Roper, 2012). Among adolescents, self-esteem, can therefore be directly impacted by possessing or not possessing specific brands

(Isaksen & Roper, 2012). Individuals low in self-esteem are more likely to self-protect (Arkin, 1981; Tice, 1991), and low self-esteem is related to increased compensatory consumption of clothes (Yurchisin et al., 2006). Similarly, low self-esteem individuals are more likely to be extrinsically motivated with their consumption, as their consumption is driven by the goal of gaining approval from peers (Darley, 1999). Those low in self-esteem often carry a negative self-concept and resort to ways in which they can establish their self-worth, such as displaying expensive, material goods (Banister & Hogg, 2004). For example, low self-esteem is associated with greater vanity concern (albeit only for women; Avelar & Veiga, 2013), with vanity being associated with conspicuous consumption (Netemeyer et al., 1995).

Furthermore, individuals with lower status-esteem evaluated a status-related product (i.e., expensive coat) more positively in a scenario where an attractive endorser was wearing the same product than those higher in status-esteem (Ono et al., 2020). Individuals with lower self-esteem report greater comparison with idealised media images (Martin & Kennedy, 1993) and are more vulnerable to making more frequent and more extreme upward comparisons on social media (Midgley et al., 2021). However, engagement in upward comparison on social media is associated with depression, which is mediated by lower self-esteem (Liu et al., 2017; Niu et al., 2016). Thus, lower self-esteem may drive a constant cycle for upward comparisons, which is related to online compulsive buying (Zheng et al., 2020).

Those high in self-esteem are more likely to self-enhance (Sedikides, 2021a). Standing out with unique and rare products can help to maintain and boost an individual's high self-esteem (Banister & Hogg, 2004). Individuals who self-enhance are more likely to engage in downward comparison, which means they focus on being superior to those worse off than them as opposed to aspiring to emulate those better off than them (Bogart et al., 2004). High self-esteem is associated with greater risk-taking, whereas low self-esteem is associated with risk aversion (Josephs et al., 1992; Tian et al., 2018), and thus individuals with high self-esteem may not be afraid to be viewed as different or trendsetters. However, low self-esteem has also been related to greater risk-taking behaviours (Tian et al., 2020) in the presence of peers. Therefore, individuals with low self-esteem may seek to stand out as a

method for increasing their confidence. However, risk-taking in these studies did not relate to consumption behaviours.

1.4.2 Need to Belong and Need for Uniqueness

The need to belong describes the fundamental human tendency to form positive and close attachments (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Belonging can refer to the subjective sense of fitting in with others (Lambert et al., 2013). Social identity theory postulates that an individual's sense of identity is based on their reference group norms (i.e., normative influence) within society and thus is derived from their ingroup (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Therefore, individuals may conform to their ingroup norms in consumer behaviour to maintain their desired social identity and affiliation with their groups (Bharti et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2018). An easy way for individuals to perceive that they fit in with their group is to wear and use brands that are accepted and recognised by it.

The need to belong to and being accepted by aspirational groups is largely responsible for the bandwagon effect, resulting in the search for fashionable products used by valued others (Niesiobedzka & Konaszewski, 2021; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Bharti and colleagues (2022) found a significant positive effect of normative influence on luxury purchase intention. Individuals can gain status through an association with a product's popularity, which provides them with a sense of membership to their desired status group (Lascu & Zinkhan, 1999). Indeed, consumers want brands that connect them with others and gives them a sense of belonging (Yarrow, 2019). A lack of social belongingness may lead to the conspicuous consumption of goods to signal group affiliation (Lee & Shrum, 2012).

Although the need to belong is ubiquitous (i.e., everybody needs somebody), the degree to which individuals are driven by this need varies. An individual with a high need to belong may be more susceptible to peer pressure and more readily conform to social norms. These consumers are thus more likely to prefer products that are fashionable and trendy (i.e., bandwagon products; Akturan & Bozbay, 2015). Furthermore, an individual's self-esteem is linked to the need to belong (Leary, 1999). Drops in self-esteem are related to

reductions in belongingness (Baumeister et al., 2011). According to sociometer theory, self-esteem is tied to social inclusion, and social exclusion leads to decreased self-esteem (Leary et al., 1995).

The need for uniqueness is a personality trait that has been considered a driver of conspicuous consumption (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005; Bharti et al., 2022; Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006; Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021a; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Leibenstein, 1950; Tian et al., 2001; Tsai et al., 2013; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). According to uniqueness theory (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980), uniqueness seeking is defined as the trait of pursuing distinctiveness in society in comparison to others via the possession of luxury brands that expresses their uniqueness (Bharti et al., 2022; Bian & Forsythe, 2012a). Individuals high in need for uniqueness may be more inclined to stand out and express their difference with snobbish patterns of consumption (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012, 2014; Workman & Kidd, 2000). For example, they tend to demonstrate a higher concentration of creating and expressing an independent identity and are more likely to choose less popular and distinctive brands (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). They are also more likely to reduce consumption of a product as it becomes commonplace (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). Therefore, the need for uniqueness drives snobbish luxury consumption (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). Luxury brands are often scarce due to high prices and are commonly limited edition, which means they are a useful way to convey uniqueness (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). When a conspicuous product is used more often, consumers with a high need for uniqueness value it less (Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Furthermore, the two forms of consumer need for uniqueness, unpopular choice counter conformity (i.e., expressing uniqueness by breaking social boundaries) and avoidance of similarity (i.e., avoiding and discontinuing commonplace items while expressing uniqueness; Ruvio et al., 2008), have a direct effect on snob luxury purchase intentions (Das et al., 2021). Although high self-esteem is linked to self-enhancement and standing out, low self-esteem is also linked to risk taking behaviours (Tian et al., 2020). Furthermore, self-esteem is negatively associated with the

need for uniqueness (Clark & Goldsmith, 2005). Breaking social norms may be a strategy to gain positive self-evaluations for individuals low in self-esteem (Clark & Goldsmith, 2005).

Optimal distinctiveness theory suggests that people are in constant effort to balance two opposing sides of their identity (Brewer, 1991). That is, people have these two opposing needs: assimilation with others (need to belong) and differentiation from others (need to be unique). The ideal differentiation is when one is like ingroup members and dissimilar from outgroup members. However, being too similar with ingroup members compromises one's sense of distinctiveness (White & Argo, 2011). This motivates those high in need for uniqueness to differentiate the self from highly similar, ingroup members. According to Husic and Cicic (2009), one of the main purposes of luxury consumption is to help the consumer be a part of the social group they wish to belong to. Therefore, both bandwagoners and snobs try to be better than the groups they perceive as inferior (Stępień, 2018).

1.4.3 Impulsivity

Impulsive buying is buying something immediately without reflecting on the long-term utility of the product (Rook & Fisher, 1995; Wang et al., 2022), and therefore is related to the consumption of products based on their symbolic, rather than utilitarian, value. Impulsive buying has been associated with conspicuous consumption via materialism (Verma, 2016). About 40% of online consumption is impulsive (Chan et al., 2017), which might partly be encouraged by the ease and rapid nature of online buying. However, individuals who are high in impulsivity have lower self-control and may be more prone to buying luxury products to satisfy hedonic needs. Impulsive buying has also been linked to low self-esteem (Zhang & Shrum, 2009).

Grandiose narcissism encompasses many of the internal influences for conspicuous consumption, such as self-enhancement/need for status (Sedikides, 2021b), materialism, vanity (Campbell et al., 2011; Choen & Cohen, 1996; Lambert & Desmond, 2013), need for self-esteem (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Zuckerman & O'Loughlin, 2009), need for uniqueness

(Neave & Fastoso, 2020), and impulsivity (Cai et al., 2015; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Vazire & Funder, 2006). For the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on this personality trait.

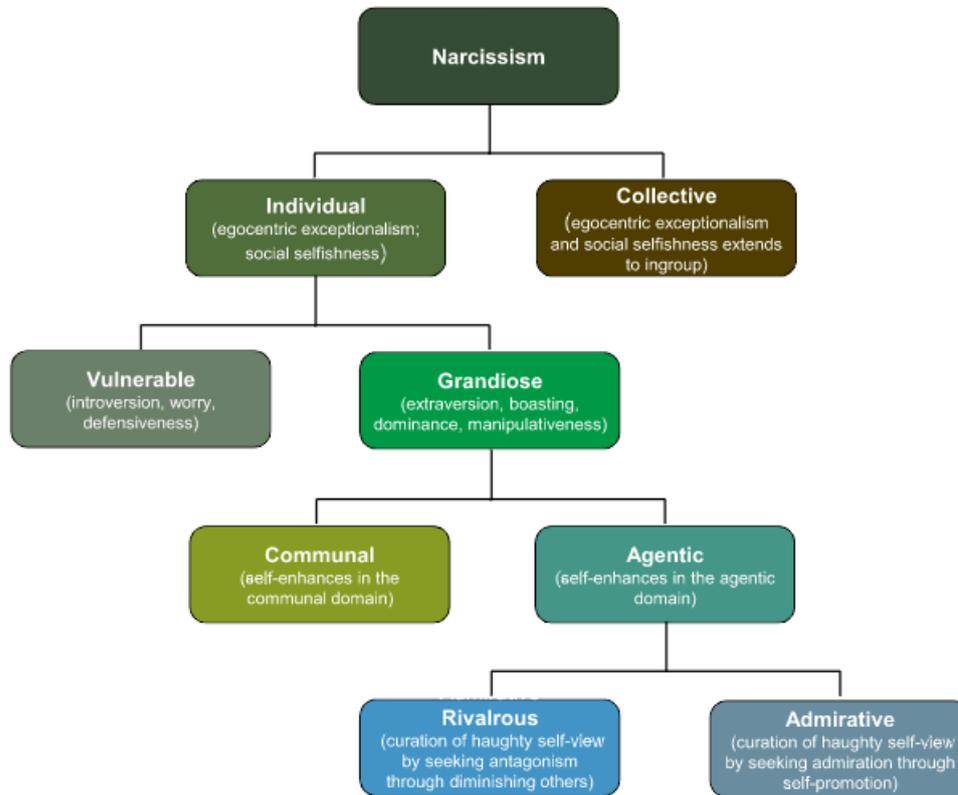
1.5 Narcissism and Luxury Consumption

The term narcissism originates from the myth of Narcissus, written by Roman poet, Ovid (43 BC – 17/18 AD). This myth is about a handsome, Greek hunter (Narcissus) and Echo (a Mountain Oread). Narcissus rejects a lovelorn Echo which leads Nemesis (Echo's patron Goddess) to entice Narcissus to a pond. Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection, became immobilised and melted away into the eponymous flower (Sedikides, 2021a). This myth illustrates personality that is particularly prevalent in the current Generation Me culture, with individuals displaying excessive self-absorption and entitlement (Twenge, 2013; Twenge et al., 2008; Twenge & Wiese, 2009), known as narcissism.

Narcissism is a normally distributed multi-dimensional and multi-faceted personality trait that lies on a continuum from high to low (Campbell & Foster, 2007). In other words, narcissism is not all or nothing, but individuals exhibit various narcissistic tendencies to different degrees (Hartley, 2021). The grandiose (as opposed to vulnerable) agentic form (from this point forward referred to as narcissism) is of central interest in this thesis (see Figure 1.2 for Sedikides, 2021 taxonomy of narcissism).

Figure 1.2

The Trait of Narcissism, Common Threads among Forms of Narcissism, and Additional Distinguishing Features of Forms of Narcissism



It refers to individuals who hold inflated self-beliefs; are extraverted, exhibitionistic, dominant, manipulative, and self-enhancing; and are low in empathy (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Krizan & Bushman, 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Narcissism is typically assessed by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988). The NPI is a robust and widely used scale. It encompasses 40-paired items that load onto seven facets of the narcissistic personality: vanity, authority, entitlement, exhibitionism, exploitation, self-sufficiency, and superiority. Researchers have observed that the NPI includes both adaptive and maladaptive components (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Watson & Biderman, 1993). Authority and self-sufficiency are associated with healthy self-esteem (Raskin et al., 1991) and self-confidence, whereas entitlement, exploitation, and exhibitionism are associated with social maladjustment (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Watson & Biderman, 1993, Watson et al., 1994), aggression, and low

self-esteem (Cai & Luo, 2019). Maladaptive narcissism drives the negative association between narcissism and empathy (Hepper et al., 2014).

Materialism is central to the narcissistic self-concept (Campbell et al., 2011; Choen & Cohen, 1996; Pilch & Hyla, 2017; Sedikides et al., 2011), as demonstrated by narcissists' desire for material possessions (Cohen & Cohen, 1996) and aspirations for wealth (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Roberts & Robbins, 2000, Vevlov et al., 2021). Therefore, narcissists are particularly prone to luxury consumption, and they tend to wear expensive, branded, and stylish clothing (Sedikides & Hart 2022; Vazire et al., 2008). Pilch and G órnik-Durose (2016) found that narcissists preference toward branded public consumption was positively mediated by materialism. Furthermore, Cunningham-Kim and Darke (2011) found that people high in narcissism were more likely to choose prestigious products than those low in narcissism. Likewise, Lee et al. (2013) reported that narcissists were more likely to spend more money on limited edition and personalised products. Consumers displaying luxury goods are even perceived as being higher in trait narcissism (Razmus et al., 2023).

There are personal motivations for luxury consumption, which are relevant for narcissists, such as hedonism (Jonason et al., 2020; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002). Narcissists are prone to novelty-seeking (Miller et al., 2009; Roberts & Robins, 2000) and impulsivity (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Rook, 1987; Vazire & Funder, 2006), which are predictors of compulsive buying (De Sarbo & Edwards, 1996). Indeed, Lucas and Koff (2014) showed that narcissists are more likely to have impulsive buying tendencies. Similarly, Rose (2007) observed that narcissists' low impulse control accounts for compulsive buying among narcissistic undergraduate consumers. Cai et al. (2015) also reported that narcissism predicted impulsive buying amongst a more diverse population (age range 17-38 years). Impulsive buying has been predicted by the more maladaptive rather than the more adaptive facets of narcissism (Cai & Liu, 2019; Cai et al., 2015). Furthermore, self-congruity has been found to enhance the relation between narcissism and luxury brand loyalty (Fastoso et al., 2018). That is, narcissists are more likely to perceive that luxury brands 'reflect who they are' which strengthens their luxury brand loyalty.

Narcissists, however, are often vain and endorse items such as “I get upset when people don’t notice how I look when I go out in public” and “I will usually show off if I get the chance” on the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Narcissists’ luxury purchases, therefore, are likely motivated by the desire to show off. Wearing luxury and branded clothing can function as a symbol of achievement, success, and therefore status (Das & Jebarajakirthy, 2020; Madinga et al., 2016), which may be why narcissists are particularly prone to conspicuous consumption. I next analyse the reasons why narcissists are relatively likely to engage in conspicuous consumption.

1.5.1 Narcissism and Self-enhancing with Conspicuous Consumption

The Self-regulatory Model (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) and the Extended Agency Model (Campbell & Foster, 2007) describe how narcissists fundamentally value agency over communion. That is, narcissists are heavily motivated by agentic goals (e.g., status, intelligence, extraversion) and less so by communal goals (e.g., warmth, morality, trustworthiness; Abele & Gebauer, 2018). More specifically the Extended Agency Model outlines how narcissists engage in intrapsychic self-regulatory strategies such as fantasies of power and self-serving biases but also interpersonal self-regulatory strategies such as self-promotion and game-playing. This has further been demonstrated by Sheldon et al. (2020), who found that narcissism was positively associated with self-serving but not prosocial motives. Essentially, getting ahead is more important than getting along for a narcissist (Hogan, 1982). For example, narcissists are more likely to put themselves above their partners (Czarna et al., 2022a). Relatedly, narcissists strive for and feel entitled to, status (Grapsas et al., 2020), power (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Horton & Sedikides, 2009), wealth (Roberts & Robbins, 2000), and fame (Giacomin et al., 2018; Raskin & Novacek, 1991).

Narcissism is also associated with high self-esteem and the belief that future fame is realistic and attainable (Maltby, 2010; Southard & Zeigler-Hill, 2016). According to Hierometer theory (Mahadevan et al., 2019), narcissists’ high self-esteem (Hyatt et al., 2018)

is mostly relevant in these agentic domains (i.e., status) and not in communal domains (i.e., social inclusion). This proposal has received empirical support (Gebauer et al., 2012; Rentzsch & Gebauer, 2019; Rentzsch et al., 2022). Indeed, evidence indicates that narcissists perceive themselves as superior on agentic, but not communal, traits (Campbell et al., 2002). Also, narcissists overestimate judgments of their performance on group tasks (Judge et al., 2006), rate themselves higher on intelligence compared to objective measures (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998; Zajenkowski & Czarna, 2015), and rate themselves higher on attractiveness than other people rate them (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2008). Furthermore, narcissism is linked to better adjustment (Dufner et al., 2019; Rose, 2002) and related to better mental health on account of their high self-esteem (Sedikides et al., 2004) and higher satisfaction with life (Rose, 2002).

Due to their heightened self-esteem and self-confidence in agentic domains (Paulhus et al., 2013), narcissists often have trouble regulating their exaggerated positive self-concept (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) and thus rely on external sources to maintain and elevate such a bloated self-view (Bergman et al., 2011; Bergman et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2002). Therefore, narcissists are hypermotivated to self-enhance (Sedikides, 2021b), and many narcissistic self-regulatory strategies are often played out in the social context (Hepper et al., 2010). Although narcissists disregard and belittle others (Ang et al., 2010; Holtzman et al., 2010; Park & Colvin, 2015; Reijntjes et al., 2016), paradoxically, they crave attention and admiration (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008a). Narcissists ‘cannot live without an audience of admirers’ (Passini, 2013, p. 382). This highlights their exploitative nature, as they tend to use others to get their needs met. Their self-regulatory strategies involve attention-seeking and self-promotion behaviours such as bragging about accomplishments in conversations (Buss & Chiado, 1991), associating with high-status others (Campbell, 1991) showcasing talents in front of others (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002), engagement in perfectionistic self-promotion (Smith et al., 2018), and grooming their appearance (Back et al., 2010).

Narcissists’ proneness to luxury consumption may therefore be considered a self-regulatory strategy to enhance the self and to show off their desired grandiose self-image and

status (Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Sedikides & Hart, 2022). This is termed narcissistic glorification hypothesis (Sedikides et al., 2011) where luxury brands help communicate wealth and prestige (Han et al., 2010). Purchasing luxury products is a convenient route to adopt the “external trappings of greatness” (Sedikides et al., 2007). Indeed, narcissists do buy products based on self-presentational concerns (Geller, 1989; Peattie, 2010) and can often be recognised as narcissists from the clothes they wear and their self-grooming practices (Holtzman & Strube, 2010).

Individuals high in materialism place a greater importance on the possession of products, specifically products that can communicate their status (Belk, 1985). Materialism is also positively associated with conspicuous consumption (Podoshen et al., 2011; Velov et al., 2014) and numerous studies have reported that narcissism predicts ostentatious, prestigious, and showy purchases (Cunningham-Kim et al., 2011; Neave & Fastoso, 2020b). Vevlov et al. (2011) found that, although narcissism (assessed via the NPI) predicted materialism, it did not predict conspicuous consumption. This study tested Serbian adolescents aged 16-18 years. As the authors pointed out, the students lacked understanding of conspicuous consumption and had limited financial resources.

Neave and Fastoso (2020) alternatively found that narcissism is positively associated with conspicuous consumption (i.e., motivated to buy luxury for social motives). This suggests that narcissists use luxury products to draw attention to themselves (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Further, narcissists purchase luxury products based on their symbolic value without engaging in deliberate information processing regarding utilitarian product characteristics (Lee & Seidle, 2012). Indeed, narcissists are thought to prefer luxury products over products that are mundane, but have superior utilitarian value (e.g., functional, affordable, practical; Campbell et al., 2011; Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018a; Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Lee et al., 2013; Sedikides et al., 2007, 2018).

Sedikides et al. (2011) conducted a preliminary study using a consumer decision-making paradigm, where participants were presented with two versions of each of four types of products: mobile phones, MP3 players, hair conditioners, sunglasses. Each version had a

picture and a description. One version was always superior in attractiveness but inferior in practicality (i.e., luxury/symbolic choice), and the other version was always superior in practicality but inferior in attractiveness (i.e., utilitarian choice). Narcissism positively predicted the number of symbolic products preferred; a pattern replicated by Cisek et al. (2014) using seven products. An advantage to this measure of conspicuous consumption is that it is high in mundane realism, as participants make consumer decisions in the moment as opposed to self-reporting attitudes (i.e., like in the conspicuous consumption scale; Chen, 2008), which does not always reflect reality. Additionally, Pilch and Górnik-Durose (2017) found that narcissists were more likely to rate new well-known branded products as highly important to have, but only if they were publicly visible (e.g., sunglasses, clothes, shoes, car) and not for private products (e.g., toothbrush, detergent, electronic equipment, shampoo). This is in line with the finding that narcissists care more about store image than product price (Naderi & Paswan, 2016). Taken together, the findings suggest that narcissists' luxury/branded purchases are largely socially motivated.

Narcissists are more likely to consume luxury products for conspicuous reasons. However, there might be differences between different forms of narcissism in terms of whether the underlying shopping motives are to stand out or fit in. I turn to this issue next.

1.5.1.1 Narcissism and Standing Out versus Fitting In with Luxury Products

Narcissism is associated high self-esteem (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Rentzsch et al., 2022) and high need for uniqueness (Lee et al., 2013). So, narcissists might buy luxury products for the conspicuous motivation of standing out and being unique (i.e., snobbery) as opposed to fitting in and approval seeking (i.e., bandwagon). Indeed, narcissism is linked to increased desire for unique products (de Bellis et al., 2016) and were willing to pay more for scarce products (Lee et al., 2013).

The motive of fitting in with others is associated with low-self-esteem (Darley, 1999), which might be why approval seeking is related to vulnerable narcissism (Neave & Fastoso, 2020a). Those high in vulnerable narcissism likely have an inner fragility, as they are associated with low explicit self-esteem, high introversion, high neuroticism, and

hypersensitivity (Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Miller et al., 2018; Rose, 2002). Vulnerable narcissism (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Sedikides, 2020; Wink, 1991) is closely aligned with clinical narcissism (NPD) and is assessed with the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS; Hendin & Cheek, 2013) or the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (Pincus et al., 2009). Vulnerable narcissism predicts high levels of anxiety and defensiveness while reporting low life satisfaction (Rohmann et al., 2019). Approval seeking mediates the relation between vulnerable narcissism and conspicuous consumption (Neave & Fastoso, 2020a) and may therefore be associated with the tendency to purchase common fashion trends. Furthermore, vulnerable narcissists are more concerned with social approval and fitting in rather than standing out (Neave & Fastoso, 2020b). There is some evidence to suggest that vulnerable narcissism is prevalent among the millennial generation (Sturt, 2017), which is an important target audience for luxury and fashion industries (BCG, 2020).

Grandiose narcissists (referred to as narcissists in this thesis), on the other hand, do like to be trend setters. This is specifically captured by their higher scores on the NPI item 'I like to start new fads and fashions' (Raskin & Terry, 1988b). Narcissists prefer to purchase goods that are scarce, unique, exclusive, and customizable (Lee & Seidle, 2012; Lee et al., 2013). Narcissistic consumers also use consumer products to signify positive distinctiveness (Lee et al., 2013; Neave et al., 2020). Therefore, narcissist's consumer decisions are guided by their need to positively distinguish themselves (i.e., individuation) and stand out from those around them (Lee et al., 2013).

Moreover, narcissists compare themselves with less fortunate others and thus engage in downward social comparison (Bogart et al., 2004; Burnell, et al., 2020). The need for uniqueness mediates the relation between narcissism and conspicuous consumption (Neave & Fastoso., 2020). Also, narcissism uniquely (i.e., controlling for self-esteem and the need for uniqueness) predicts ownership of more unique products (de Bellis et al., 2016).

Conspicuous consumption might be used by narcissists to gain uniqueness and attract potential mates for short-term dating (Sedikides et al., 2018). Narcissism is often associated with short-term dating (Campbell et al., 2002; Schmitt et al., 2017). Dufner et al.

(2013) demonstrated a positive association between narcissism and mate appeal, which was mediated through attractiveness and social boldness. In addition, Dufner et al. manipulated narcissistic levels of a fictitious person and found that high narcissism predicts a positive effect on mate appeal. There is some evidence to suggest that higher circulating levels of testosterone in males is positively associated with conspicuous consumption among individuals who are primed with intrasexual competition (Nepomuceno & Stenstrom, 2021). Czarna et al. (2022b) highlighted the multiple parallels between narcissists and people with high endogenous testosterone, such as a drive for status, overconfidence in expectations of success, more responsive to information about their status, and motives to restore their status when it is threatened (Horvath & Morf, 2009; Josephs et al., 2006; Sedikides, 2021b; Wallace et al., 2009). Narcissism is positively associated with testosterone (Pfattheicher, 2016), thus, narcissists may be more prone to conspicuous consumption due to an evolutionary, biological predisposition relating to sexual competition (Holtzman, 2018). However, the scarce studies on this topic have inconsistent findings and have trouble accounting for women's behaviour. Thus, little is known as to whether narcissists' conspicuous consumption is motivated by the social motive of standing out as a short-term mating strategy, generally (Sedikides & Hart, 2022).

Perhaps the perfect platform for narcissists to stand out (or fit in) is to gain an audience of admirers on social media. Narcissism is positively associated with compulsive social media use (Andreassen et al., 2017) and positively predicts the number of 'selfies' posted on the social networking sites Facebook and Instagram (Fox & Rooney, 2015; Weiser 2015). Also, narcissism positively predicts the posting of highly self-promoting and sexy pictures of themselves on Facebook (DeWall et al., 2011). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of 62 samples ($n = 13,430$) established a strong relation between narcissism and a range of social media use (i.e., time spent on social media, frequency of status updates/tweets on social media, number of friends/followers on social media, frequency of posting pictures of the self or selfies on social media; McCain & Campbell, 2018). Similarly, Buffardi and Campbell (2008), reported that narcissism predicts more self-promoting content in several

aspects of the social networking web pages. In addition, narcissism predicts the use of social media to project a positive image on their profile (Bergman et al., 2011), and increased Facebook usage is positively associated with narcissism which in turn predicts a stronger desire to promote oneself through conspicuous consumption (Taylor & Strutton, 2016)

Grandiose narcissism encompasses a range of adaptive and maladaptive facets which have unique relations to self-worth, self-esteem, and wellbeing (Cai & Luo, 2019). Studies that only use the NPI are limited, because they ignore the unique relations between sub-facets of narcissism and psychological or behavioural outcomes (Ackerman et al., 2011). These sub-facets might be opposing and silencing each other's effects and associations when examined as a collective. Therefore, facets of narcissism may be associated differently to conspicuous consumption.

1.5.1.2 Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry

There are inconsistencies in the relationship between narcissism and self-esteem (Southard et al., 2018). Researchers have shown that, whereas narcissists score high on measures of explicit self-esteem (i.e., deliberate, conscious, reflective self-views), they score low on measures of implicit self-esteem (i.e., automatic, unconscious, unintentional self-views; Gregg & Sedikides, 2010; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Rentzsch et al., 2022). Without considering the various forms of narcissism, these findings suggest that people high in narcissism have a fragile self-concept similarly to vulnerable narcissism (Brown & Bosson, 2001; Gregg & Sedikides, 2010; Jordan et al., 2003; Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, 2011).

According to the Mask Model of narcissism (Hardaker et al., 2021; Hovarth & Morf, 2009), narcissists have a soft core, representing insecurity and a brittle ego. This suggests that narcissists might be similar to vulnerable narcissists in their inner fragility. However, in the adaptive-maladaptive subdivision of narcissism (Barry et al., 2003), adaptive narcissism (authority, self-sufficiency) predicts high explicit self-esteem, whereas maladaptive narcissism (entitlement, exploitativeness, exhibitionism) predicts low self-esteem (Cai & Luo, 2019).

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Although these narcissistic subscales (i.e., adaptive, and maladaptive) are internally consistent and valid (Barry et al., 2007; Cai et al., 2015; Hepper et al., 2014), the NPI does not directly account for disagreeable and antagonistic aspects of narcissism, such as aggressive and derogatory behaviours (Martinez, et al., 2008). A recent, yet more established distinction between adaptive and maladaptive aspects of grandiose agentic narcissism is the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013). Narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry are two related but distinct forms of narcissism (Figure 1.2). Narcissists can adopt an assertive (i.e., self-promotion, self-enhancing, dominant) or antagonistic (i.e., derogation of others, disagreeableness, hostility) social strategy to create and maintain a grandiose agentic self. These strategies are assessed with the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ).

The NARQ has good factorial structure and internal consistency and demonstrates good predictive validity above and beyond the NPI (Back et al., 2013). Individuals high in narcissistic admiration endorse items such as ‘most of the time I am able to draw people’s attention to myself in conversations’ and ‘I show others how special I am’. Individuals high in narcissistic rivalry agree with items including ‘I secretly take pleasure in the failure of my rivals’, and ‘I enjoy it when another person is inferior to me.’ Hereafter in this thesis, a narcissist still refers to those who score high on the grandiose agentic form, while I make clear distinctions between the agentic forms (narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry).

The association of psychological well-being with narcissistic admiration and rivalry closely mirrors the associations of psychological well-being with adaptive and maladaptive narcissism. Those scoring high on the narcissistic admiration subscale (i.e., more adaptive) display better adjusted psychological well-being scores and are related stably and positively to self-esteem. Contrastingly, those high on narcissistic rivalry display low self-esteem and are more likely to have lower empathy and well-being (Back et al., 2013; Burgmer et al., 2019; Hepper et al., 2014; Leckelt et al., 2017, 2019). These findings are consistent with previous research on the antagonistic aspects of grandiose narcissism (Geukes et al., 2017; Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013).

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In Back et al.'s (2018) working model (Figure 1.3) the rivalry strategy is a narcissistic mode in which one defends oneself, in an antagonistic way, in response to perceived disrespect and lack of admiration. Although the default mode for those high in narcissism is to achieve grandiosity and be admired, if (in this model) narcissists are unable to restore their self-esteem, following perceived disrespect, they continue to defend themselves in an antagonistic way until their perception that they can retaliate to the situation ceases. According to Back's (2018) model, this is when a rivalrous narcissistic mode becomes vulnerable (i.e., neurotic), leading to low well-being (i.e., hopelessness, hypersensitivity, low self-esteem; Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Miller et al., 2011; Rose, 2002). This idea received empirical support (Rogoza et al., 2018), concluding that narcissistic rivalry is a trait that likely lies between admiring and vulnerable forms of narcissism. This notion is visualised (Rogoza et al., 2018) in the Narcissism Spectrum Model (Krizan & Herlache, 2018). I present this model in (Figure 1.4)**Error! Reference source not found..**

Admirative narcissists, therefore, may differ to rivalrous narcissists because they tend to be fuelled by approach motivation (Back et al., 2013; Sedikides, 2021b), self-improvement, and prosocial behaviours (Martin et al., 2019). As rivalrous narcissists are more inclined to view others through the lens of defensive competition due to a lack of self-esteem (Back et al., 2013; Cheshure et al., 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019), previous narcissism-communal associations are likely to have been driven by admiration. Although admirative narcissists might not have communal motives in their relationships, it is plausible that they value them (perhaps for the self-enhancement from the relational association with trophy partners; Campbell & Foster, 2002). However, relational benefits may be uniquely tied to underlying communal (not agentic) motivations.

Figure 1.3

A Working Model of Within-person Self-regulatory Dynamics Underlying Systematic Variation and Development Across Agentic, Antagonistic, and Neurotic Narcissistic Modes

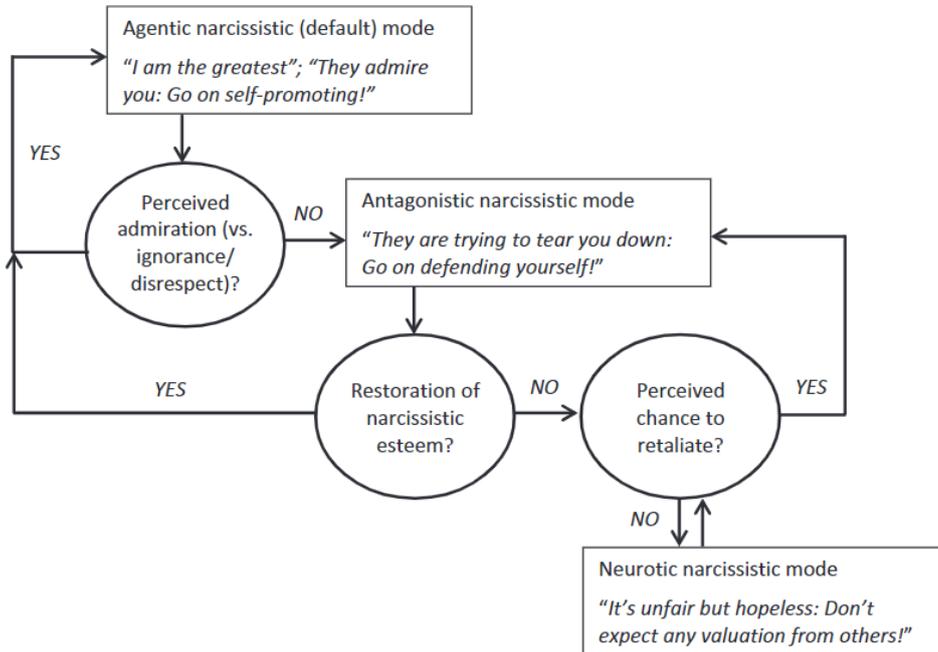
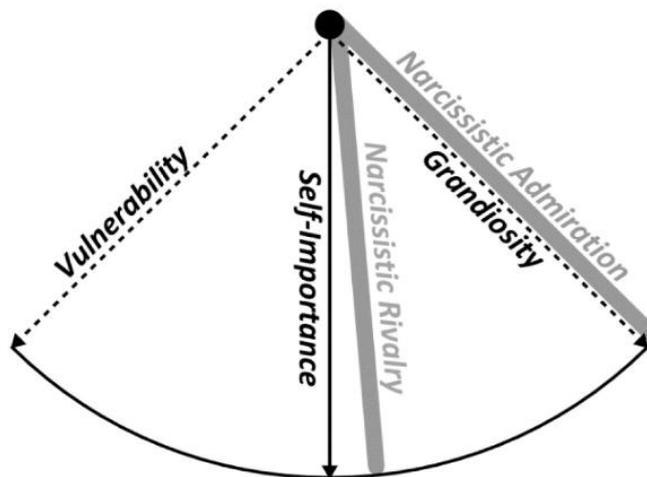


Figure 1.4

The Graphical Representation of the Narcissism Spectrum Model in Which Admiration and Rivalry Are Assigned to the Hypothesized Dimensions



Narcissists high on admiration are more likely to have an approach orientation towards self-enhancement and therefore assertively engage in self-promotional behaviours (i.e., wearing flashy clothes and bragging in conversations), with the aim to be admired (Back et al., 2013). Those high on rivalry alternatively self-enhance by antagonising, belittling, and competing with others, with the desire to be superior to them. Narcissistic admiration and rivalry are forms of grandiose agentic narcissism, and therefore both represent individuals' strategies to maintain an inflated self-views and high status. Admirative narcissists seek status via self-promotion, whereas rivalrous narcissists seek status largely through dominance and competitiveness (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). Purchasing products that are luxurious would allow narcissists to self-promote and be admired but also compete and be better than others; thus, I assume that both narcissistic strategies would predict conspicuous consumption, with the social motive of gaining status.

Martin et al. (2019) found that both narcissistic admiration and rivalry are predictors of a vain consumer style. The measure of a vain consumer lifestyle included items such as posting photos, reading celebrity news, and keeping up with trends. Although this study suggests that both admirative and rivalrous narcissists are prone to following fashion trends and conforming to celebrity endorsements, this study did not measure conspicuous consumption. Further, Niesiobedzka and Konaszewski (2021) suggested that admirative narcissists are prone to social status-seeking consumption (i.e., conspicuous consumption) due to related goals of uniqueness and grandiose fantasies. Contrastingly, striving for supremacy and devaluation of others likely drives rivalrous narcissists to conspicuous consumption.

The need for uniqueness is associated with narcissistic admiration, but not rivalry (Back et al., 2013; Jordan et al., 2022). Therefore, those admirative narcissists might be motivated to conspicuously consume via the snob effect (Sanyal & Sharma, 2020). They might prefer products that are distinct, customisable, and limited edition, as opposed to mainstream fashionable products, which are associated with the bandwagon effect of wanting to fit in.

Given that high self-esteem is linked with greater risk-taking (Josephs et al., 1992; Tian et al., 2018), and that standing out with unique products can help maintain and boost self-esteem (Banister & Hogg, 2004), the need for uniqueness is unrelated to vulnerable narcissism and narcissistic rivalry. Furthermore, rivalry, but not admiration, predicts impulsivity (Back et al., 2013), which is also linked to low self-esteem (Zhang & Shrum, 2009).

Niesiobędzka and Konaszewki (2021) found that only narcissistic rivalry directly influenced the propensity to conspicuous consumption. They did not expect this finding, as admiration should theoretically predict conspicuous consumption as well. However, both admiration and rivalry were positively related to conspicuous consumption via self-verified activity on Facebook (i.e., willingness to check opinions or any information about oneself). Admiration predicted self-promotion activity (i.e., updating profile and profile picture, posting self-related photos, tagging posts and photos) on Facebook to a greater extent than self-verified activity. However, self-promotion activity surprisingly did not predict conspicuous consumption, which is inconsistent with previous findings (Widjajanta et al., 2018). Rivalry did not predict self-promotion activity. Niesiobędzka and Konaszewki (2021) suggested that rivalrous narcissists are driven by self-protection and might fear self-promotion for the prospect of social failure. Rivalry is positively associated with lower self-esteem and individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to self-protect rather than self-enhance (Tice, 1991). So, these individuals might be more inclined to fit in than stand out with their conspicuous consumption. This is a plausible proposition given the negative association between rivalry and self-esteem.

Yet, the Niesiobędzka and Konaszewki (2021) study had limitations. Firstly, Facebook is not at the forefront for self-promotion. Facebook is used for communicative functions, whereas Instagram's functions largely involve self-promoting (Widjajanta et al., 2018). Also, Instagram use increases conspicuous consumption (Kraus et al., 2019; Widjajanta et al., 2018), challenging the Niesiobędzka and Konaszewki (2021) finding that self-promotion activity on Facebook fails to predict conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, participants in Niesiobędzka and Konaszewki were young adults of low income, which may have affected

the findings. Despite this, young consumers are predicted to dominate the global luxury market (65% by 2025; BCG, 2020). Given the limitations of Niesiobędzka and Konaszewki's study, it is still plausible that both narcissistic strategies predict conspicuous consumption.

Conspicuous consumption is clearly a prominent behaviour among narcissists. Understanding the underlying motivations for conspicuous consumption is crucial in the effort to curtail the undesirable repercussions of consumer behaviour. We currently know that narcissists are materialistic self-enhancers, which makes them more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption. Little research, however, has examined whether narcissists' gain more than ego-booster from conspicuous consumption. Narcissists may gain MIL. I elaborate on this point next.

1.6 Meaning in Life

The pursuit of MIL is thought to be an essential part of human nature (Frankl, 1969). MIL is most commonly defined as the subjective sense that one's life has purpose (i.e., behaviour is guided by personally valued goals), coherence (i.e., one's perceptions of their experiences in life make sense), and significance (i.e., one perceived that their life is valuable and matters; Costin & Vignoles, 2020; Kashdan & Mcknight, 2013; Martela & Steger, 2016). A wide array of possible dimensions of MIL have been considered in the literature, including feelings of satisfaction (Dufton & Perlman, 1986), control in life (Reker & Peacock, 1981), and connectedness (Chamberlain & Zika, 1988), to name a few. However, as the field evolved, certain dimensions became regarded as potential precursors and consequences of meaning, whereas the trichotomy of purpose, coherence, and significance are now considered, by many researchers, the most fundamental aspects of MIL (Heintzelman & King, 2014; King & Hicks, 2021; Martela & Steger, 2016; Negri et al., 2020). According to many researchers (Heintzelman & King, 2014; Park & George, 2013; Reker et al., 2013; Schnell, 2009; Steger, 2012), individuals are more likely to find meaning in their daily lives if they have a clear purpose as their actions and choices are aligned with what they consider personally significant. Purpose in life is considered the motivational component of MIL (Steger, 2016).

Furthermore, according to Antonovsky's (1979) Sense of Coherence Model and the Meaning Maintenance Model (Heine et al., 2006) individuals perceive their life as meaningful when they view their environment as comprehensible (i.e., understandable) and predictable. King et al (2016) demonstrated how participants (i.e., in an experiment) self-reported a higher sense of meaning if they viewed stimuli (pictures of trees) in a coherent order (i.e., trees ordered by seasons) compared to those who saw stimuli in an incoherent order (i.e., trees at random). In another study, participants were shown to have higher momentary experiences of MIL when they were engaged in their daily routines, as such routines help to organise life into comprehensible, organised, and predictable patterns (Heintzelman & King, 2019). Coherence is considered the cognitive component of MIL (Steger, 2016). The sense that one's life has significance or "matters" is described as the affective component of MIL (Steger, 2016) and is considered the most central aspect of MIL (Costin & Vignoles, 2020; George & Park, 2014). Significance in the context of MIL refers to the evaluation of one's life as worthwhile, valuable, and important (George & Park, 2014; Martela & Steger, 2016).

Low MIL is linked to psychological distress (Yalom, 1980), poor well-being (i.e., depression, pessimism, uncontrollable stress, substance abuse, and anxiety; Ryff, 1989; Nicholson et al., 1994; Sørensen et al., 2019), and even psychopathology (Frankl, 1965). The extreme discomfort that lack or crisis of MIL creates can motivate an individual to search and invest in a meaningful mindset, thus pursuing a higher purpose (Schnell, 2009). The search for MIL is one of the strongest motivators of human behaviour.

The presence of MIL is associated with health and positive well-being (Hill & Turiano, 2014; Sørensen et al., 2019; Steger et al., 2009; Thompson et al., 2003), including, happiness, self-esteem, positive affect, and life-satisfaction (Damasio et al., 2013; Keyes et al., 2002; Reker et al., 1987; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Schnell, 2009). Those high (than low) on MIL report better adjustment and adaptive coping following stress (Thompson et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 2003), and report feeling healthier (Steger et al., 2009). MIL has further emerged as predictor of longevity (Hill & Turiano, 2014).

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There are individual differences in the presence of MIL (Zhao et al., 2017). For example, persons high on extraversion (Schnell & Becker, 2006) and self-esteem (Womick et al., 2020) are particularly prone to experience their lives as meaningful. Such persons, then, are more likely to perceive that they understand their purpose in life and feel like they matter. Due to (grandiose) narcissists' high self-esteem (Hyatt et al., 2018b) and extraversion (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Raskin & Terry, 1988a), as well as their positive affect (King et al., 2016), positive psychological functioning (i.e., life-satisfaction, wellbeing), and positive self-beliefs (Park & Colvin, 2014), narcissism is associated with higher MIL, even when controlling for self-esteem (Womick et al., 2019a, 2020). Narcissism is highly correlated with the significance component of MIL (Womick & King, 2021), as narcissists tend to have feelings of self-importance and entitlement (Campbell & Foster, 2007) and believe that their life will have a profound impact on the world (Schaw, 2000). Narcissists' high MIL may also be consequential of their engagement in self-regulatory strategies (Campbell & Foster, 2007) that are related to their self-directed agentic goals of achieving grandiosity. Having such valued goals that direct such agentic strategies are likely to provide narcissists with a sense of purpose (King & Hicks, 2021). Finally, according to Womick et al (2020), narcissists may have high MIL because they view the world as revolved and focused on the self, thus their self-focused self-enhancing and self-protecting strategies may aid them in organising and making sense of their experiences in life. Research has found that all three facets (significance, purpose, & coherence) of MIL help to account for the association between narcissism and MIL (Womick & King, 2021).

MIL is a subjective construct and thus can arise from a variety of sources (Arndt et al., 2013; King & Hicks, 2021; Martela & Steger, 2016). MIL, however, is generally thought to arise from intrinsic aspirations (Kasser et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2013; Schlegel et al., 2009; Schnell, 2011, 2016). These are inherently gratifying and satisfy psychological needs, such as belongingness (Lambert et al., 2013), through maintaining strong relationships, authentic self-expression, or caring for the community. Intrinsic aspirations are associated with better psychological functioning, happiness, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

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Although MIL is associated with high well-being, it is not synonymous with hedonic well-being (Schnell, 2009). Hedonic well-being refers to positive affect (absence of negative affect), enjoyment, pleasure, and absence of pain (Ryan et al., 2008). Achieving extrinsic goals is associated with hedonic well-being (Yamaguchi & Halberstadt, 2008), but according to Schnell (2009), a meaningful life is not necessarily associated with joyful experiences that are free of negative affect. Eudaimonic well-being is a type of well-being that instead comes from an intrinsically worthwhile and complete way of living to the best of one's abilities (Martela & Steger, 2016), involving good deeds, personal growth, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, and purposeful living (Ryan et al., 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989) and is usually a better predictor of a meaningful life (Sun et al., 2023). The idea of eudaimonia is closely aligned to the significance facet of MIL as eudaimonia refers to the ways in which one can experience a life worth living, whereas significance is the experience of a life worth living (Martela & Steger, 2016). The strongest source of meaning that increases the likelihood of a meaningful life is self-transcendence (i.e., connectedness/spirituality; Schnell, 2011). Still, MIL is a subjective experience (King & Hicks, 2021).

It is unlikely that narcissists would get their meaning through such intrinsic goals, as they are low on communal values and motivated largely by agency (Abele & Gebauer, 2018). Indeed, narcissism is negatively associated with intrinsic pursuits, such as helping others or fostering social relationships (Baumeister & Wallace, 2012; Morf et al., 2000).

Narcissists are extrinsically driven (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Extrinsic aspirations are externally motivated, as they are associated with gaining a reward (i.e., money) or attention from others (i.e., fame), and are not pleasurable in the absence of these associated outcomes. Extrinsic aspirations generally predict lower MIL, conversely to intrinsic aspirations (Kashdan & Breen, 2007), and are thought to deter from intrinsic goals (Schlegel et al., 2009). Extrinsic aspirations are also positively associated with poor psychological well-being (Kasser et al., 2007; Sedikides et al., 2013).

There is recent evidence, however, that extrinsic aspirations might give rise to MIL for those who value such goals (i.e., narcissists). Narcissists might instead derive meaning

through extrinsic goals, and in particular from at least three agentic domains—achievement, materialism, reflections of glory (Sedikides et al., 2007)—all of which align with their high agency (Campbell et al., 2002). Extrinsic aspirations should lead to all three aspects of MIL (coherence, significance, and purpose). With regards to coherence, extrinsic motivation may align and be consistent with their perception that they have high status. An extrinsic goal such as conspicuous consumption may give narcissists a sense of coherence because buying luxury products may be a part of their daily routine and it is thought that aspects of daily routines help to organise life into comprehensible, and predictable patterns, that help life to make sense to the person living it (Heintzelman & King, 2019; King et al., 2016). Extrinsic goals may also give narcissists a sense of purpose as they highly value and strive for grandiosity and status. Lastly, extrinsic goals should contribute to making narcissists feel like they are important and matter as such goals align with their agentic values.

Zajenkowski and Czarna (2015) found that narcissism was negatively associated with satisfaction with life at low levels of self-assessed intelligence, which suggests that satisfying agentic motives is a necessary precondition for narcissists' well-being.

Some support for the notion that narcissists may attain MIL through extrinsic goals is also grounded in studies that have focused on nostalgia as a meaning-making resource. Narcissists might gain MIL when longing for past agency (i.e., success) rather than communion (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014), and a study by Hart et al. (2011) found that high (vs. low) narcissists made more agentic nostalgic recollections in an Event Reflection Task, when asked to bring to mind personal nostalgic events. For example, high (vs. low) narcissists described their personal nostalgic event with more agentic (i.e., achieve, competitive, dominant) than communal words (i.e., charitable, thoughtful, understanding). Narcissists were also more likely to derive self-positivity, but not social connectedness from such recollections. This suggests that narcissists' nostalgia may be biased towards agentic goals. However, Bialobrzeska et al. (2023) demonstrated that narcissists gained MIL via increased importance ratings of communion (e.g., love-friendship, unity-togetherness) following a nostalgic Event Reflection Task (vs. control). Having said that, when agency (e.g., status-

victory, self-mastery) was the mediator, nostalgia decreased life meaning through lowered agency among narcissists. Thus, although nostalgia may induce communion rather than agency, even for narcissists, which in turn increases benefits such as MIL, this experiment shows that narcissists MIL is also related to their agency.

The proposal that narcissists attain MIL via extrinsic and agentic goals was further supported by two studies conducted by Abeyta et al. (2017). Study 1 was cross-sectional. Participants rated how meaningful they perceived two extrinsic and intrinsic goals (from the Aspirations Index; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). High (vs. low) narcissists were likely to rate the extrinsic goals of wealth and fame (“to have many expensive possessions” and “to be famous”) as meaningful, suggesting that they regard such goals as meaningful. Study 2 was experimental. The researchers randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions— intrinsic or extrinsic. In both conditions, participants thought about the progress they had made to a personally relevant goal (i.e., earning their university degree). In the intrinsic condition, participants read an essay that framed the value of the degree as contributing to a personally satisfying job, whereas, in the extrinsic condition, participants read an essay that framed the value of the degree as contributing to financial benefits. Participants in the extrinsic condition had higher state MIL than those in the intrinsic condition, but this was only among narcissists. State MIL refers to the measurement of a momentary experience of presence of MIL, whereas dispositional MIL refers to the measurement of an individual’s general level of presence of MIL.

Abeyta et al.’s (2017) findings suggest that narcissists can gain momentary meaning from extrinsic aspirations and provide a useful starting point for future investigation. Extrinsic aspirations are strongly related to conspicuous consumption behaviour (Truong, 2010); thus, it is highly likely that buying flashy, expensive products will imbue a narcissist with meaning, as this would help them with achieving their extrinsic goals (i.e., status, image). Follow-up research, then, will need to assess the extrinsic aspiration of image (Kasser & Ryan, 1996), which is relevant to conspicuous consumption.

Only one study has addressed whether narcissists derive meaning from conspicuous consumption behaviours (Zhu et al., 2021). Zhu et al. (2021) measured, in a cross-sectional, correlational study, the relation between narcissism, conspicuous consumption, MIL, and the specific component or important pre-condition to MIL (Costin & Vignoles, 2020), known as significance (Martela & Steger, 2016; Womick et al., 2020) or external value (Li et al., 2021). Conspicuous consumption was negatively related with MIL and although narcissism was positively related with conspicuous consumption and MIL, conspicuous consumption did not mediate narcissists positive relation with MIL. Further, narcissism was positively related to external value, which positively mediated the positive narcissism-MIL relation. However, narcissists' higher conspicuous consumption was negatively related to their external value. Zhu et al (2021) did not examine whether narcissists conspicuous consumption was related to the other aspects of MIL (coherence and purpose), which have been shown to explain the association between narcissism and MIL (Womick et al., 2020).

There are several issues to be considered when addressing the question 'Do narcissists engage in conspicuous consumption because it provides them with MIL?'. Firstly, MIL is associated with self-esteem, and as narcissistic admiration and rivalry have unique relations to self-esteem (Back et al., 2013), there are likely differences regarding their relation to MIL. Zhu et al. (2021) only included global grandiose agentic (but also vulnerable) narcissism but not admiring and rivalrous forms. Furthermore, conspicuous consumption can be assessed in several ways. For example, research on conspicuous consumption largely relies on the Conspicuous Consumption Orientation Scale (Chaudhuri et al., 2011) and the Conspicuous Consumption Scale (Chen, 2008), which are self-report measures of agreement with social motives for buying luxury products (i.e., "People buy famous brands to make a good impression on others"; Chen, 2008). Zhu et al. (2021) measured conspicuous consumption via the conspicuous consumption scale (Chen, 2009; Marcoux, 1997). Although these scales are useful for measuring attitudes and views, measured attitudes do not always reflect real behaviour due to biases such as socially desirable responding (Hart et

al., 2015). Finally, an issue with self-report measures of conspicuous consumption is that only dispositional (general levels) and not state MIL could be measured, thus momentary experiences of MIL was not captured.

1.7 Present Research

The aim of this thesis is to examine whether conspicuous consumption is a source of MIL for narcissists. Narcissists might benefit psychologically from conspicuous consumption if it can provide them with MIL. Perhaps conspicuous consumption is not associated with lower subjective well-being (Linssen et al., 2011) among narcissists with agentic values. Conspicuous consumption might also help narcissists with their short-term mating strategy (Campbell, 1999; Campbell et al., 2002; Collins et al., 2015). Yet, conspicuous consumption has also adverse implications, including financial debt (Greenberg et al., 2020; LaRose & Eastin, 2002; Pettit & Sivanathan, 2011), pollution, and exploitation of the planets resources (Hirschnitz-Garbers et al., 2016; O’Neill et al., 2018).

I propose that narcissists derive MIL from conspicuous consumption. Symbolic purchases imply material wealth and are likely to attract rewards or positive evaluation from others (i.e., fame). Symbolic purchases, then, are likely to elevate narcissists’ social status and accentuate their specialness and exceptionalism (Sedikides et al., 2013). Narcissists are self-centred, have an exalted sense of self-importance, and desire to establish their superiority over others (Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). Therefore, purchasing symbolic products that align with their desire for superiority and status will afford them MIL. Utilitarian purchases, on the other hand, satisfy practicality, similarity to others, and maintaining social bonds or belongingness. A communal orientation, though, is not considered important by narcissists (Campbell et al., 2002). So, the purchase of utilitarian products will misalign with the narcissistic desire for superiority and status and will fail to increase MIL.

I will address the questions ‘What provides narcissists with MIL?’ and ‘Does conspicuous consumption provide narcissists with MIL?’ in five correlational and

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experimental studies. In cross-sectional Study 1 (Chapter 2), I will measure narcissism, various extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations (i.e., sources of meaning), and dispositional presence of MIL. This study can provide insights on what generally gives narcissists MIL. Furthermore, I will distinguish between the presence and search of MIL, and consider the difference between state (i.e., in the moment) and dispositional (i.e., stable) measures of MIL. Although Abeyta et al. (2017) assessed the degree to which narcissists find extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations meaningful, they did so only at the state level. Although I measure dispositional presence of MIL in Study 1 to assess narcissists' general levels of presence of MIL, in all other studies, I measure state MIL, to determine what happens to narcissists' momentary experience of presence of MIL following conspicuous consumption. The measurement of state MIL is useful for understanding whether narcissists' behaviour of conspicuous consumption contributes to their temporary fulfilment of meaning. This will shed light on the degree to which narcissists are motivated to engage in conspicuous consumption, as striving for meaning is potentially one of our most fundamental human motivations (Frankl, 1969). In cross-sectional Study 2 (Chapter 3), I will test whether narcissistic preferences for symbolic (vs. utilitarian) products mediate their state presence of MIL. This study builds upon the previous one by assessing (via consumer decision-making paradigm), the meaning associated with an extrinsic aspiration of conspicuous consumption. In experimental Study 3 (Chapter 4), I will test whether conspicuous consumption, as measured by the same consumer decision-making paradigm, increases state presence of MIL. The manipulation will involve blocking (vs. not) the ability to conspicuously consume.

Further, in experimental Study 4 (Chapter 5), I will test whether the manipulation of presence of MIL (i.e., threatened, affirmed, or control) increases the number of symbolic products preferred and the amount willing to spend on them (i.e., using the same consumer decision-making paradigm). If narcissists gain MIL via conspicuous consumption, then temporarily fulfilling this need would reduce their preference and willingness to spend on symbolic products, compared to the control or threat condition. Temporarily threatening this

need would increase their preference and willingness to spend on symbolic products.

Finally, in cross-sectional Study 5 (Chapter 6), I will examine narcissistic preferences for symbolic (vs. utilitarian) by asking participants to recall a recent product they have purchased and their motivations for purchasing it. This measure of conspicuous consumption is high in mundane realism, as it asks participants to report on real products that they have recently bought (i.e., personally relevant). This will also test whether narcissists' symbolic preferences are socially motivated and thus represent conspicuous consumption. The state measure of presence of MIL will follow. Finally, across studies, I will examine the relevance for conspicuous consumption not only of narcissism (assessed via the NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), but also of the two facets of narcissism, admiration, and rivalry (assessed via the NARQ; Back et al., 2013). I expect for all forms of narcissism will be positively associated with conspicuous consumption.

Conspicuous consumption can have negative consequences at the intrapersonal level (poor psychological wellbeing; Kasser et al., 2007; Sedikides et al., 2013), interpersonal level (i.e., individuals who conspicuously consume are less preferred as new friends; Garcia et al., 2019), and environmental level (i.e., contributes to pollution and exploitation of resources; Hirschnitz-Garbers et al., 2016; McFall-Johnsen, 2019, 2020; O'Neill et al., 2018). With reports suggesting that younger generations are becoming even more narcissistic (i.e., generation Me) and that nearly half of the luxury consumer market in 2025 will be occupied by younger generations (Neave & Fastoso, 2020), it is important to understand how deeply rooted this behaviour is for narcissistic individuals.

If I find that narcissists do gain MIL partly through their symbolic purchases, then strategies aimed at curtailing such behaviours can be developed and tested in future. There is some evidence to suggest that narcissistic consumers might be flexible to change, and therefore could be "rehabilitated." In particular, experimental research successfully increased relational commitment in narcissists following cognitive activation of communal attributes (Finkel et al., 2009). Hepper et al. (2014) also demonstrated that the negative links between maladaptive narcissism and empathy was ameliorated by instructions to take the

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perspective of a target person. Such evidence provides hope at curtailing narcissists conspicuous and compulsive buying, even though it has not been tested in a consumer context.

Chapter 2 Study 1 – Sources of Meaning and the Presence of Meaning in Life for Narcissists

Finding MIL is crucial to well-being. Therefore, striving for and achieving goals that are perceived as valuable and lead to a meaningful existence is a powerful motivation of human behaviour. Narcissists are particularly driven by extrinsic goals such as fame, wealth, and image, and are more likely to perceive these goals as more meaningful. No research has tested the contribution of the admiration versus rivalry form or whether investment in extrinsic goals is associated with dispositional MIL.

In this chapter, I examine a range of aspirations (i.e., extrinsic, agentic, intrinsic, communal) and test whether extrinsic aspirations can provide narcissists with MIL (Schlegel et al., 2011; Schnell, 2011; 2016; Stillman et al., 2010). High (vs. low) narcissists might derive MIL from extrinsic aspirations. Support for this proposal would suggest that extrinsic behaviours, such as conspicuous consumption, are conducive to the well-being of narcissists. However, if extrinsic aspirations are not connected with MIL, then conspicuous consumption might be detrimental to narcissists' well-being, especially given that investment in extrinsic aspirations (i.e., fame, wealth, and image) often reduces investment in intrinsic aspirations (i.e., personal growth, community, and relationships; Schlegel et al., 2009), which are thought to be largely predictive of MIL (Kasser et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2013; Schlegel et al., 2009; Schnell, 2011, 2016).

This study will help to establish the relation between narcissism, as well as the forms of narcissistic admiration and rivalry, with various aspirations and MIL. Admiration and rivalry are related but distinct approaches towards achieving a grandiose self. I expect them to have distinct relations with MIL, as they have contrasting associations with other measures of well-being. Regardless of whether extrinsic aspirations can provide narcissists with MIL, this study will serve as the foundation of this programme of research.

2.1 Narcissism and Extrinsic Motivation

Narcissists are typically associated with an inflated self-concept in agentic (i.e., extraversion, intelligence, status, physical attractiveness), but not communal domains (i.e., agreeableness, morality, warmth, trustworthiness; Thomaes et al., 2018; Sedikides, 2021b). As a result of narcissists' high agency, they are extrinsically driven. That is, they are materialistic, vain, attention-seeking, exhibitionistic, dominant individuals, who love to be centre of attention and feel superior (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Krizan & Bushman, 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Sedikides, 2021). They are heavily motivated to self-enhance and protect their self-perceived grandiosity, and bloated self-esteem (Campbell & Foster, 2007). These efforts manifest in self-regulatory strategies (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), such as showing off (with trophy partners, for example), bragging about accomplishments, and buying luxury products (Buss & Chiodo, 1991; Campbell et al., 2002; DeWall et al., 2011; Sedikides et al., 2007). These strategies often benefit the self, but not others (Mc-Fall Johnson, 2020; Sundie et al., 2011). For example, self-enhancement predicts psychological health (Sedikides et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2003), however, narcissists have little investment in intrinsic aspirations such as warm or caring relationships with others (Campbell et al., 2002; Finkel et al., 2009; Koehn et al., 2018; Wurst et al., 2017). Therefore, narcissists tend to prioritise extrinsic over intrinsic aspirations. For instance, getting ahead is more important than getting along and narcissists are willing to tread on others for personal gains (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992). This is likely facilitated by their low levels of empathy (Burgmer et al., 2019; Hepper et al., 2014; Watson & Morris., 1991).

Despite a narcissist's propensity toward extrinsic and agentic aspirations, narcissism is associated with higher MIL (Womick et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021), and has repeatedly been associated with psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and reduced depression (Giacomin & Jordan, 2019; Papageorgiou et al., 2019; Thomaes & Sedikides, 2016).

Narcissists also have high explicit self-esteem (Gregg & Sedikides, 2010), which is a strong predictor of MIL (Du et al., 2017; Gori et al., 2022). Researchers have pointed out however,

that although both narcissists and those high in self-esteem think well of themselves, the distinction between them is that narcissists think they are superior to others, whereas those high in self-esteem think of themselves as worthy (Brummelman et al., 2016). Narcissists high self-esteem is only relevant for their agentic but not communal traits (Campbell et al., 2002), which reflects the fact that they highly value agency and devalue communion. Perhaps narcissists can gain MIL through domains that provide them with higher self-esteem and therefore agency. Indeed, narcissists are more likely to derive higher state MIL from extrinsic aspirations (Abeyta et al., 2017).

2.2 Sources of Meaning in Life

MIL is associated with good health and positive psychological well-being (Steger et al., 2009; Sørensen et al., 2019; Hill & Turiano, 2014). The discomfort caused by a lack of meaning often strongly motivates individuals to seek and invest in a meaningful mind set, pursuing a higher purpose (Schnell, 2009).

MIL is often measured with the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006), which includes two subscales pertaining to the presence of, and search for, MIL. The presence of MIL refers to the extent to which a person has made sense of and feels significance regarding the nature of their own being and existence (Steger et al., 2006). The search for MIL refers to the desire to find meaning in one's life. These two subscales represent distinct and independent constructs and therefore high scores on these constructs can coexist. Although a lack of MIL may create a desire to search for MIL, a person may have a high presence of MIL and still strive to expand their current sources of MIL or gain a deeper understanding of what already gives their life meaning (Steger et al., 2006). From here on, I will use MIL to refer to presence of MIL. Furthermore, the Meaning in Life Questionnaire can be used either as a state or trait measure of MIL.

Meaning can arise from a variety of sources (Arndt et al., 2013) and is largely subjective depending on the goals, values, and experiences of the individual. In general, however, the experience of meaning is positively related to intrinsic rather than extrinsic

aspirations or goals (Grouden & Jose, 2015; Kasser et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2013; Schlegel et al., 2009; Weinstein et al., 2012). Intrinsic aspirations are gratifying and meet psychological needs (e.g., belongingness authentic self-expression, personal growth). Also, intrinsic aspirations are also associated with higher psychological functioning and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002; Martos & Kopp, 2012; Sheldon et al., 2004), as well as quality of performance (Cerasoli et al., 2014).

Extrinsic aspirations refer to reaping an external reward (e.g., financial success) or social attention (e.g., fame, power). Such aspirations are not internally gratifying, as they are not pleasurable in the absence of associated outcomes. Although extrinsic aspirations are a strong predictor of performance quantity (not quality; Cerasoli et al., 2014), they are associated with low well-being (Bradshaw et al., 2023; Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Kasser et al., 2007). An example of an extrinsic aspiration is when a person strives for a career in a subjectively boring field to receive a higher salary in return. An example of an intrinsic aspiration is where a person chooses a career because of genuine interest in the work itself and not because of the salary. Extrinsic (but not intrinsic) aspirations predict lower MIL (Kashdan & Breen, 2007) and are thought to reduce interest in intrinsic aspirations (Schlegel et al., 2009).

Limited research has addressed the individual differences in the sources (intrinsic and/or extrinsic aspirations) that give rise to meaning. It is common to have a range of intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations (Grouzet et al., 2005; Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002), as well as a diverse range of sources of meaning (Schnell, 2011). Extrinsic aspirations may only become problematic for well-being when they are disproportionately prioritised. The extent to which an extrinsic aspiration is prioritised over an intrinsic aspiration (and vice-versa) and whether such prioritisations can give rise to MIL, is likely to vary according to certain personality traits. For example, narcissists are mostly motivated by extrinsic aspirations (Campbell & Foster, 2007), yet they tend to have high MIL (Womick et al., 2020).

2.3 Narcissism and Sources of Meaning in Life

Abeyta et al (2017) found, in a between-subjects experiment, that state MIL among narcissists (assessed via the state version of the MIL Questionnaire; Steger et al., 2006) increased after participants read information about a personally relevant goal pursuit (i.e., university degree) that emphasised an extrinsic (i.e., financially beneficial) as opposed to an intrinsic value (i.e., personal fulfilment). Among narcissists, state MIL was higher in the extrinsic condition and lower in the intrinsic condition, suggesting that narcissists can derive meaning via extrinsic and agentic aspirations. Also, low narcissists had higher MIL when primed with intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic aspirations, mirroring the well-established link between intrinsic (but not extrinsic) aspirations and higher MIL (Kashdan & Breen, 2007).

Additionally, in a cross-sectional study by Abeyta et al (2017), high (than low) narcissists were more likely to explicitly rate extrinsic goals that related to the aspirations of 'wealth' and 'fame' as meaningful. Overall, however, narcissists rated intrinsic aspirations (i.e., 'community,' 'relationships') as more meaningful than extrinsic aspirations (i.e., wealth, fame). This finding was unexpected, as narcissists tend to prioritise agency over communion (Campbell et al., 2007; Watson & Morris, 1991). The authors raised the possibility that narcissists respond in a socially desirable manner, knowing that community and relationships are recognised culturally as meaningful. Narcissism, however (at least as measured by the forced-choice response format of the NPI), is negatively correlated with impression management (Hart et al., 2015; Sedikides et al., 2004). That is, narcissists do not feel the need to, be accepted or adjust their views to suit the experimenter. Thus, these findings likely reflect narcissists' true preferences. More recent studies provide good evidence however that narcissism is positively associated with socially desirable responding (Brunell & Buelow, 2019; Kowalski et al., 2018).

Abeyta et al. (2017) also suggested that narcissists might perceive relationships as beneficial, but only for their agency, rather than their communion. This suggestion highlights a flaw with the validity of this explicit measure of meaning. Although they can be categorised

as extrinsic or intrinsic, it is unknown whether the underlying motive for those aspirations are also extrinsic or intrinsic, respectively. For example, an individual may report that they find wealth to be meaningful. This could reflect an underlying motivation of materialism and the desire to buy lots of things, but it could equally reflect the motivation of having enough money to support loved ones. It is also possible that although narcissists may rate intrinsic aspirations as meaningful, these aspirations might not provide them with an actual increase in state MIL, like extrinsic goals can. This notion is supported in their (previously described) experiment.

In summary, Abeyta et al. (2017) demonstrated that narcissism is related to the perception of extrinsic aspirations as meaningful. For those high (than low) on narcissism, the meaningfulness of extrinsic aspirations is rated closer to the meaningfulness of intrinsic aspirations. These authors also found that narcissism was positively related to higher state MIL following an extrinsic, as opposed to intrinsic, goal. Although narcissists perceived intrinsic goals to be meaningful, extrinsic goals were more effective at increasing MIL, implying that narcissists can gain MIL from extrinsic goals, at least in the short-term.

However, little is known whether narcissists' extrinsic aspirations are associated with dispositional (as opposed to state) MIL and its related positive wellbeing (Debats et al., 1993; Hicks & King, 2007, 2021; Sørensen et al., 2019). Dispositional MIL refers to trait-level MIL, suggesting a more consistent, robust, and long-lasting presence of meaning, than daily within-person fluctuations of MIL captured by the state MIL measure (Newman et al., 2018).

Werner et al. (2019) replicated Abeyta et al.'s (2017) correlational study, but instead of examining individual aspirations (i.e., The Aspirations Index; Kasser & Ryan, 1996), they (1) averaged the aspirations to create overall intrinsic and overall extrinsic aspiration indices, and (2) created a Relative Extrinsic Value Orientation (REVO) index by subtracting the intrinsic items average from the extrinsic items average. They also included the extrinsic aspiration of 'image', as this is theoretically and empirically related to narcissism, and highly correlated with the other extrinsic aspirations, and the intrinsic aspiration of 'personal growth.' Werner et al. found that narcissists were more likely to perceive extrinsic aspirations

as more, and intrinsic aspirations as less, meaningful, which is compatible with the theorised narcissistic personality structure (i.e., they value agency over communion; Campbell & Foster, 2007). This contrasts with Abeyta et al.'s (2017) correlational findings, where narcissists rated intrinsic goals as more meaningful than extrinsic goals. Therefore, there are inconsistent findings for narcissists' perceptions of extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations as meaningful.

Werner et al. (2019) highlighted that it is difficult to estimate whether any person would derive MIL from these aspiration questions alone, because asking about the meaningfulness of a goal is essentially asking how important that goal is to them (i.e., important and meaningfulness questions were highly correlated). Furthermore, they suggested that, if a goal is important or meaningful to a person, this will not necessarily translate into positive benefits such as dispositional MIL. Therefore, Werner et al. also tested whether narcissists' perceived meaningfulness of extrinsic aspirations resulted in lower well-being. Narcissists perceived extrinsic (relative to intrinsic) goals as more meaningful, which in turn was negatively associated with both subjective and eudaimonic well-being and was positively associated with depression. Extrinsic aspirations were negatively associated with well-being, even for narcissists (similar, to previous findings when not controlling for narcissism). This finding is consistent with self-determination theory, which proposes that extrinsic goals do not predict well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Therefore, although narcissists might gain state MIL from extrinsic aspirations (Abeyta et al.'s [2017] experimental findings), this might not translate into high well-being despite valuing these aspirations. Werner et al. (2019) did not measure dispositional MIL. Regardless, the findings suggests that extrinsic goals might not provide long-lasting well-being and meaning for narcissists.

But why is higher narcissism often positively associated with dispositional MIL and high well-being, when narcissists seem to disproportionately value extrinsic as opposed to intrinsic aspirations (Schnell, 2009). An answer might lie in the inconsistencies of relevant studies (Abeyta et al., 2017; Werner et al., 2019). These inconsistencies might be due to the

fact these authors did not examine the forms of narcissism, such as admiration and rivalry (Back et al. 2013). Although both admiration and rivalry are motivated by agency, Admiration involves self-enhancement, whereas rivalry involves self-protection.

Admiration and rivalry forms are correlated but have distinct inter- and intrapersonal consequences. Specifically, admiration is associated with better adjustment, psychological well-being, self-esteem (Burgmer et al., 2019; Leckelt et al., 2019), self-improvement, and prosocial behaviours (Martin et al., 2019), whereas rivalry is associated with lower empathy, self-esteem, and subjective well-being (Back et al., 2013; Burgmer et al., 2019; Leckelt et al., 2018, 2019). The difference in self-esteem between admiration and rivalry may be due to admiring narcissists believing that they have high status, whereas rivalrous narcissists believing they have low status (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). Admiration is considered a narcissistic default mode, with rivalry developing when a narcissist consistently perceives a lack of admiration over time. Rivalrous narcissists therefore experience high levels of social conflict (Back et al., 2013; Cheshure et al., 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). Hence, although both admiration and rivalry are driven by agency, rivalry largely accounts for lack of communion. In addition, rivalry overlaps strongly with vulnerable narcissism (Back et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2014). Rivalry and vulnerable narcissism predict having fragile self-esteem, whereas admiration predicts optimal self-esteem (Rogoza et al., 2018). Therefore, previously positive associations between narcissism (NPI) and well-being might have been driven by admiration rather than narcissistic rivalry.

2.4 The Current Study

In this study, I will examine the relation among, narcissism, meaning perceptions of extrinsic, agentic, intrinsic, and communal aspirations, and whether these perceptions are related to higher dispositional MIL.

In Abeyta et al. (2017), the difference in MIL derived from extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations was smaller for high than low narcissists. High (vs. low) narcissists, then, may consider both extrinsic and intrinsic goals meaningful. However, in Werner et al. (2019),

narcissism was associated with higher MIL derived from extrinsic relative to intrinsic aspirations. Therefore, with this study, I aim to tackle these inconsistencies from the existing literature.

Additionally, Werner et al. (2019) found that narcissists' extrinsic aspirations were negatively related to well-being. Although MIL is positively associated with well-being (Steger et al., 2009; Sørensen et al., 2019; Hill & Turiano, 2014), and extrinsic aspirations are negatively associated with well-being, it is unknown whether extrinsic aspirations relative to intrinsic aspirations can give rise to dispositional MIL for narcissists. Considering that extrinsic aspirations negatively predict well-being, even for narcissists, I predict that extrinsic aspirations are negatively associated with dispositional MIL.

The previously found positive association between narcissism and dispositional MIL (Womick et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021) may be explained by the more adaptive side of narcissism: admiring narcissists are more likely to value intrinsic and communal aspirations and have better psychological functioning (Burgmer et al., 2019; Leckelt et al., 2019), whereas rivalrous narcissists predict are more likely to have lower well-being (Back et al., 2013; Burgmer et al., 2019; Leckelt et al. 2017; Wetzel & Back, 2019). Unlike Abeyta et al. (2017) and Werner et al. (2019), who only measured overall narcissism (via the NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), I will test the narcissistic forms of admiration and rivalry as well.

Furthermore, Abeyta et al. (2017) and Werner et al. (2019) only used an explicit measure of sources of MIL (i.e., the Aspirations Index; Kasser & Ryan, 1996) to measure sources of MIL. Schnell (2009) argued that conscious notions of meaningful experiences may be influenced by the sources of meaning that are highly valued by society and thus easily come to mind. Schnell created a Sources of Meaning and Meaning in life Questionnaire (SOME) based on a laddering technique to capture implicit sources of meaning. Therefore, to measure sources of MIL I used both the explicit (i.e., aspirations Index) and implicit (i.e., SOME) scales.

2.4.1 Hypothesis 1: Narcissism and Meaning Ratings of Extrinsic Aspirations

Consistent with Abeyta et al. (2017) and Werner et al. (2019) findings, I hypothesise that narcissism will be positively related to meaningfulness in the case of extrinsic aspirations. Also, I hypothesise that admiration and rivalry will be positively associated with meaningfulness in the case of extrinsic aspirations.

- **H1a:** Narcissists will regard extrinsic aspirations as highly meaningful (Replication)
- **H1b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will regard extrinsic aspirations as highly meaningful (New)

2.4.2 Hypothesis 2: Narcissism and Meaning ratings of Intrinsic Aspirations

Consistent with Abeyta et al.'s (2017) findings, I hypothesise that narcissism will be positively related to meaningfulness in the case of intrinsic aspirations. Admiration will be associated with having a communal and agentic orientation toward one's relationships, whereas rivalry will be unassociated with either orientation (Sauls & Zeigler-Hill, 2020).

- **H2a:** Narcissists will regard intrinsic aspirations as highly meaningful (Replication)
- **H2b:** Admirative (but not rivalrous) narcissists will not regard intrinsic aspirations as highly meaningful (New)

2.4.3 Extension of Hypotheses 1 and 2

To assess meaningfulness of extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations, I used the aspiration items from the Aspirations Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) and (similarly to Abeyta et al., 2017, and Werner et al., 2019) I adjusted the question for each item to 'how meaningful is this goal to you?'. This was an explicit measure of MIL. I also used Schnell's Sources of Meaning and Meaning in life Questionnaire (SOME) to capture implicit sources of meaning. I will repeat the previously stated hypotheses in relation to this measure.

- **H1c:** Narcissists will endorse agentic aspirations
- **H1d:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will endorse agentic aspirations
- **H2c:** Narcissists will endorse communal aspirations
- **H2d:** Admirative (but not rivalrous) narcissists will endorse communal aspirations

2.4.4 Hypothesis 3: Do Narcissists Perceive Extrinsic Aspirations as More Meaningful than Intrinsic Aspirations

I hypothesise that narcissism will be positively associated with higher MIL derived from extrinsic than intrinsic aspirations (as in Werner et al.). I will obtain this pattern among rivalrous narcissists, as they will be relatively invested in extrinsic than intrinsic aspirations. Admirative narcissists will manifest smaller differences in MIL derived from extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations.

- **H3a:** Narcissists will exhibit higher MIL derived from extrinsic relative to intrinsic aspirations (Replication)
- **H3b:** Rivalrous (relative to admirative) narcissists will exhibit higher MIL derived from extrinsic than intrinsic aspirations (New)

2.4.5 Hypothesis 4: Narcissism and MIL

Narcissism and narcissists admiration is associated with positive psychological well-being and self-esteem (Back et al., 2013; Burgmer et al., 2019; Leckelt et al., 2017; Wetzel & Back, 2019). Narcissistic rivalry is associated with lower psychological well-being (Back et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2014). I expect to replicate the positive relation between narcissism and MIL among admirative narcissists, but to find the opposite pattern among rivalrous narcissists.

- **H4a:** Narcissism will have higher MIL (Replication)
- **H4b:** Admirative narcissists will have higher, and rivalrous narcissists lower, MIL (New)

2.4.6 Hypothesis 5: Extrinsic/Agentic and Intrinsic/Communal Aspirations as Mediators of the Relation Between Narcissism and MIL

Although narcissists might gain state MIL from extrinsic/agentic aspirations (Abeyta et al., 2017), I hypothesise that these aspirations will not be linked to dispositional MIL. I also hypothesize that dispositional MIL will only be linked positively to intrinsic and communal aspirations. Further, narcissistic admiration will be positively associated with dispositional MIL via higher intrinsic and communal aspirations, whereas narcissistic rivalry will be negatively associated with dispositional MIL via higher extrinsic and agentic aspirations.

- **H5a:** Narcissists will have report MIL via intrinsic and communal aspirations, but not via extrinsic and agentic aspirations (New)
- **H5b:** Admirative narcissists will report higher MIL via intrinsic and communal aspirations, but not via extrinsic and agentic aspirations (New)
- **H5c:** Rivalrous narcissists will report lower MIL via extrinsic and agentic aspirations, but not via intrinsic and communal aspirations (New)

I will test these hypotheses twice, once with an explicit measure (Aspirations Index) of extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations (mediators) and once with an implicit measure (SOME) of agentic and communal aspirations (mediators).

2.5 Method

2.5.1 Participants

I advertised the study, titled 'Personality and Life', on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter) and on Call4Participants for participants over the age of 18 and fluent in English. Participants completed the study in exchange for the chance to win one of two £25 Amazon vouchers in a prize draw. I also recruited University of Southampton undergraduates for course credit.

In total, 385 participants completed the study. The a priori exclusion criteria were: (1) having more than 10% missing data (Bennett; 2001), (2) completing the study in under 15 minutes, (3) incorrectly responding to all attention check (there were three of them: e.g., ‘Please tick number 4’; Oppenheimer et al., 2009), and (4) providing invariant responses (e.g., ‘1,1,1,1,1). I excluded 122 participants based on the criteria 1 and 2. The final sample ($n = 263$) consisted of 224 female, 37 male, and 2 undisclosed gender participants. Participants’ age ranged from 18 to 69 years ($M = 25.24$, $SD = 10.36$), and 53.5% of them were full-time students¹. Most participants were Caucasian (83%; 0.4% Hispanic, 2.7% Indian, 1.2%, Pakistani, 0.4% Bangladeshi, 1.2% Chinese, 2.7% were any other Asian background, 1.2% African, 1.2% White & Asian, 1.2% White & Black Caribbean, 1.2% White & Asian, 0.4% White & Hispanic, 1.9% any other mixed background, 2.7% other ethnic group [Arab, Cypriot, Sri Lankan Tamil]). Regarding employment, 20.4% of participants were employed (and 1.2% self-employed) full-time, 18.8% were employed part-time, and the rest were not employed.

An a priori Monte Carlo simulation was conducted to determine the suitable sample size needed as this is the best practice for determining sample size in mediation models (Schoemann et al., 2017). The simulation was specifically tailored to a parallel multiple mediation model, which was the most complex analysis within this study. It was conducted using 10,000 iterations, with a standard significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), and desired power of 0.80. Results indicated that a sample size of 480 would be sufficient to achieve 80% power. This suggests that this study is significantly underpowered, as the analyses were conducted using only 263 participants. However, Kline (2005) recommends 20 participants per parameter, which is a less conservative approach. There are 5 parameters in the most

¹ As half of participants were full-time students, and recent students may be more narcissistic than previous generations (Wetzel et al., 2017), I conducted an independent samples t-test to compare levels of narcissism scores between full-time students and non-students. Levels of narcissism did not differ between full-time students ($M = 9.43$, $SD = 5.75$) and non-students ($M = 9.40$, $SD = 6.27$), $t(258) = 0.04$, $p = .483$. Additionally, there were no differences between full-time students and non-students on admiration ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.23$ vs. $M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.33$; $t[258] = 0.25$, $p = .401$), rivalry ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.02$ vs. $M = .64$, $SD = 1.09$; $t[258] = -0.40$, $p = .343$), MIL ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.63$ vs. $M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.78$; $t[258] = -0.54$, $p = .296$), and meaningfulness ($M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.40$ vs. $M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.40$; $t[258] = 0.07$, $p = .471$).

complex analysis (i.e., admiration, rivalry, extrinsic aspirations, intrinsic aspirations, MIL).

There are 52 participants per parameter in this study.

2.5.2 Procedure and Measures

The study took on average 30 minutes to complete. First, participants read an information sheet before consenting to take part in the online survey (via Qualtrics). Participants then responded to demographic questions, followed by measures of narcissism and measures of the putative outcomes. Lastly, participants were debriefed and compensated for their time (i.e., entered into the prize draw).

2.5.2.1 Narcissism

Participants completed two measures of narcissism in a separate random order. The first was the 40-item NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988). For each item, participants could choose between a pair of statements—one indicating high (“I like to be the centre of attention”) and another low (“I prefer to blend in with the crowd”) narcissism. I coded narcissistic responses as 1 and non-narcissistic responses as 0. The number of narcissistic choices constituted the final score.

The second measure was the 18-item (NARQ; Back et al., 2013), which produces separate scores for admiring and rivalrous narcissists. Each subscale comprises nine items (1 = *very uncharacteristic or untrue*, 8 = *very characteristic or true*). An example of an admiration item is “I show others how special I am,” and an example of a rivalry item is “I enjoy it when another person is inferior to me”. I averaged responses to each subscale to compute admiration and rivalry scores.

2.5.2.2 Sources of Meaning in Life

I used the Aspirations Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996), an explicit measure of aspirations and the Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (SOME; Schnell, 2016) as an implicit measure of aspirations.

2.5.2.2.1 Aspirations Index

Three of the subscales in the Aspirations Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) represent intrinsically motivated aspirations (i.e., personal growth, community, relationships), and three capture extrinsically motivated aspirations (i.e., fame, wealth, image). Further, the Aspirations Index included five statements relating to goals toward achieving each overarching aspiration, and participants rated the personal meaningfulness of each goal (i.e., “how meaningful is this goal to you?”; 1 = *not at all*, 8 = *very much so*). For example, the aspiration of wealth included statements such as “To be a very wealthy person” and “To be rich.” The aspiration of relationships included statements such as “to have committed intimate relationships” and “to share my life with someone I love.” I averaged responses to the relevant statements to create meaning scores for three extrinsic (fame, wealth, image) and three intrinsic (personal growth, community, relationships) variables.

In addition to the individual aspiration variables, I computed overall extrinsic and intrinsic variables. For example, I averaged all of the individual extrinsic aspirations variables (i.e., fame, wealth, image) to create one ‘overall extrinsic aspirations’ variable. I repeated this process for the intrinsic aspirations. Similarly to Werner and colleagues (2019), I also calculated a relative extrinsic value orientation (REVO) variable by subtracting the average of all intrinsic aspirations from the average of all the extrinsic aspirations; so higher scores indicate that participants considered extrinsic goals to be more meaningful.

2.5.2.2.2 Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire

The SOME is a 151-item inventory that allows for a highly differentiated implicit measurement of 26 sources of meaning identified by Schnell (2009) via a laddering interview technique. The validity of SOME has been demonstrated in numerous studies (Hoof, 2010; Schnell, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Schnell & Becker, 2006, 2007; Schnell & Hoof, 2012; Schnell & Keenan, 2011).

The 26 sources of meaning are grouped into overarching categories of self-actualisation (**achievement**, challenge, creativity, development, freedom, **individualism**,

knowledge, **power**), self-transcendence (explicit religiosity, spirituality, generativity, health, self-knowledge, **social commitment**, unison with nature), well-being and relatedness (attentiveness, **care**, comfort, community, fun, **harmony**, love), and order (morality, practicality, tradition). There are many sources of meaning in this scale, but, for the purpose of this study, I selected six relevant aspirations. Three of them (achievement, individualism, power), all within the self-actualisation meaning category, reflected agentic aspirations. Another three (social commitment, care, harmony), all within the self-transcendence and well-being and relatedness categories, reflected intrinsic and communal aspirations. Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 8 (*strongly agree*). An example for achievement is 'I need to produce excellent results,' and an example for care is 'I am always thinking of how I can make other people happy.' I averaged responses to the relevant statements to create three agentic (achievement, individualism, power) and three communal (care, commitment, harmony) variables. In addition to the individual aspiration variables, I computed overall agentic and communal variables. For example, I averaged achievement, individualism, and power scores to create an 'overall agentic aspirations' variable, and I averaged care, harmony, and social commitment scores to create an 'overall communal aspirations' variable.

2.5.2.3 Presence of Meaning in Life and Search for Meaning

I used the original dispositional version of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006). This is a 10-item questionnaire with two dimensions: Five items refer to MIL (1 = *strongly disagree*, 8 = *strongly agree*). A sample item for MIL is "I understand my life's meaning." I computed MIL scores by averaging across the relevant five items.

The SOME (Schnell, 2009) provides a separate measure for meaningfulness. The meaningfulness scale is made of five items that are similar to that of the presence of MIL items. Two sample items for the meaningfulness scale are 'I lead a fulfilled life,' and 'I think my life has a deeper meaning'.

2.6 Results

2.6.1 Variables and Scale Reliability

I computed 24 variables for the analyses. These were: narcissism (NPI; independent variable), narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry (NARQ), three individual extrinsic aspirations (i.e., fame, wealth, image), overall extrinsic aspiration, three intrinsic aspirations (i.e., fame, wealth, image), overall intrinsic aspiration, three agentic aspirations (i.e., power, achievement, individualism), overall agentic aspirations, three communal aspirations (i.e., care, harmony, social commitment), overall communal aspirations, REVO (i.e., extrinsic minus intrinsic aspirations), MIL, meaningfulness.

Most scales were internally reliable with a Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1953) value greater than .70, except for power, individualism, social commitment, harmony, and impression management that had a Cronbach's alpha greater than .60 (Table 2.1). All scales were within the acceptable boundaries for skewness (i.e., -2 and +2) and kurtosis (i.e., -7 and +7; Bryne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2.1*Descriptive Statistics in Study 1*

Measure (Scale)	M(SD)	Min-Max	Skew	Kurtosis	α
Narcissism	9.41 (5.99)	0.00 – 27.00	0.68	-0.07	.84
Narcissistic Admiration	3.66 (1.28)	1.00 – 7.56	0.31	-0.41	.85
Narcissistic Rivalry	2.42 (1.05)	1.00 – 5.22	0.78	-0.27	.82
Explicit					
Overall Extrinsic Aspirations	3.34 (1.31)	1.00 – 7.67	0.48	-0.08	.91
Fame	2.65 (1.46)	1.00 – 7.40	1.00	0.50	.87
Wealth	3.89 (1.61)	1.00 – 8.00	0.28	-0.50	.87
Image	3.49 (1.58)	1.00 – 8.00	0.33	-0.43	.81
Implicit					
Overall Agentic Aspirations	5.60 (8.88)	3.09 – 7.78	-0.16	-0.20	.72
Power	5.24 (1.10)	1.80 – 8.00	-0.22	-0.10	.65
Achievement	5.73 (1.22)	2.00 – 8.00	-0.34	-0.29	.71
Individualism	5.83 (0.96)	2.83 – 8.00	-0.23	-0.24	.64
Explicit					
Overall Intrinsic Aspirations	6.77 (0.88)	2.07 – 8.00	-1.17	2.67	.88
Personal Growth	6.63 (1.05)	2.80 – 8.00	-0.72	-0.01	.73
Community	6.52 (1.22)	1.20 – 8.00	-1.09	1.72	.86
Relationship	7.15 (1.04)	1.00 – 8.00	-2.06	6.31	.83
Implicit					
Overall Communal Aspirations	6.03 (0.79)	1.25 – 7.80	-1.21	5.74	.64
Care	6.54 (1.03)	1.75 – 8.00	-1.11	2.33	.75
Harmony	5.33 (1.66)	1.00 – 8.00	-0.53	-0.23	.84
Social Commitment	5.62 (1.05)	1.00 – 8.00	-0.59	1.15	.62
REVO	-3.42 (1.47)	-6.33 – 1.20	0.47	0.30	-
Presence of MIL	4.80 (1.70)	1.00 – 8.00	-0.22	-0.55	.91
Meaningfulness (SOME)	5.22 (1.40)	1.00 – 8.00	-0.38	-0.25	.81

Note. NPI scores could range between 0 and 40. All other scales ranged from

1 – 8. The Relative Extrinsic Value Orientation (REVO) variable is calculated

based on the Extrinsic and Intrinsic Aspiration scales.

2.6.2 Correlations

I conducted all analyses using SPSS software (version 29). Narcissistic admiration and rivalry were positively correlated, and both were positively correlated with narcissism, which is consistent with previous research (Back et al., 2013; Table 2.2). Narcissism and both forms (i.e., admiration and rivalry) were positively correlated with the meaningfulness of extrinsic aspirations overall and individually (i.e., fame, wealth, image). Narcissism and narcissistic admiration were positively correlated with the meaningfulness of agentic aspirations (i.e., the implicit measure, SOME) overall and individually (i.e., power, achievement, individualism). However narcissistic rivalry was uncorrelated with overall agentic aspirations and only correlated with power.

Narcissism did not significantly correlate with the meaningfulness of intrinsic aspirations overall or individually (i.e., personal growth, community, relationships). Admiration was, however, positively correlated with overall intrinsic aspirations and individually with personal growth. Rivalry was negatively correlated with the meaningfulness of all intrinsic aspirations overall and individually. Narcissism did not significantly correlate with communal aspirations overall or individually (i.e., care, harmony, social commitment). Although admiration positively correlated with harmony only, rivalry negatively correlated with all communal aspirations overall and individually. These opposing relations for admiration and rivalry might mask the association between narcissism and intrinsic aspirations. All forms of narcissism were positively correlated with REVO.

Narcissism and admiration were positively associated with MIL (for both measures, MLQ and SOME). Rivalry, on the other hand, was not associated with any of these measures.

Table 2.2*Correlations for Study 1*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. Narc	1																					
2. Ad	.67**	1																				
3. Riv	.37**	.36**	1																			
4. EExtO	.44**	.44**	.27**	1																		
5. Fame	.43**	.49**	.26**	.79**	1																	
6. Wealth	.39**	.35**	.20**	.87**	.51**	1																
7. Image	.30**	.28**	.22**	.87**	.52**	.67*	1															
8. IAgO	.58**	.52**	.09	.38**	.32**	.40**	.24**	1														
9. Power	.64**	.54**	.14*	.31**	.28**	.32**	.18**	.82**	1													
10. Achieve	.34**	.33**	.05	.37**	.28**	.39**	.27**	.79**	.43**	1												
11. Individ	.41**	.38**	.03	.21**	.19**	.23**	.11	.79**	.57**	.41**	1											
12. EIntO	.08	.15*	-.33**	.15*	.13*	.12	.12	.44**	.33**	.34**	.39**	1										

13. PGrow	.10	.18**	-.21**	.25**	.18**	.24**	.18**	.49**	.33**	.34**	.52**	.80**	1										
14. Com	.09	.06	-.34**	.07	.09	.05	.04	.35**	.26**	.29**	.30**	.84**	.52**	1									
15. Relation	.01	.11	-.21**	.05	.04	.01	.07	.21**	.21**	.17**	.11	.76**	.42**	.43**	1								
16. IComO	-.01	.05	-.32**	-.01	-.01	-.02	.01	.35**	.30**	.21**	.35**	.67**	.49**	.66**	.48**	1							
17. Care	-.06	-.01	-.35**	-.02	-.04	-.01	.00	.23**	.18**	.21**	.15*	.55**	.34**	.53**	.45**	.76**	1						
18. Harm	.05	.17**	-.18**	.13*	.07	.12	.15*	.40**	.29**	.26**	.44**	.58**	.53**	.45**	.40**	.82**	.51**	1					
19. SCom	-.01	-.05	-.19**	-.13*	-.04	-.14*	-.13*	.17**	.22**	.00	.22**	.44**	.25**	.52**	.26**	.70**	.23**	.09	1				
20. REVO	.34**	.30**	.43**	.80**	.63**	.70**	.70**	.07	.08	.13*	-.05	-.47**	-.27**	-.44**	-.41**	-.42**	-.35**	-.07	-.38**	1			
21. PMIL	.24**	.34**	-.11	.04	.07	.05	-.03	.35**	.39**	.22**	.21**	.30**	.23**	.27**	.22**	.30**	.24**	.21**	.13*	-.15*	1		
22. Meaning	.29**	.37**	-.12	.20**	.20**	.22**	.10	.50**	.46**	.37**	.37**	.44**	.42**	.38**	.25**	.42**	.28**	.26**	.19**	-.08	.64**	1	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, Narc = overall narcissism, Ad = narcissistic admiration, Riv = narcissistic rivalry, EExtO = overall explicit extrinsic aspirations, IAgO = overall implicit agentic aspirations, Achieve = achievement, Individ = Individualism, ElntO = overall explicit intrinsic aspirations, PGrow = personal growth, Com = community, Relation = relationships, IComO = overall implicit communal aspirations, Harm = harmony, SCom = social commitment, REVO = relative extrinsic value orientation, PMIL = presence of MIL.

2.6.3 Main Regression and Mediation Analysis

2.6.3.1 Narcissism and Meaning Ratings of Extrinsic and Agentic Aspirations

2.6.3.1.1 Narcissism and Extrinsic Aspirations (Explicit Measure)

2.6.3.1.1.1 H1a: Narcissists will be more likely to rate extrinsic aspirations as highly meaningful. (Replication)

Four simple linear regression were run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted higher ratings for each individual extrinsic aspiration (i.e., fame, wealth, image) and overall extrinsic aspirations, (see Table 2.3 for all regression analyses). Hypothesis 1a was thus supported.

2.6.3.1.1.2 H1b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to rate extrinsic aspirations as highly meaningful. (New)

Four multiple linear regression were run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration predicted higher ratings for each individual extrinsic aspiration (i.e., fame, wealth, image) and overall extrinsic aspirations. Higher rivalry did not predict fame or wealth, individually, but it did predict image and overall extrinsic aspirations. Hypothesis 1b was supported for Admiration only.

2.6.3.1.2 Narcissism and Agentic Aspirations (Implicit Measure)

2.6.3.1.2.1 H1c: Narcissists will be more likely to endorse agentic aspirations. (New)

Four simple linear regression were run with implicit agentic aspirations as the criterion variable to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted higher ratings on all agentic aspirations (i.e., power, achievement, individualism) individually and on as overall agentic aspirations. Hypothesis 1c was supported.

2.6.3.1.2.2 H1d: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to endorse agentic aspirations. (New)

Four multiple linear regression were run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration predicted higher ratings on all agentic aspirations (i.e., power, achievement, individualism) individually and on overall agentic aspirations. Higher rivalry did not predict overall agentic aspirations, nor power, and achievement, while it negatively predicted individualism. Hypothesis 1d was supported for admiration only (in reference to the implicit measure).

2.6.3.1 Narcissism and Meaning Ratings of Intrinsic and Communal Aspirations

2.6.3.1.1 Narcissism and Intrinsic Aspirations (Explicit Measure)

2.6.3.1.1.1 H2a: Narcissists will be more likely to regard intrinsic aspirations as highly meaningful. (Replication)

Four simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism did not predict higher ratings on each individual intrinsic aspiration (i.e., personal growth, community, relationships), or overall intrinsic aspirations. Hypothesis 2a was not supported.

2.6.3.1.1.2 H2b: Admirative (but not rivalrous) narcissism will be more likely to regard intrinsic aspirations as highly meaningful. (New)

Four multiple linear regression were run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration predicted higher ratings on each individual intrinsic aspiration (i.e., personal growth, community, relationships) and on overall intrinsic aspirations. Higher rivalry predicted lower ratings on each individual intrinsic aspirations and on overall intrinsic aspirations. Hypothesis 2b was supported.

2.6.3.1.2 Narcissism and Communal Aspirations (Implicit Measure)

2.6.3.1.2.1 H2c: Narcissists will be more likely to endorse communal aspirations. (New)

A simple linear regression with implicit communal aspirations as the criterion variable was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism, narcissism did not predict higher ratings on each communal aspiration (i.e., care, harmony, social commitment) or on overall communal aspirations. Hypothesis 2c was not supported.

2.6.3.1.2.2 H2d: Admirative (but not rivalrous) narcissists will be more likely to endorse communal aspirations (New)

Four multiple linear regression were run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration predicted higher ratings on two communal aspirations (i.e., care and harmony, but not social commitment) and on overall communal aspirations. Higher rivalry negatively predicted all the individual communal aspirations (i.e., care, harmony, social commitment) and on overall communal aspirations. Hypothesis 2d was supported.

2.6.3.2 Narcissism and Meaning Ratings of Extrinsic Relative to Intrinsic Aspirations

2.6.3.2.1 H3a: Narcissists will exhibit higher MIL derived from extrinsic relative to intrinsic aspirations. (Replication)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater ratings of extrinsic relative to intrinsic goals (REVO) as more meaningful. Hypothesis 3a was supported.

2.6.3.2.2 H3b: Rivalrous (relative to admirative) narcissists will exhibit higher MIL derived from extrinsic than intrinsic aspirations. (New)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration and rivalry predicted greater

ratings of extrinsic relative to intrinsic goals (REVO) as more meaningful. Rivalry was a stronger predictor of REVO than admiration. Hypothesis 3b was partially supported.

2.6.3.3 Narcissism and Meaning in Life

I tested the next hypotheses twice – once with presence of MIL as the criterion variable, and once with meaningfulness as the criterion variable.

Table 2.3*Main Regression Analyses in Study 1*

Hypothesis	Predictor	Outcome	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²
H1	Narcissism	Overall Explicit Extrinsic	0.10	0.01	17.96	< .001	.19
		Fame	0.10	0.01	7.53	< .001	.18
		Wealth	0.11	0.02	6.89	< .001	.16
		Image	0.08	0.02	4.99	< .001	.09
		Overall Implicit Agentic	0.08	0.01	11.28	< .001	.33
		Power	0.12	0.01	13.40	< .001	.41
		Achievement	0.07	0.01	5.84	< .001	.12
		Individualism	0.07	0.01	7.16	< .001	.17
		Narcissistic Admiration	Overall Explicit Extrinsic	0.40	0.06	6.63	< .001
	Fame		0.52	0.07	7.86	< .001	.25
	Wealth		0.40	0.08	5.12	< .001	.13
	Image		0.29	0.08	3.65	< .001	.10
	Overall Implicit Agentic		0.38	0.04	9.90	< .001	.28
	Power		0.48	0.05	10.10	< .001	.30
	Narcissistic Rivalry	Overall Explicit Extrinsic	Achievement	0.35	0.06	5.76	< .001
Individualism			0.32	0.05	7.01	< .001	.16
Fame			0.16	0.07	2.23	.027	.28
Wealth			0.14	0.08	1.78	.077	.25
Image			0.14	0.10	1.46	.145	.13
Image			0.21	0.10	2.22	.027	.10

H2	Overall Narcissism	Overall Implicit Agentic	-0.09	0.05	-1.89	.061	.21
		Power	-0.06	0.06	-1.05	.296	.30
		Achievement	-0.09	0.07	-1.26	.208	.12
		Individualism	-0.11	0.06	-2.03	.043	.16
		Overall Explicit Intrinsic	0.01	0.01	1.35	.178	.01
		Personal Growth	0.02	0.01	1.69	.093	.01
		Community	0.02	0.01	1.39	.165	.01
		Relationship	0.001	0.01	0.10	.919	< .01
		Overall Implicit Communal	-0.001	0.01	-0.10	.917	< .01
		Care	-0.01	0.01	-0.96	.337	< .01
	Harmony	0.01	0.01	0.87	.387	< .01	
	Social Commit	-0.002	0.01	-0.15	.879	< .01	
	Narcissistic Admiration	Overall Explicit Intrinsic	0.27	0.04	4.98	< .001	.18
		Personal Growth	0.24	0.05	4.65	< .001	.12
		Community	0.21	0.06	3.54	< .001	.16
		Relationship	0.18	0.05	3.37	< .001	.09
		Overall Implicit Communal	0.11	0.04	2.93	.004	.13
		Care	0.10	0.05	2.00	.047	.14
	Narcissistic Rivalry	Overall Explicit Intrinsic	-0.36	0.05	-7.17	< .001	.18
		Personal Growth	-0.31	0.06	-5.04	< .001	.12
Community		-0.49	0.07	-6.87	< .001	.16	
Relationship		-0.28	0.06	-4.49	< .001	.09	
Overall Implicit Communal		-0.29	0.05	-6.14	< .001	.13	

			Care	-0.39	0.06	-6.37	< .001	.14
			Harmony	-0.27	0.06	-4.36	< .001	.10
			Social Commit	-0.20	0.07	-3.10	.002	.04
H3	Narcissism	REVO		0.08	0.01	5.82	< .001	.12
	Narcissistic Admiration	REVO		0.20	0.07	2.87	.004	.22
	Narcissistic Rivalry	REVO		0.53	0.08	6.40	< .001	.22
H4	Narcissism	Presence of MIL		0.07	0.02	4.01	< .001	.06
		Meaningfulness (SOME)		0.07	0.01	4.78	< .001	.08
	Narcissistic Admiration	Presence of MIL		0.57	0.08	7.03	< .001	.17
		Meaningfulness (SOME)		0.51	0.07	7.85	< .001	.20
	Narcissistic Rivalry	Presence of MIL		-0.42	0.10	-4.26	< .001	.17
		Meaningfulness (SOME)		-0.37	0.08	-4.72	< .001	.20

Note. Social Commit = social commitment.

2.6.3.3.1 H4a: Narcissists will have higher MIL. (Replication)

2.6.3.3.1.1 Presence of MIL

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater MIL.

2.6.3.3.1.2 Meaningfulness

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater MIL. Hypothesis 4a was supported.

2.6.3.3.2 H4b: Admirative narcissists will have higher, and rivalrous narcissists lower, MIL. (New)

2.6.3.3.2.1 Presence of MIL

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration positively predicted MIL whereas rivalry negatively predicted MIL.

2.6.3.3.2.2 Meaningfulness

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration positively predicted MIL whereas rivalry negatively predicted MIL. Hypothesis 4b was supported.

2.6.3.4 Extrinsic and Agentive, and Intrinsic and Communal, Aspirations as Mediators of the Relation Between Narcissism and MIL

I tested the hypotheses below with a multiple mediation regression analysis using PROCESS (version 4.1; Hayes, 2022), Model 4, with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. I used both the explicit (aspirations index; Figure 2.1) and implicit (SOME; Figure 2.2) measures of extrinsic/agentive and intrinsic/communal sources of meaning in separate mediation models.

Figure 2.1

Multiple Mediation Model for Explicit Aspirations

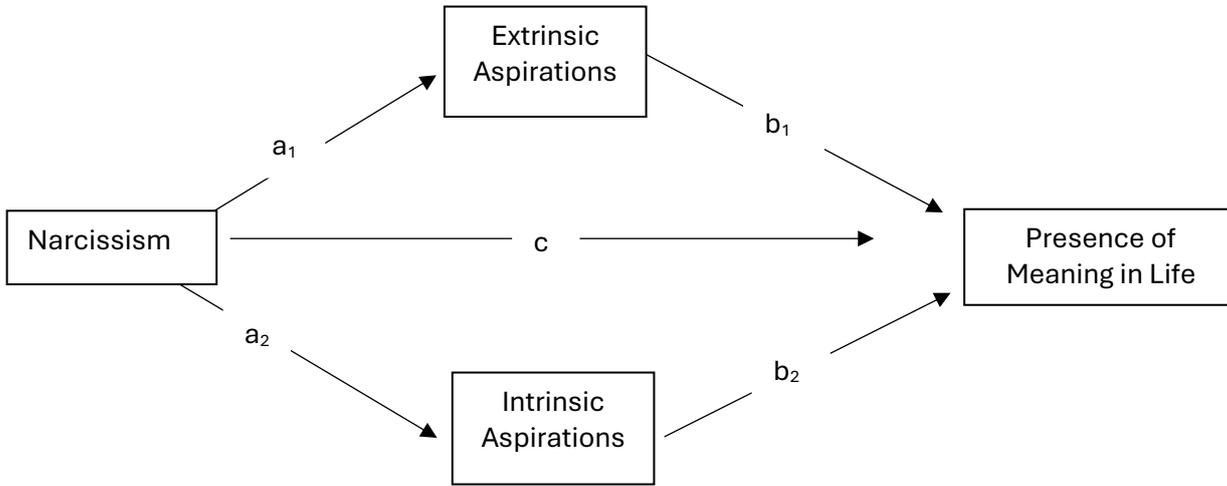
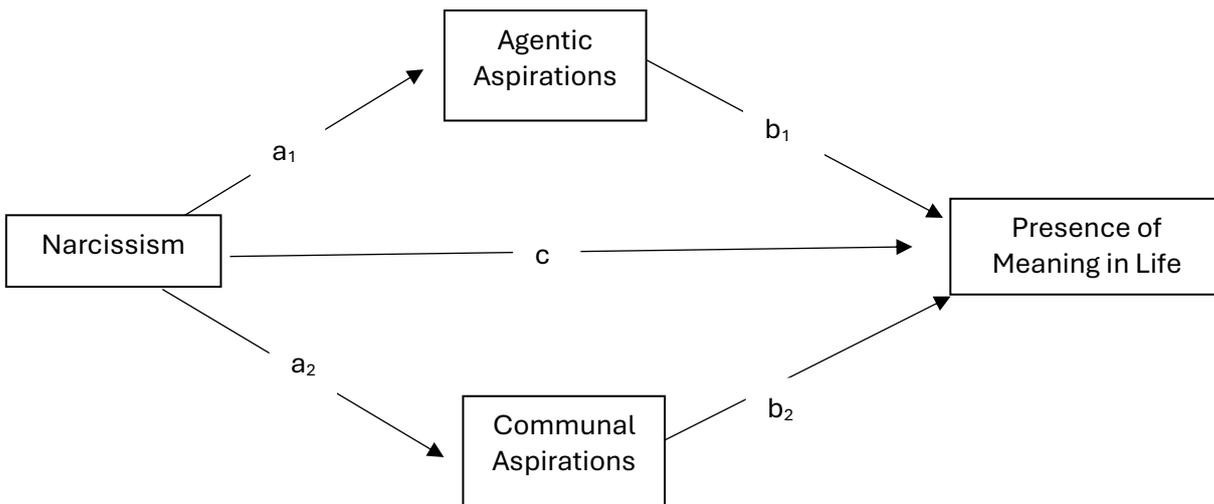


Figure 2.2

Multiple Mediation Model for Implicit Aspirations



2.6.3.4.1 H5a: Narcissists will report higher MIL via intrinsic and communal aspirations, but not via extrinsic and agentic aspirations. (New)

2.6.3.4.1.1 H5a_Explicit

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 2.4), narcissism was the predictor, intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations were entered as parallel mediators, and MIL was the dependent variable. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant and the main effect of narcissism on extrinsic aspirations was positive and significant. There was no main effect of narcissism on intrinsic aspirations, but intrinsic aspiration positively and significantly predicted MIL. Extrinsic aspirations did not predict MIL. There were no indirect effects of extrinsic or intrinsic aspirations on MIL.

2.6.3.4.1.2 H5a_Implicit

In a second multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 2.5), the total effect of narcissism on the MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissism on MIL was not significant but the main effect of narcissism on agentic aspirations was positive and significant. There was no main effect of narcissism on communal aspirations, but communal aspirations did positively and significantly predict MIL. Agentic aspirations also positively and significantly predicted MIL. There was a significant positive indirect effect of agentic aspirations on MIL, but no indirect effect of communal aspirations. Hypothesis 5a was not supported.

2.6.3.4.2 H5b: Admirative narcissists will report higher MIL via intrinsic and communal aspirations, but not via extrinsic and agentic aspirations. (New)

2.6.3.4.2.1 H5b_Explicit

In a mediation regression analysis (Table 2.4), narcissistic admiration was the predictor (with rivalry as a covariate), intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations were entered as two

mediators, and MIL was the dependent variable. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of narcissism admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissistic admiration on MIL was positive and significant and the main effect of narcissistic admiration on extrinsic aspirations was positive and significant. The main effect of narcissistic admiration on intrinsic aspirations was positive and significant. Intrinsic aspirations positively and significantly predicted MIL. Extrinsic aspirations negatively and significantly predicted MIL. Therefore, although narcissistic admiration positively predicted both extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations, there was a negative indirect effect of extrinsic aspirations and positive indirect effect of intrinsic aspirations.

2.6.3.4.2.2 H5b_Implicit

In another multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 2.5), the total effect of narcissistic admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissistic admiration on MIL was positive and significant and the main effect of narcissistic admiration on agentic aspirations was positive and significant. The main effect of narcissistic admiration on communal aspirations was also positive and significant. Both communal and agentic aspirations positively and significantly predicted MIL. There was a significant positive indirect mediating effect of agentic and communal aspirations on MIL. Hypothesis 5b was supported for the explicit measures only.

2.6.3.4.3 H5c: Rivalrous narcissists will report lower MIL via extrinsic and agentic aspirations, but not via intrinsic and communal aspiration (New)

2.6.3.4.3.1 H5c_Explicit

In a mediation regression analysis (Table 2.4), narcissistic rivalry was the predictor (with admiration as a covariate), intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations were entered as two mediators, and MIL was the dependent variable. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of narcissism rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The direct effect of narcissistic rivalry on MIL was negative and significant and the main effect of narcissistic rivalry on extrinsic

aspirations was positive and significant. The main effect of narcissistic rivalry on intrinsic aspirations was negative and significant. Intrinsic aspirations positively and significantly predicted MIL. Extrinsic aspirations negatively and significantly predicted MIL. Therefore, there was a negative indirect effect of intrinsic aspirations and no indirect effect of extrinsic aspirations.

2.6.3.4.3.2 H5c_Implicit

In another multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 2.5), the total effect of narcissistic rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The direct effect of narcissistic rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The main effect of narcissistic rivalry on agentic aspirations was not significant. The main effect of narcissistic rivalry on communal aspirations was negative and significant. Communal aspirations positively and significantly predicted MIL whereas agentic aspirations did not. There was a significant negative indirect effect of communal aspirations on MIL, but no indirect effect of agentic aspirations.

Hypothesis 5c was not supported.

Table 2.4*Mediation Analyses for Study 1 with Explicit Aspirations*

Effect	Figure 2.1 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Total Effect:													
Narc→MIL		0.07	0.02	4.01**	0.06	0.57	0.08	7.03**	0.17	-0.42	0.10	-4.26**	0.17
Main Effects:													
Narc→Extrinsic	a ₁	0.10	0.01	7.84**	—	0.40	0.06	6.63**	—	0.16	0.07	2.23*	—
Extrinsic→MIL	b ₁	-0.16	0.08	-1.91	—	-0.18	0.08	-2.13*	—	-0.18	0.08	-2.13*	—
Narc→Intrinsic	a ₂	0.01	0.01	1.35	—	0.21	0.04	4.98**	—	-0.36	0.05	-7.17**	—
Intrinsic→MIL	b ₂	0.57	0.11	5.09**	—	0.41	0.12	3.38**	—	0.41	0.12	3.38**	—
Narc→MIL	c	0.08	0.02	4.23**	—	0.55	0.09	6.33**	—	-0.24	0.11	-2.26*	—
Indirect Effects:													
95% CI													
Narc→MIL													
Via Extrinsic	a ₁ * b ₁	-0.02	0.01	—	- .0341, + .0013	-0.07	0.04	—	- .1424, - .0045	-0.03	0.02	—	- .0850, + .0007
Via Intrinsic	a ₂ * b ₂	0.01	0.01	—	- .0024, + .0190	0.08	0.03	—	+ .0259, + .1544	-0.15	0.05	—	- .2583, - .0511
Model Summary:													
		<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²
		0.39	15.08	<.001	0.15	0.46	17.38	<.001	0.21	0.46	17.38	<.001	0.21

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .001, Narc = narcissism, MIL = presence of meaning in Life, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

Table 2.5*Meditation Analyses for Study 1 with Implicit Aspirations*

Effect	Figure 2.2 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry					
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²		
Total Effect:															
Narc→MIL		0.07	0.02	4.01**	0.06	0.57	0.08	7.03**	0.17	-0.42	0.10	-4.26**	0.17		
Main Effects:															
Narc→Agentic	a ₁	0.08	0.01	11.28**	—	0.38	0.04	9.90**	—	-0.09	0.05	-1.88	—		
Agentic→MIL	b ₁	0.42	0.15	2.88*	—	0.30	0.13	2.31*	—	0.30	0.13	2.31*	—		
Narc→Communal	a ₂	< .01	0.01	0.53	—	0.16	0.04	3.65**	—	-0.26	0.05	-4.87**	—		
Communal→MIL	b ₂	0.41	0.12	3.47**	—	0.30	0.12	2.54*	—	0.30	0.12	2.54*	—		
Narc→MIL	c	0.03	0.02	1.56	—	0.40	0.09	4.37**	—	-0.31	0.10	-3.15*	—		
Indirect Effects:															
				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI			
Narc→MIL															
Via Agentic	a ₁ * b ₁	0.04	0.01	—	+ .0099, + .0610	0.12	0.05	—	+ .0089, + .2234	-0.03	0.02	—	- .0664, + .0018		
Via Communal	a ₂ * b ₂	< .01	< .01	—	- .0049, + .0094	0.05	0.02	—	+ .0074, + .1046	-0.11	0.05	—	- .1597, - .0127		
Model Summary:															
		<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²		
		0.40	16.42	<.001	0.16	0.46	18.02	<.001	0.22	0.47	18.02	<.001	0.22		

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .001, Narc = narcissism, MIL = presence of meaning in life, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

2.7 Discussion

The aim of this correlational study was to address the inconsistencies in the limited research on narcissism and sources of meaning. Although narcissists view extrinsic aspirations meaningful, Abeyta et al. (2017) found that narcissists view intrinsic aspirations as more meaningful. Furthermore, narcissists reported higher state MIL following exposure to personally relevant extrinsic (relative to intrinsic) aspirations. These researchers did not assess whether extrinsic aspirations account for the positive relation between narcissism and dispositional (as opposed to state) MIL (Womick et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021).

Although Werner et al. (2019) measured the mediating influence of extrinsic aspirations on narcissists' well-being, they also did not assess dispositional MIL. Therefore, it is unknown whether narcissists' extrinsic aspirations are associated with dispositional MIL in the same way that intrinsic aspirations are (Grouden & Jose, 2015; Kasser et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2013; Schlegel et al., 2009; Weinstein et al., 2012). Furthermore, no study had tested the narcissistic forms of admiration and rivalry in relation to the sources of MIL and dispositional MIL. Narcissism may mask the often-opposing effects of narcissistic admiration and rivalry (Back et al., 2013).

The first hypothesis, that both narcissists and admiring/rivalrous narcissists will regard extrinsic and agentic aspirations as more meaningful, was partially supported. Both narcissists and admiring narcissists viewed extrinsic aspirations (i.e., fame, wealth, image) as meaningful. Rivalrous narcissists only considered the image aspiration as meaningful. Admiring and rivalrous narcissists perceive extrinsic aspirations as meaningful, an expected pattern given that both narcissistic forms are described as sharing the common goal of achieving a grandiose, agentic self (Back et al., 2013). Therefore, I replicated Abeyta et al.'s (2017) finding that narcissists are more likely to regard extrinsic aspirations as more meaningful, and further generalized this pattern to admiring and rivalrous narcissists.

However, the first hypothesis was only partially supported in the case of the implicit measure of agentic aspirations. Narcissists and admiring narcissists viewed agentic

aspirations (i.e., power, achievement, individualism) as meaningful. Rivalrous narcissists did not regard any of the agentic aspirations as meaningful, but they were less likely to view individualism as meaningful.

These findings suggest that admiring narcissists value a greater range of extrinsic and agentic aspirations. The strong association between narcissism and conspicuous consumption may be particularly driven by admiration. However, considering that rivalry only predicted the extrinsic aspiration of image, rivalrous narcissists may disproportionately prioritise their image as a source of meaning. This possibility is consistent with findings that only narcissistic rivalry is associated with the propensity to conspicuous consumption (Niesiobędzka, 2018).

The second hypothesis, that admiring (but not rivalrous) narcissists will explicitly regard intrinsic and communal aspirations as more meaningful, was partially supported. Whereas narcissists did not view intrinsic aspirations (i.e., personal growth, community, relationships) as meaningful, admiring narcissists considered all these aspirations as meaningful. Rivalrous narcissists viewed intrinsic aspirations less meaningful. Therefore, I did not replicate Abeyta et al.'s (2017) findings that narcissists view intrinsic aspirations more meaningful; instead, I obtained this pattern for admiring, but not rivalrous narcissists.

The second hypothesis was also only partially supported in the case of the implicit measure of communal aspirations. Narcissists, similarly, did not view communal aspirations (i.e., care, harmony, social commitment) as meaningful. Admiring narcissists did regard the specific aspirations of care and harmony, but not social commitment, meaningful, whereas rivalrous narcissists viewed communal aspirations (i.e., care, harmony, social commitment), less meaningful. My hypothesis that admiring (but not rivalrous) narcissists find communal aspirations more meaningful was supported. This supports previous findings that the admiring form is positively associated with self-improvement and pro-social behaviours (Martin et al., 2019). Rivalrous narcissists seem to devalue intrinsic and communal aspirations, which I hypothesised due to this form being associated with interpersonal conflict (Back et al., 2013; Cheshure et al., 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). Thus,

the null effect for narcissism may be explained by the opposing findings for admiration and rivalry, as they may cancel each other's effects. The opposing effects also demonstrates that admiring narcissists find extrinsic, agentic, intrinsic, and communal aspirations to be meaningful, and this might be the form of narcissism that accounts for Abeyta et al.'s (2017) findings where participants regarded intrinsic aspirations as more meaningful than extrinsic aspirations. This notion is supported by the finding that admiration has a much higher correlation with the NPI than rivalry. The findings for the implicit and explicit measures of aspirations manifested a similar pattern, reinforcing their validity.

The third hypothesis was that narcissists and rivalrous, but not admiring narcissists, would find extrinsic aspirations more meaningful than intrinsic aspirations. The results partially supported this hypothesis, with narcissists, and both admiring and rivalrous narcissists regarding extrinsic aspirations as more meaningful than intrinsic ones (i.e., positively predicting REVO). This finding replicates Werner et al. (2019) study and extends it to admiration and rivalry. Rivalry, however, was the strongest predictor of REVO. However, Werner et al.'s (2019) REVO measure might not have accurately reflected an extrinsic preference here².

² Werner et al. subtracted intrinsic aspirations from extrinsic aspirations. In this study, participants rated intrinsic aspirations as more meaningful than extrinsic aspirations. As such, REVO scores were mostly negative. Only seven out of 260 participants scored zero or above. The highest score was 1.2 and the lowest score was -6.33. The higher scores were in the region of 0 and 1.2 for this variable: higher scores indicate that extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations were viewed similarly meaningful. That is why it would be inaccurate to conclude that high scores on the REVO variable reflected an extrinsic preference. This resembles what Abeyta et al. (2017, Study 1) found, namely, that narcissism predicted smaller differences between extrinsic and intrinsic average scores. Hence, all forms of narcissism are associated with finding extrinsic as well as intrinsic aspirations equally meaningful. As Werner et al. (2019) found a positive relation between narcissism and REVO, they concluded that this would indicate an extrinsic preference, when, in fact, the majority of their REVO scores were negative ($M = -2.30$, $SD = 1.58$), similarly to this current study. Thus, a higher score of 0 would not indicate an extrinsic preference, but it would indicate that there were no differences between ratings of meaningfulness between extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations. Werner et al.'s conclusion that narcissists rate extrinsic aspirations as more meaningful than intrinsic aspirations is incorrect. Moreover, these authors found that their REVO score mediated the positive relation between narcissism and depression. Considering the true meaning of a high REVO score, this mediation suggests viewing intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations equally meaningful is what mediates narcissists' depression, instead of viewing extrinsic aspirations as more meaningful.

Hypothesis 4 was supported. Narcissists and admiring narcissists had higher MIL (for both measures), whereas rivalrous narcissists had lower MIL (for both measures). The previously reported positive relation between narcissism and MIL (Womick et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021) may have been influenced by admiration but not rivalry. This claim is consistent with findings that admiration is positively related to other predictors of MIL such as high self-esteem and psychological well-being (Burgmer et al., 2019; Leckelt et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 5 anticipated that extrinsic aspirations would not provide dispositional MIL, and that higher MIL would be explained by intrinsic aspirations, whereas extrinsic aspirations would be negatively related to MIL, among narcissists. Extrinsic (i.e., fame, wealth, image) and intrinsic aspirations (i.e., personal growth, community, relationship) did not explain the relation between narcissism and MIL. However, narcissists have higher MIL partly through their agentic (i.e., power, achievement, individualism), but not communal (i.e., care, harmony, social commitment) aspirations³.

For admiring narcissists, higher intrinsic aspirations (i.e., via the explicit measure) were associated with greater MIL, and higher extrinsic aspirations were associated with lessened MIL, as hypothesised. In addition, higher agentic and communal aspirations (i.e., via the implicit measure) predicted greater MIL among admiring narcissists. Therefore, narcissism and admiration had greater MIL via agentic aspirations, whereas admiration also had greater MIL via communal aspirations. Effects for narcissism and admiration are often mirrored because they are highly correlated and the NPI captures more admiration features than rivalrous ones (Andrews & McCann, 2022).

³ Although all the explicit extrinsic (i.e., fame, wealth, image) and the implicit agentic (i.e., power, achievement, individualism) aspirations are agentic, only two of the agentic aspirations (i.e., power, achievement) are extrinsically motivated. Agentic aspirations such as individualism are more likely to be associated with MIL, because it is intrinsically motivated (i.e., an item from the SOME individualism scale is ‘The most important goal in my life is personal fulfilment’; Schnell, 2016). Extrinsically motivated agentic goals such as materialism (but not intrinsic goals) predict lower MIL (Kashdan & Breen, 2007); therefore, extrinsically motivated agentic aspirations such as individualism may influence narcissists’ MIL more than the extrinsic aspirations of fame, wealth, image, power, and achievement.

For rivalrous narcissists, lower intrinsic and communal aspirations were associated with lessened MIL. Thus, rivalrous narcissists lower intrinsic aspirations partly explain their lower MIL. Extrinsic and agentic aspirations did not explain rivalrous narcissists lessened MIL. Therefore, the pattern of the explicit measure was mirrored by the implicit measure of aspirations. For both admiration and rivalry, agentic aspirations were not related to their MIL and MIL was related to the degree of their intrinsic and communal aspirations.

In conclusion, narcissists perceive extrinsic aspirations to be meaningful. The results replicate Abeyta et al. (2017, Study 1) and generalize to admiring and rivalrous narcissists. The findings suggest that agentic aspirations might be beneficial for narcissists. However, I observed this pattern only in the case of implicit (i.e., power, achievement, individualism) but not explicit (i.e., fame, wealth, image) aspirations, and I did not replicate it among admiring and rivalrous narcissists.

Although admiring narcissists are more likely to have both extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations, it was intrinsic aspirations that partially explained their higher MIL, whereas extrinsic aspirations explained lower MIL. Furthermore, the negative association between rivalry and MIL was partially explained by viewing intrinsic aspirations as less meaningful. Therefore, although narcissists perceive extrinsic aspirations to be meaningful, it is only intrinsic aspirations that are associated with dispositional MIL for both admiring and rivalrous narcissists. These findings show how perceiving a goal to be meaningful is different from gaining dispositional MIL from it. Also, extrinsic goals such as fame, wealth, and image are not necessarily good for narcissists, as it seems that these goals are largely unrelated to dispositional MIL.

Abeyta et al. (2017, Study 2) reported that narcissists have a higher state MIL following exposure to extrinsic, as opposed to intrinsic, aspirations. Therefore, narcissists not only consider extrinsic aspirations meaningful, but they attain higher state MIL from them, which will make them feel good and provide hedonic well-being (Holmqvist et al., 2020; Mize, 2014). By perceiving extrinsic goals as meaningful and gaining state MIL without dispositional MIL, narcissists may continue to strive for extrinsic goals such as wealth or

image that may only satisfy them temporarily, in a hedonic treadmill (Brickman & Campbell, 1971). Narcissists may continue to engage in extrinsic behaviour, such as conspicuous consumption (Andreassen et al., 2017), to boost state MIL. Very little research, however, has examined whether narcissists can gain (short-term) boosts in state MIL from conspicuous consumption, and no study has examined this for admiring and rivalrous narcissists.

Study 1 showed the importance of breaking narcissism down into admiration and rivalry. Previous positive associations between narcissism and MIL were likely influenced by the more adaptive dimension of narcissistic admiration than by the more maladaptive dimension of narcissistic rivalry. Moreover, studies that have previously measured only narcissism may have had results that counteracted the contrasting effects of admiration and rivalry dimensions. In Abeyta et al. (2017, Study 1), narcissists found intrinsic aspirations more meaningful than extrinsic ones. Here, rivalry negatively predicted intrinsic aspirations. Thus, although all forms of narcissism are strongly motivated by extrinsic aspirations, rivalrous narcissists may disproportionately prioritise them.

The study had limitations. First, it was cross-sectional, thus not allowing causal inferences. Second, it relied on self-reports. As such, participants may not have had adequate insight into their sources of MIL. Third, the survey was long (30 minutes), perhaps causing fatigue in participants. Finally, in retrospect, it was not useful to directly compare the explicit (Aspiration Index) and implicit (Sources of Meaning Questionnaire) aspiration measures, as originally planned, because they assess different aspirations that varied on other dimensions (beyond the explicit-implicit one), such as extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. For example, although all intrinsic (i.e., personal growth, community, relationships) and communal (i.e., care, harmony, social commitment) aspirations are intrinsically motivated, the intrinsic goal of personal growth is agency-related and not communal. Even though all extrinsic (i.e., fame, wealth, image) and agentic (i.e., power, achievement, individualism) aspirations are agentic, the agentic aspiration of individualism is intrinsic. The difficulty in separating the constructs of agentic, communal, extrinsic, and

intrinsic aspirations highlights the complexity of categorising aspirations and therefore drawing conclusions about their unique influences on MIL.

Specific to the aim of my PhD project, image, which is an agentic and extrinsically motivated pursuit, is considered meaningful but was unassociated with dispositional MIL for all forms of narcissism. Although I did not address the state MIL or specifically the extrinsic behaviour of conspicuous consumption, the purpose of this initial study was to examine a range of extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations related to different forms of narcissism with dispositional MIL. This provides perspective for my subsequent studies that focus on the specific extrinsic aspiration of conspicuous consumption.

Chapter 3 Study 2 – Do Narcissists Gain Meaning in Life from their Conspicuous Consumption?

3.1 Do Narcissists Find Meaning in their Conspicuous Consumption?

In Study 1, although narcissism and admiration predicted higher MIL for all extrinsic and agentic aspirations, narcissistic rivalry did not. Rivalry did predict the specific extrinsic aspiration of image. Hence, rivalrous narcissists might view their self-image as a particularly meaningful aspiration.

Although extrinsic and agentic aspirations were mostly non-significant mediators of narcissism and dispositional MIL, we know little about the relevance of the extrinsic goal of conspicuous consumption as a mediator. Zhu et al. (2021) tested whether conspicuous consumption mediated the positive relation between narcissism and dispositional MIL (i.e., using the global meaning in life questionnaire; Costin & Vignoles, 2020). Narcissism positively predicted conspicuous consumption, but conspicuous consumption negatively predicted MIL. Further, Zhu et al. (2021) did not examine state MIL. Abeyta et al. (2017, Study 2), however, found that extrinsic aspirations boosting state MIL for narcissists. Yet, they did not specifically examine the extrinsic aspiration of image or conspicuous consumption. I aimed to address whether narcissists gain state MIL following conspicuous consumption. Additionally, I included admiration and rivalry.

To capture individual proneness to conspicuous consumption, self-reported questionnaires are often used, such as the conspicuous consumption scale (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004). Zhu et al. (2021) used a different conspicuous consumption scale (Chen, 2008), which consists of items such as ‘People buy famous brands to make a good impression on others’ and ‘People want to own brand-name products owned by their friends and colleagues.’ The conspicuous consumption orientation scale (Chaudhuri et al., 2011)

consists of similar items, but by directing focus on participants via the pronoun 'I' instead of 'People'. Sample items are; 'I choose products or brands to create my own style that everybody admires, and 'I would be a member in a businessmen's posh club.' The phrasing of the latter item highlights that this scale needs to be updated. Additionally, there is an issue with the concurrent validity of conspicuous consumption scales. For example, a recent systematic review revealed that self-report conspicuous consumption manifest little consensus among them, because scales were developed to measure conspicuous consumption in specific contexts (Melo et al., 2022).

Instead, I will use a more behavioural measure, the consumer decision-making paradigm (Cisek et al., 2014; Sedikides et al., 2011). Participants select their preferred product (i.e., luxurious or flashy vs. practical or utilitarian) from a range of pictures and product descriptions. The paradigm is realistic and engaging.

3.2 Current Research

In Study 2, to test my hypothesis that narcissists gain state MIL via conspicuous consumption, I examined the indirect effect of conspicuous consumption in a consumer decision-making paradigm on the relation between narcissism and state MIL, in a mediated regression analysis. I assessed narcissism and admiration and rivalry as predictors. State MIL was the outcome variable.

3.2.1 Hypothesis 1: Narcissism and Symbolic Preference

Narcissists are prone to luxury consumption (Cunningham-Kim & Darke, 2011; Vazire et al., 2008). Also, in a consumer decision-making paradigm, narcissism positively predicts preferences for symbolic (relative to utilitarian) products (Cisek et al., 2014; Sedikides et al., 2011). Furthermore, considering that admiration and rivalry characterise individuals who desire grandiosity and are therefore motivated by agency, I hypothesise that both will positively predict preferences for symbolic products.

- **H1a:** Narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (Replication)

- **H1b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (New)

3.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Narcissism and Willingness to Spend on Symbolic Products

I hypothesise that narcissism, admiration, and rivalry will predict a higher amount of money that participants are willing to spend on symbolic products. Previous research has shown that narcissism positively predicts a willingness to spend more on limited edition, personalised, symbolic products (Lee et al., 2013), but no studies have tested admiration or rivalry.

- **H2a:** Narcissists will be willing to spend more on symbolic products (Replication)
- **H2b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be willing to spend more on symbolic products (New)

3.2.3 Hypothesis 3: Symbolic Preferences Will Mediate the Relation Between Narcissism and State Meaning in Life

Narcissists are extrinsically driven and prone to conspicuous consumption (Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013; Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2007). This consumer behaviour is likely to imbue narcissists with meaning (Sedikides, et al., 2013), as it aligns with their high agency (Campbell et al., 2002) and helps to fulfil their desire for status and superiority (Baumeister & Wallace, 2012; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). Given that narcissists value looking good, preferences for symbolic products are likely to boost their state MIL.

- **H3a:** Narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (New)
- **H3b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (New)

3.3 Method – Study 2a

3.3.1 Participants

I advertised the study, titled ‘Personality and Consumerism’, on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter) and on Call4Participants.com for any person over the age of 18 and fluent in English. Participants completed the study in exchange for the chance to win a £50 Amazon voucher in a prize draw. I also recruited University of Southampton undergraduates for course credit.

In total, 299 participants completed the study. The a priori exclusion criteria were: (1) having more than 10% missing data (Bennett; 2001), (2) completing the study in under 15 minutes, and (3) providing invariant responses (e.g., ‘1,1,1,1,1). I excluded 46 participants based on the above criteria. The final sample ($n = 253$) consisted of 197 female, 53 male, and 3 undisclosed gender participants. Participants’ age ranged from 18 to 72 years ($M = 29.69$, $SD = 14.17$), and 41.9% of them were homemakers. Regarding employment, 20.2% of participants were employed full-time, 8.7% were employed part-time, 26.1% were not employed, and 3.2% were students. Most participants were Caucasian (72%; 15% Hispanic; 4.3% Chinese; 2.4% African; 4% any other mixed/multiple ethnic background; 0.4% any other Asian background; 0.4% Caribbean; 0.4% Indian; 0.4% Pakistani; 0.8% unknown).

An a priori Monte Carlo simulation was conducted to determine the suitable sample size needed as this is the best practice for determining sample size in mediation models (Schoemann et al., 2017). The simulation was specifically tailored to a simple mediation model, which was the most complex analysis within this study. It was conducted using 10,000 iterations, with a standard significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), and desired power of 0.80. Results indicated that a sample size of 790 would be sufficient to achieve 80% power. This suggests that this study is significantly underpowered, as the analyses were conducted using only 253 participants. However, Kline (2005) recommends 20 participants per parameter, which is a less conservative approach. There are 5 parameters in the most

complex analysis (i.e., admiration, rivalry, impression management, symbolic preferences, MIL). There are 50 participants per parameter in this study.

3.3.2 Procedure and Measures

This study lasted approximately 30 minutes. Participants read an information sheet before consenting to take part in this online survey (via ISurvey). Then, they responded to demographic questions, followed by measures of narcissism and a measure of impression management. Next, participants completed a consumer decision-making paradigm followed by a state measure of meaning. Lastly, participants were debriefed and compensated for their time (i.e., entered the prize draw).

3.3.2.1 Narcissism

To measure narcissism, I used the 40-item NPI scale (Raskin & Terry, 1988) and the NARQ (Back et al., 2013; 1 = *very uncharacteristic or untrue*, 8 = *very characteristic or true*).

3.3.2.2 Impression Management

To measure impression management, I used the 8-item impression management scale from The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form (BIDR-16; Hart et al. 2015 to assess participants' tendency to respond in a socially desirable way 1 = *strongly disagree*, 8 = *strongly agree*). Sample items are: "I sometimes tell lies if I have to" and "When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening." I reversed-scored responses to four items. I averaged responses to compute the impression management variable. Higher scores indicate greater impression management.

3.3.2.3 Consumer Decision-Making Paradigm

Participants viewed 21 products. Two photographs were placed side by side for each product, showing two different versions of the same type of product. One photograph depicted a flashier and more luxurious version, whereas the other depicted a less flashy, more ordinary-looking product. For 10 of the products (i.e., Phone cover, Blender, Headphones, Coffee Maker, Camera, Toaster, Water Bottle, Lamp, Laptop, Sound system), the flashier product was paired with a description (below the photograph) that was less

practical and functional than the description paired with the more ordinary-looking product. Participants were instructed to look at the pictures and descriptions of each pair of products, and to rate how much they would be willing to spend on each product (1 = *not very much*, 8 = *very much*). The ratings for this question on each of the flashier/luxury products were averaged to create a symbolic spend variable. The ratings for this question on each of the more practical/functional products were averaged to create utilitarian spend variable. They were also asked to select which product from each of the pairs they would most likely buy. I summed the number of times participants favoured the luxury, less practical product to create a symbolic preference variable. Therefore, if participants chose the flashier product despite lower functionality, then this was considered a conspicuous consumption preference.

I tested product images in a pilot study to ensure that the photographs intended to look flashier and luxurious were rated significantly more so than its paired photograph in each pair (see Appendix A for the Pilot Study for Study 2a products). I also tested product descriptions to ensure that the description intended to be more practical and functional were rated significantly more so than its paired description in each pair.

There were 11 filler products (i.e., Kettle, Portable Speaker, Toothbrush, Bike, Fan, Watch, Thermal Mug, Luggage, Satnav, Hoover, and coat) evenly distributed throughout the list to prevent suspicion (e.g., from guessing the pattern that the symbolic product always had a lower utilitarian description). For some of the filler products, I paired the more practical description with the flashier-looking products. For the remaining filler products, I used the photographs and descriptions that did not differ from each other in terms luxury and practicality, respectively. I did not include the ratings for the filler products in the analysis.

3.3.2.4 Meaning in Life

I used the state version of the presence scale from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006). I used the same 5-item scale as in Study 1. However, participants answered the items in terms of how they felt in that very moment, instead of generally.

Participants indicated how much they agreed with the statements (1 = *strongly disagree*, 8 = *strongly agree*). I computed MIL by averaging across items.

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Variables and Scale Reliability

I computed 9 variables for the analyses. These were: narcissism (NPI; Independent variable), narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry (NARQ; independent variables), symbolic preference (mediator), relative symbolic spend (mediator), presence of MIL (dependent variable), and impression management (covariate).

Most scales were internally reliable with a Cronbach's alpha greater than .70 except for the Impression Management scale (Table 3.1). All scales were within the acceptable boundaries for skewness (i.e., -2 and +2) and kurtosis (i.e., -7 and +7; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010).

Table 3.1

Descriptive Statistics in Study 2a

Measure (Scale)	<i>M(SD)</i>	Min Max	Skew	Kurtosis	α
Narcissism (0-40)	10.67 (6.29)	0-32	0.60	-0.12	.84
Admiration (1-8)	3.90 (1.17)	1.44-8	0.30	-0.17	.89
Rivalry (1-8)	2.73 (1.26)	1-8	1.04	1.26	.86
Symbolic (0-10)	3.34 (2.54)	0-10	0.74	-0.12	-
Relative Spend (-7-7)	-0.14 (1.17)	-4.20 - 4.20	0.29	1.71	-
MIL (1-8)	4.98 (1.60)	1-8	-0.09	-0.77	.88
Impress M (1-8)	4.79 (1.33)	1.63-7.88	0.01	0.23	.67

Note. Symbolic = Symbolic preference, Relative Spend = the amount willing to spend on symbolic in comparison to utilitarian products, MIL = presence of meaning in life, Impress M = Impression management.

3.4.2 Correlations

I conducted all analyses using SPSS software (version 29). Admiration and rivalry were positively correlated with one another, and both were positively correlated with narcissism, which is consistent with previous research (Back et al., 2013; Table 3.2). Narcissism, admiration, and rivalry were positively associated with preference for symbolic items; that is, participants were more likely to select the flashy-looking product regardless of it being less practical or functional. Only rivalry was positively related to participants' willingness to spend more on symbolic relative to utilitarian products. Symbolic preferences were related to higher spending on symbolic relative to utilitarian products. There was no relation between narcissism and state MIL. However, admiration was positively, and rivalry negatively, related to state MIL.

Impression management was negatively associated with narcissism and with admiration and rivalry. It was also negatively related to symbolic preferences and positively related to state MIL. Due to these significant correlations, I controlled for impression management in all subsequent analyses.

Table 3.2

Correlations in Study 2a

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Narcissism	1						
2. Admiration	.69**	1					
3. Rivalry	.50**	.50**	1				
4. Symbolic	.20**	.19**	.30**	1			
5. Relative Spend	.10	.04	.13*	.63**	1		
6. Presence of MIL	.07	.16*	-.14*	-.11	-.05	1	
7. Impress M	-.33**	-.32**	-.51**	-.15*	-.11	.20**	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, Symbolic = Symbolic preference, Relative Spend = the amount willing to spend on symbolic in comparison to utilitarian products, Impress M = Impression management.

3.4.3 Main Regression and Mediation Analysis

3.4.3.1 Narcissism and Symbolic Preference

3.4.3.1.1 H1a: Narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (Replication)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater symbolic preferences, $b = 0.10$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 3.66$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.08$. Hypothesis 1a was supported.

3.4.3.1.2 H1b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (New)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher rivalry predicted greater symbolic preferences, $b = 0.57$, $SE = 0.17$, $t = 3.32$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = 0.09$, but higher admiration did not, $b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.16$, $t = 0.73$, $p = .466$, $R^2 = 0.09$, respectively. Hypothesis 1b was supported for rivalry only.

3.4.3.2 Narcissism and Willingness to Spend on Symbolic Products

3.4.3.2.1 H2a: Narcissists will be willing to spend more on symbolic products (New)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism did not predict a greater willingness to spend more on symbolic products, $b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = -1.36$, $p = .176$, $R^2 = 0.02$. Hypothesis 2a was not supported.

3.4.3.2.2 H2b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be willing to spend more on symbolic products (New)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration and rivalry (entered simultaneously) did not predict a greater willingness to spend more on symbolic products, b

= -0.04, $SE = 0.07$, $t = -0.54$, $p = .588$, $b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 1.50$, $p = .134$, $R^2 = 0.02$,

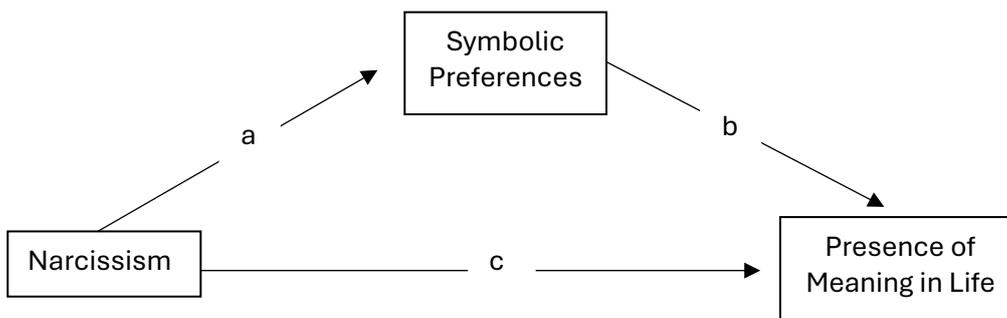
respectively. Hypothesis 2b was not supported.

3.4.3.3 Symbolic Preference as a Mediator of the Relation Between Narcissism and State MIL

To test Hypothesis 3, I conducted three (i.e., narcissism, admiration, rivalry) mediation analyses using PROCESS (version 4.1, Hayes, 2022) Model 4, with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. In all analyses, the outcome variable was state MIL, and the mediator was symbolic preference (Figure 3.1). I entered impression management as a covariate in all models.

Figure 3.1

Mediation Model in Study 2



3.4.3.3.1 H3a: Narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (New)

Narcissism was the predictor in a simple mediation regression analysis (Table 3.3). The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effect of narcissism on symbolic preference was positive and significant. Symbolic preferences did not predict MIL. There was no indirect effect of symbolic preference. Hypothesis 3a was not supported.

3.4.3.3.2 H3b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (New)

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 3.3), I entered admiration as the predictor and rivalry and impression management as the covariates. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The main effect of admiration on symbolic preferences was not significant, and symbolic preferences did not predict MIL. Therefore, although admiration significantly and positively predicted MIL, there was no indirect effect of symbolic preferences.

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 3.3), I entered rivalry as the predictor and admiration and impression management as covariates. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The direct effect of rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The main effect of rivalry on symbolic preferences was positive and significant, but symbolic preferences did not predict MIL. Hence, although rivalry significantly and negatively predicted MIL, there was no indirect effect of symbolic preferences. Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

Table 3.3*Mediation Analyses in Study 2a*

Effect	Figure 3.1 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry				
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	
Total Effect:														
Narc → MIL		0.04	0.02	2.12*	0.07	0.43	0.10	4.37**	0.20	-0.27	0.11	-2.59*	0.20	
Main Effects:									0.20					0.20
Narc → Symbolic	a	0.10	0.03	3.66**	—	0.12	0.16	0.73	—	0.57	0.17	3.32*	—	
Symbolic → MIL	b	-0.08	0.04	-1.86	—	-0.05	0.04	-1.33	—	-0.05	0.04	-1.33	—	
Narc → MIL	c	0.04	0.02	2.51*	—	0.44	0.10	4.44**	—	-0.24	0.11	-2.25*	—	
Indirect Effects:					95% CI					95% CI				95% CI
Narc → MIL														
Via Symbolic	a * b	-0.01	<0.01	—	-.0182, + .0003	-0.01	0.01	—	-.0368, + .0153	-0.03	0.03	—	-.0853, + .0140	
Model Summary:		<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	
		0.29	6.78	<.001	0.08	0.37	8.76	<.001	0.13	0.37	8.76	<.002	0.13	

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .001, Narc = narcissism, MIL = presence of meaning in life, Symbolic = symbolic preferences, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

3.5 Discussion

The first aim of Study 2a was to test that narcissists are more likely to prefer conspicuous products (i.e., prefer symbolic over utilitarian products). Narcissism positively predicted a preference for symbolic products, which is consistent with past research (Cisek et al., 2014; Sedikides et al., 2011). The hypothesis that both admiration and rivalry would positively predict symbolic preferences was supported only regarding rivalry. This pattern is consistent with Niesiobędzka's (2018b) study where only rivalry directly influenced the propensity for conspicuous consumption. The second aim of Study 2 was to check whether narcissists are willing to spend more on symbolic products. Narcissism did not predict a higher willingness to spend on symbolic than utilitarian products.

Abeyta et al. (2017) found extrinsic aspirations to increase narcissists state MIL. I did not replicate this pattern treating symbolic preference as the mediator (in the case of narcissism, admiration, and rivalry). Conspicuous consumption might not provide narcissists with short-term boosts in MIL. However, there were several issues with this consumer decision-making paradigm. Half of the products were private (i.e., blender, coffee maker, toaster, lamp, sound system) and half public (i.e., phone cover, headphones, camera, bottle, laptop). Although people can now show off products via social media, conspicuous consumption might be particularly relevant for public products. Therefore, the private products might not have been relevant for narcissists in terms of simulating a shopping experience that activates their desire to show off (i.e., conspicuous consumption). This is why preferences for symbolic products did not influence state MIL. Furthermore, I only used unisex products; as such, I could not use products such as clothes or jewellery, which are particularly relevant for conspicuous consumption as they can directly show off the user in public (i.e., unlike a toaster, or fan). Thus, the products might not have been personally relevant. Additionally, the high number of products (21) might have led to fatigue. I opted to replicate this study with improved products.

3.6 Method – Study 2b

3.6.1 Participants

I also advertised this study ('Personality and Consumerism') on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter) and on Call4 for the chance to win one of two £25 Amazon vouchers in a prize draw. Likewise, I recruited University of Southampton undergraduates for course credit.

In total, 385 participants completed the study. The a priori exclusion criteria were: (1) having more than 10% missing data (Bennett; 2001), (2) completing the study in under 15 minutes, (3) incorrectly responding to all attention check (there were two of them: e.g., 'Please tick number 4'; Oppenheimer et al., 2009), and (4) providing invariant responses (e.g., '1,1,1,1,1'). I excluded 15 participants based on the criteria 1, 2, 3, and 4. The final sample ($n = 370$) consisted of 325 female and 45 male participants. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 44 years ($M = 19.51$, $SD = 2.02$), and 88.1% of them were full-time students. Most participants were Caucasian (83.8%; 3.2% White and Asian; 1.6% any other mixed/multiple ethnic background; 2.4% Indian; 0.5% Pakistani; 0.8% Chinese; 2.2% any other Asian background; 2.2% African; 1.6% Caribbean; 0.3% any other Black/African/Caribbean background; 0.5% Arab; 0.8% unknown). Regarding employment, 0.3% of participants were employed full-time, 9.7% were employed part-time, 1.9% were not employed, and 88.1% were students.

An a priori Monte Carlo simulation was conducted to determine the suitable sample size needed as this is the best practice for determining sample size in mediation models (Schoemann et al., 2017). The simulation was specifically tailored to a simple mediation model, which was the most complex analysis within this study. It was conducted using 10,000 iterations, with a standard significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), and desired power of 0.80. Results indicated that a sample size of 790 would be sufficient to achieve 80% power. This suggests that this study is significantly underpowered, as the analyses were conducted using only 370 participants. However, Kline (2005) recommends 20 participants per parameter, which is a less conservative approach. There are 5 parameters in the most complex analysis

(i.e., admiration, rivalry, impression management, symbolic preferences, MIL). There are 74 participants per parameter in this study.

3.6.2 Procedure and Improved Measures

This study lasted about 20 minutes. The design, procedure, and measures were the same as in Study 2a. I reduced the number of product choices in the consumer decision-making paradigm to lower participant fatigue, and chose gender specific products (i.e., personal products, such as clothes and accessories, could be used). Furthermore, most of the products were public. I tested the new product images in a pilot study to ensure that the photographs intended to look flashier and luxurious were rated significantly more so than its paired photograph in each pair (see Appendix B for the Pilot Study for Study 2b products). I also tested product descriptions to ensure that the description intended to be more practical and functional were rated significantly more so than its paired description in each pair. I summed the number of times participants favoured the luxury, less practical product to create a luxurious preference variable. For most of the products there was a female version (rated by females) and male version (rated by males). Some of the products were unisex and thus were included in both female and male versions of the pilot study.

There were eight products (i.e., pen, lamp, coat, headphones, holdall, phone case, sports shorts/bra, wallet/purse) and four filler products (i.e., suitcase, camera, Hoover, alarm clock) chosen from the pilot study.

3.7 Results

3.7.1 Scale Reliability

Most scales were internally reliable with a Cronbach's alpha greater than .70 and met the required parametric assumptions (Table 3.4; Kline, 2011). Impression management had an alpha of .36. However, I removed the second item (i.e., 'I never cover up my mistakes'),

because the statistical output revealed that the Cronbach's alpha would raise to .62 if this item was deleted, with the next highest suggestion only being .34.

Table 3.4*Descriptive Statistics in Study 2b*

Measure (Scale)	<i>M(SD)</i>	Min Max	Skew	Kurtosis	α
Narcissism (0-40)	10.80 (6.34)	0-32	0.86	0.615	.85
Admiration (1-8)	3.70 (1.21)	1.11-7.44	0.17	-0.25	.86
Rivalry (1-8)	2.33 (1.07)	1-7.78	1.49	3.21	.86
Symbolic Preference (0-8)	3.72 (2.04)	0-8	-0.004	-0.84	-
Relative Spend (-7-7)	0.23 (1.33)	-5.25-3.75	-0.25	0.94	-
Presence of MIL (1-8)	4.34 (1.52)	1-8	0.05	-0.67	.88
Impression Management (1-8)	4.83 (1.06)	1-7.57	-0.11	0.17	.62

Note. Symbolic = Symbolic preference, Relative Spend = the amount willing to spend on

symbolic in comparison to utilitarian products, MIL = presence of meaning in life, Impress M = Impression management.

3.7.2 Correlations

I carried out all analyses using SPSS software (version 29). Admiration and rivalry were positively related, and both were positively related with narcissism, which is consistent with previous research (Back et al., 2013; Table 3.5). Narcissism and admiration were positively related with symbolic preferences, suggesting that participants were more likely to select the flashy-looking product regardless of it being less practical or functional. Rivalry was unrelated to symbolic preferences. Narcissism, admiration, and rivalry positively related to participants' willingness to spend more on symbolic relative to utilitarian products. Narcissism and admiration were positively, and rivalry negatively, related to state MIL. Further, impression management was negatively linked to narcissism, admiration, and rivalry. It was also negatively linked to symbolic preferences and positively linked to MIL. Therefore, I controlled for impression management in all subsequent analyses.

Table 3.5*Correlations in Study 2b*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Narcissism	1						
2. Admiration	.68**	1					
3. Rivalry	.40**	.48**	1				
4. Symbolic	.19*	.11*	.10	1			
5. Relative Spend	.17**	.11*	.15**	.73**	1		
6. Presence of MIL	.32**	.39**	.01	-.09	.10	1	
7. Impress M	-.26**	-.33**	-.47**	-.13*	.05	.02	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, Symbolic = symbolic preferences, Relative Spend = the amount willing to spend on symbolic in comparison to utilitarian products, Impress M = impression management.

3.7.3 Main Regression and Mediation Analysis

3.7.3.1 Narcissism and Symbolic Preference

3.7.3.1.1 H1a: Narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products

(Replication)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater symbolic preference, $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = 3.35$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.04$.

Hypothesis 1a was supported.

3.7.3.1.2 H1b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (Replication)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration and rivalry did not predict symbolic preferences, $b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 1.22$, $p = .225$, $R^2 = 0.02$, $b = 0.07$, $SE = 0.12$, $t = 0.59$, $p = .555$, $R^2 = 0.02$, respectively. Hypothesis 1b was not supported.

3.7.3.2 Narcissism and Willingness to Spend

3.7.3.2.1 H2a: Narcissists will be willing to spend more on symbolic products (Replication)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater willingness to spend more on symbolic products, $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.01$, $t = 2.68$, $p = .008$, $R^2 = 0.04$. Hypothesis 2a was supported.

3.7.3.2.2 H2b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be willing to spend more on symbolic products (Replication)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration and rivalry (entered simultaneously) did not predict a greater willingness to spend more on symbolic products, $b = -0.05$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 0.76$, $p = .445$, $b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 1.45$, $p = .148$, $R^2 = 0.03$, respectively. Hypothesis 2b was not supported.

3.7.3.3 Symbolic Preferences as a Mediator of the Relation Between Narcissism and State MIL

I tested Hypothesis 3, by performing three (i.e., narcissism, admiration, rivalry) mediation analyses using PROCESS (version 4.1, Hayes, 2022) Model 4, with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. In all analyses, the outcome variable was state MIL, and the mediator was symbolic preferences (Figure 3.1). I entered impression management as a covariate in all models.

3.7.3.3.1 H3a: Narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (New)

In a simple mediation regression analysis (Table 3.6), narcissism was the predictor. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effect of narcissism on symbolic preference was positive and significant. Symbolic preferences did

not predict MIL. Therefore, although narcissism significantly and positively predicted MIL, there was no indirect effect of symbolic preference. Hypothesis 3a was not supported.

3.7.3.3.2 H3b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (New)

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 3.6), I entered admiration as the predictor and rivalry and impression management as covariates. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The main effect of admiration on symbolic preferences was not significant, and symbolic preference did not predict MIL. Therefore, although narcissistic admiration significantly and positively predicted MIL, there was no indirect effect of symbolic preference.

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 3.6), I entered rivalry as the predictor and admiration and impression management as covariates. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The direct effect of rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The main effect of rivalry on symbolic preference was not significant and symbolic preference did not predict MIL. Thus, although rivalry significantly and negatively predicted MIL, there was no indirect effect of symbolic preference. Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

Table 3.6*Mediation Analyses in Study 2b*

Effect	Figure 3.1 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Total Effect:													
Narc → MIL		0.08	0.01	6.90**	0.12	0.65	0.07	9.68**	0.20	-0.29	0.08	-3.54**	0.20
Main Effects:													
Narc → Symbolic	a	0.06	0.02	3.32*	—	0.12	0.10	1.20	—	0.08	0.12	0.65	—
Symbolic → MIL	b	-0.03	0.04	-0.73	—	<-0.01	0.04	-0.14	—	<-0.00	0.04	-0.14	—
Narc → MIL	c	0.09	0.01	6.92**	—	0.65	0.07	9.66**	—	-0.29	0.08	-3.53**	—
Indirect Effects:													
				95% CI				95% CI				95% CI	
Narc → MIL													
Via Symbolic	a * b	<-0.01	<0.01	—	-.0062, +.0026	<-0.01	0.01	—	-.0135, +.0099	<-0.01	<0.01	—	-.0131, +.0089
Model Summary:													
		<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²
		0.34	16.05	<.001	0.12	0.45	31.32	<.001	0.20	0.45	31.32	<.001	0.20

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .001, Narc = narcissism, MIL = presence of meaning in life, Symbolic = symbolic preferences, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped

confidence intervals.

3.8 Overall Discussion

The purpose of Study 2 was to examine the relations among narcissism, conspicuous consumption, and state MIL. I obtained support for the hypothesis that narcissism positively predicts preferences for conspicuous products (replication). In both Study 2a and 2b, narcissists were more likely to prefer symbolic products despite them being inferior in practicality to the alternative product. This finding is in line with literature showing that narcissists are particularly prone to consuming luxurious, flashy, and exclusive products (Cunningham-Kim et al., 2011; Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2007; Zhu et al., 2021). Similar findings were found for both Study 2a and 2b, suggesting that they are relevant for both university students (Study 2a had 88.1% university students) and social media users (Study 2b had 3.2% university students). Surprisingly, admiration did not predict symbolic preferences in either study. Rivalry predicted symbolic preferences, albeit, only in Study 2a. This finding was consistent with Niesiobędzka and Małgorzata's (2021) study, where rivalry, but not admiration, predicted conspicuous consumption. Prior links between narcissism and conspicuous consumption may have been driven by this self-protective, competitive, narcissistic strategy, to a larger extent than the admiration-seeking strategy.

Given the limited literature on the relation between these forms of narcissism (i.e., admiration and rivalry) and conspicuous consumption, it is important to find out if these patterns emerge consistently in future studies. Rivalry positively predicted conspicuous consumption in studies that have measured conspicuous consumption in different ways. Niesiobędzka and Konaszewski (2021) measured self-reported conspicuous consumption, whereas I assessed direct shopping preferences. Narcissism (but not admiration or rivalry) predicted a higher willingness to spend more on symbolic relative to utilitarian products.

Symbolic preferences did not mediate the relation between narcissism and state MIL in either study. Symbolic preferences were also unrelated to state MIL in both studies. In all, conspicuous consumption did not predict higher state MIL for narcissists.

Chapter 3

These two studies had limitations. Firstly, the design was cross-sectional. Secondly, the consumer decision-making paradigm was hypothetical. Narcissists might get a boost in MIL when they buy and attain symbolic products in real life. Finally, the consumer decision-making paradigm may have not been sufficiently engaging or personally relevant. In the next study, I changed the consumer decision-making paradigm.

Chapter 4 Study 3 – Does Product Availability Affect Meaning in Life for Narcissists?

4.1 Does Blocking Symbolic Product Consumption Temporarily Reduce Meaningfulness?

In Study 2a and 2b, narcissism was associated with greater preference for symbolic preferences. This is consistent with findings that narcissists are more likely to engage in luxury consumption (Cunningham-Kim et al., 2011; Vazire et al., 2008) and with studies that have used a similar consumer decision-making paradigm (Cisek et al., 2014; Sedikides et al., 2011). There are few such studies, especially those that test for narcissistic forms, admiration, and rivalry. Findings for studies that have assessed admiration and rivalry are inconsistent. In Study 2a, only rivalry was positively associated with symbolic preferences. This mirrored the findings of a recent study (Niesiołędzka & Konaszewski, 2021) that used a self-report measure of conspicuous consumption (The Conspicuous Consumption Scale; Chung & Fischer, 2001) instead of a consumer decision-making paradigm. They also found that admirative and rivalrous narcissism was positively related with conspicuous consumption indirectly via self-verified behaviours (i.e., willingness to check opinions or any information about oneself) on the social networking site, Facebook. However, in Study 2b, neither admiration nor rivalry predicted symbolic preferences.

Furthermore, I did not find evidence in Study 2a and 2b that conspicuous consumption can give rise to state MIL for narcissists. Zhu et al. (2021) found that narcissists' conspicuous consumption did not mediate their higher MIL. They also found that narcissists' higher external value (i.e., a different term referring to the *significance* component of MIL; Li et al., 2021), was not mediated by their higher conspicuous consumption. Recent findings suggest that achieving external value is one of the most important prerequisites to gain a sense of MIL (Costin and Vignoles, 2020). Narcissists'

conspicuous consumption was negatively related to both external value and MIL. This study, however, only looked at narcissism but not admiring or rivalrous narcissism. Zhu et al. (2021) also measured conspicuous consumption via a self-report measure (i.e., The Conspicuous Consumption Scale; Chen, 2009) and dispositional MIL as opposed to state MIL. This is an issue because conspicuous consumption may not be related to stable, dispositional MIL, but it might influence short term or daily boosts in state MIL in narcissists. Finally, Zhu et al.'s (2021) study (like Study 2a and b) was correlational and not experimental. Correlation does not mean causation.

4.2 Current Research

In Study 3, to test my hypothesis that conspicuous consumption increases state MIL for narcissists, I experimentally manipulated product availability (i.e., available versus unavailable condition). I assessed if product availability would influence the relation between narcissism and state MIL, in a moderated regression analysis. Little research has experimentally tested the influence of conspicuous consumption on state MIL whilst controlling for narcissism and the forms of admiration and rivalry. This will allow for cause-and-effect conclusions to be made. I provided extra information in the consumer decision-making paradigm by informing participants that there will be a chance to win their preferred product to make participants more invested in making their decision of choosing a product they would want to own rather than just which they prefer. To manipulate product availability participants were informed that the product they wanted was either available (available condition) or unavailable (unavailable condition). I assessed narcissism and admiration and rivalry as predictors. State MIL was the outcome variable.

4.2.1 Hypothesis 1: Narcissism and Symbolic Preference

Narcissists are self-enhancers and are prone to self-enhancing by their conspicuous consumption (Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013; Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2007, 2011). Martin et al. (2019) found that both admiring and

rivalrous narcissists have a vain consumer lifestyle which implies conspicuous consumption. Further Niesiobedzka and Konaszewski (2021) found that both admiration and rivalry are indirectly and directly related to greater conspicuous consumption, respectively. Despite limited research, I hypothesise that admiration and rivalry will positively predict symbolic preferences as they are both traits that are characterised as being motivated by grandiosity and agency.

- **H1a:** Narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (Replication)
- **H1b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (Replication)

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Symbolic Preferences Will Mediate the Relation Between Narcissism and State Meaning in Life

Narcissists are motivated by external rewards and tend to engage in conspicuous consumption (Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013; Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2007). This type of consumer behavior is likely to provide narcissists with a sense of meaning (Sedikides et al., 2013), as it aligns with their strong sense of personal agency (Campbell et al., 2002) and satisfies their need for status and superiority (Baumeister & Wallace, 2012; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). Since narcissists place a high value on appearance, their preference for symbolic products is likely to enhance their sense of meaning in life (MIL).

- **H2a:** Narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (Replication)
- **H2b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (Replication)

4.2.3 Hypothesis 3: Product Availability Will Moderate the Indirect Effect of Symbolic Preference on the Relation between Narcissism and State Meaning in Life

Narcissists are likely to gain MIL from the consumption of luxury products (Sedikides, et al., 2013). If conspicuous consumption can boost narcissists' state MIL, then I hypothesise that blocking the ability to own a symbolic item (versus not blocking), by manipulating the availability of the product, will reduce the positive indirect effect of symbolic preference.

- **H3a:** The positive indirect effect of symbolic preferences on the relation between narcissism and state MIL will be reduced for those who are exposed to the product unavailable (versus product available) condition (New)
- **H3b:** The positive indirect effect of symbolic preferences on the relation between admirative and rivalrous narcissism and state MIL will be reduced for those who are exposed to the product unavailable (versus product available) condition (New)

4.3 Method

4.3.1 Participants

The study titled 'Personality and Marketing', was advertised on [Prolific](#) for any person over the age of 18, from the UK and USA, fluent in English, and identified as either Male or Female. Participants completed the study in exchange for £2.50. Participants were also recruited on Efolio and Call for Participants. All participants had the chance to win one of two £25 Amazon vouchers in a prize draw (including those who were paid £2.50 on Prolific).

In total, 182 participants completed the study. The a priori exclusion criteria were: (1) having more than 10% missing data (Bennett; 2001), (2) completing the study in under 10 minutes, and (3) providing invariant responses (e.g., '1,1,1,1,1'). I excluded six participants based on the criteria 1. The final sample ($n = 176$) consisted of 90 female and 86 male

participants. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 56 years ($M = 25.86$, $SD = 7.72$), and 31.3% of them were full-time students. Most participants were Caucasian (85.8%; 1.7% White & Asian; 4.5% any other mixed background; 1.7% Indian; 1.7% any other Asian background; 1.7% African; 0.6% Caribbean; 0.6% Hispanic; 1.7% unknown). Regarding employment, 30.7% of participants were employed full-time (and 23.3 % part-time), 12.5% were unemployed, looking for work, 1.1% were homemakers, 0.6% were unemployed, not looking for work, and 0.6% were stay at home parents.

An a priori Monte Carlo simulation was conducted to determine the suitable sample size needed as this is the best practice for determining sample size in mediation models (Schoemann et al., 2017). The simulation was specifically tailored to a simple mediation model, which was the most complex analysis within this study. It was conducted using 10,000 iterations, with a standard significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), and desired power of 0.80. Results indicated that a sample size of 739 would be sufficient to achieve 80% power. This suggests that this study is significantly underpowered, as the analyses were conducted using only 176 participants. However, Kline (2005) recommends 20 participants per parameter, which is a less conservative approach. There are 8 parameters in the most complex analysis (i.e., admiration, rivalry, impression management, symbolic preference, product availability [available, unavailable]), admiration x symbolic preference, rivalry x symbolic preference, symbolic preference x product availability). There are 22 participants per parameter in this study.

4.3.2 Procedure and Measures

This study took on average 25 minutes to complete. First, participants read an information sheet before consenting to take part in the online survey (via Qualtrics). Participants then responded to demographic questions, followed by measures of narcissism and a measure of impression management. Next, participants completed a consumer decision-making paradigm, followed by a product availability manipulation and a state

measure of meaning. After this, the participants were debriefed and compensated for their time (i.e., £2.50 and/or entered the prize draw).

4.3.2.1 Narcissism

To measure narcissism, I used the 40-item NPI scale (Raskin & Terry, 1988) and the NARQ (Back et al., 2013; 1 = *very uncharacteristic or untrue*, 8 = *very characteristic or true*).

4.3.2.2 Impression Management

To measure impression management, I used the impression management subscale of the BIDR-16 (Hart et al., 2015; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 8 = *strongly agree*).

4.3.2.3 Consumer Decision-Making Paradigm

I used the same consumer decision-making paradigm as in Study 2b. In this study participants were under the ruse that “we are working in conjunction with a new marketing company, Axoloti, based in Southampton in the UK. Axoloti is promoting a range of products, and we are interested to see which products you prefer”. Participants viewed 12 products. Two photographs were placed side by side for each product, showing two different versions of the same type of product. One photograph depicted a flashier and more luxurious version, whereas the other depicted a less flashy, more ordinary-looking product. For 8 of the products (i.e., pen, lamp, coat, headphones, holdall, phone case, sports shorts/bra, wallet/purse) the flashier product was paired with a description (below the photograph) that was less practical and functional than the description paired with the more ordinary-looking product. Participants were instructed to look at the pictures and descriptions of each pair of products, and to rate how much they like the products in each pair individually (1 = *not very much*, 8 = *very much*). The ratings for this question on each of the flashier/luxury products were averaged to create a symbolic liking variable. The ratings for this question on each of the more practical/functional products were averaged to create utilitarian liking variable. They were also asked to select which product from each of the pairs they would most likely buy (as in Study 2). I summed the number of times participants favoured the luxury, less practical product to create a symbolic preference variable.

There were four filler products (i.e., suitcase, camera, Hoover, alarm clock) evenly distributed throughout the list to prevent suspicion (e.g., from guessing the pattern that the symbolic product always had a lower utilitarian description). For some of the filler products, I paired the more practical description with the flashier-looking products. For the remaining filler products, I used the photographs and descriptions that did not differ from each other in terms of luxury and practicality, respectively. I did not include the ratings for the filler products in the analysis.

4.3.2.4 Product Availability Manipulation

Participants viewed all photographs (but not descriptions) of the products in the study on one screen (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to select one product (of all products in the study) that they would like the chance to win in a prize draw. They were told that this would be courtesy of the marketing company, Axoloti. I am not working with a marketing company and participants would not have the chance to win one of the products, but I used this cover story to facilitate the manipulation of product availability (i.e., the key manipulation in this study).

After participants selected their preferred product, they were randomly assigned to one of two conditions; product available (i.e., told they will be entered into a prize draw to win their preferred product) or product unavailable (i.e., told that their chosen product is not in stock, but they will be entered into a prize draw to win the alternative version of their preferred product). This was a form of deception as the products displayed in the study were not available for the prize draw. This allowed me to block the ability to own certain products to see if MIL is negatively impacted. Participants were debriefed afterwards on this issue and instead of being entered into a prize draw to win a product from the study, they were given the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw to win one of two Amazon vouchers (worth £25 or equivalent).

4.3.2.5 Meaning in Life

To measure MIL, I used the state version of the presence scale from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 8 = *strongly agree*).

4.3.2.6 Manipulation Check

To check that the participants liked the product that they believed to have a chance to win, at the end of the study (before debriefing), participants were instructed to rate how happy owning this product would make them feel (1 = *not at all*, 8 = *very much so*).

Participants were also instructed to rate how satisfied, frustrated, and disappointed they were with the product they were told they would have chance to win in the prize draw.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Variables and Scale Reliability

I computed 8 variables for the analyses. These were: narcissism (NPI; independent variable), narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry (NARQ; independent variables), presence of MIL (dependent variable), and impression management (covariate), symbolic preference (dependent variable & post-hoc mediator), symbolic liking (post-hoc mediator), utilitarian liking (post-hoc mediator). The manipulation of product availability (i.e., available, not available) was the moderator.

All scales were internally reliable with a Cronbach's alpha value greater than .07 except for the Impression Management scale (Table 4.1). All scales were within the acceptable boundaries for skewness (i.e., -2 and +2) and kurtosis (i.e., -7 and +7; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011).

Table 4.1*Descriptive Statistics in Study 3*

Measure (Scale)	M(SD)	Min Max	Skew	Kurtosis	α
Narcissism (0-40)	12.96 (6.60)	1-29	0.30	-0.63	.84
Narcissistic Admiration (1-8)	4.17 (1.31)	1.22-7.22	-0.12	-0.45	.86
Narcissistic Rivalry (1-8)	3.11 (1.24)	1-6.89	0.35	-0.54	.82
Symbolic Preference (0-8)	3.49 (1.97)	0-8	0.03	-0.76	-
Symbolic Liking (0-8)	5.14 (1.14)	1.75-7.63	-0.38	-0.05	-
Utilitarian Liking (0-8)	5.04 (1.19)	1.88-7.75	-0.27	0.10	-
Presence of MIL (1-8)	4.75 (1.52)	1-8	-0.21	-0.17	.89
Impression Management (1-8)	4.70 (1.08)	1.8-8	0.13	0.09	.66

Note. Symbolic and Utilitarian Liking is used for the Post Hoc Analyses.

4.4.2 Correlations

I carried out all analyses using SPSS software (version 29). Admiration and rivalry were positively related, and both were positively related with narcissism, which is consistent with previous research (Back et al., 2013; Table 4.2). Narcissism, admiration, and rivalry were positively related with symbolic preferences, meaning they were more likely to select the flashy-looking product regardless of it being less practical or functional. Narcissism, admiration, and rivalry were positively related with symbolic liking but only narcissism and rivalry were negatively related with utilitarian liking. Admiration was positively, and rivalry negatively, related to state MIL. Further, impression management was positively related to state MIL and negatively linked to all other variables. Therefore, impression management was controlled for in all subsequent analyses.

Table 4.2*Correlations in Study 3*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Narcissism	1							
2. Admiration	.67**	1						
3. Rivalry	.33**	.30**	1					
4. Symbolic Preference	.42**	.31**	.30**	1				
5. Symbolic Liking	.23**	.32**	.17*	.49**	1			
6. Utilitarian Liking	-.27**	-.09	-.20**	-.54**	.08	1		
7. Presence of MIL	.34**	.28**	-.22**	.23**	.22**	-.06	1	
8. Impression Management	-.16*	-.16*	-.49**	-.15*	-.15*	.10	.16*	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$,

4.4.3 Main Regression and Moderated Mediation Analysis

4.4.3.1 Narcissism and Symbolic Preference

4.4.3.1.1 H1a: Narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products

(Replication)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater symbolic preferences, $b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = 5.81$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.18$. Hypothesis 1a was supported.

4.4.3.1.2 H1b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products rivalry (Replication)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration and rivalry predicted greater symbolic preferences, $b = 0.37$, $SE = 0.11$, $t = 3.34$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = 0.14$, $b = 0.35$, $SE = 0.13$, $t = 2.62$, $p = .010$, $R^2 = 0.14$, respectively. Hypothesis 1b was supported.

4.4.3.2 Symbolic Preferences as a Mediator of the Relation Between Narcissism and State MIL

I tested Hypothesis 2 by performing three (i.e., narcissism, admiration, rivalry) mediation analyses using PROCESS (version 4.1, Hayes, 2022) Model 4, with 5000 bootstrap

samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. In all analyses, the outcome variable was state MIL, and the mediator was symbolic preference (Figure 4.1). I entered impression management as a covariate in all models.

4.4.3.2.1 H2a: Narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (Replication)

In a simple mediation regression analysis (

Effect	Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Total Effect:													
Narc → MIL		0.09	0.02	5.34*	0.16	0.04	0.08	5.24*	0.18	-0.03	0.10	3.66*	0.08
Main Effects:													0.14
Narc → S Preference	a	0.012	0.02	5.81*	—	0.037	0.11	3.34*	—	0.035	0.13	2.62*	—
S Preference → MIL	b	0.010	0.06	1.62	—	0.019	0.06	3.33*	—	0.019	0.06	3.33*	—
Narc → MIL	c	0.008	0.02	4.25*	—	0.037	0.08	4.40*	—	0.043	0.10	4.34*	—
Indirect Effects:					95% CI				95% CI				95% CI
Narc → MIL	Via S Preference	a * b	0.001	0.01	—	-.003	0.007	—	+ .0135,	0.006	0.003	—	+ .0128,

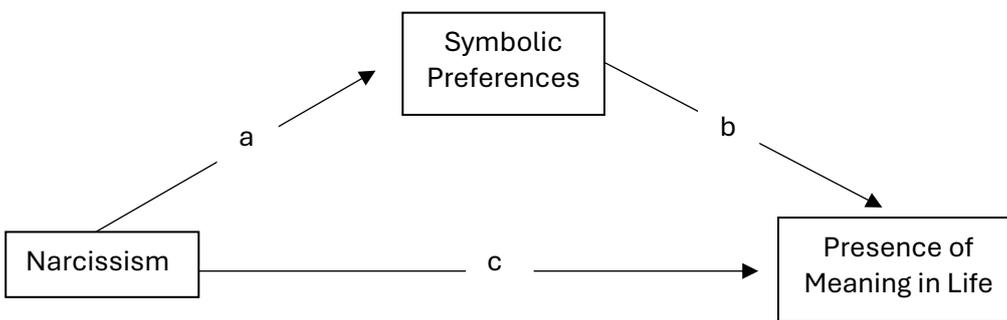
Model Summary :	1,				+ .14				+ .1			
	R	F	P	R ²	R	F	P	R ²	R	F	P	R ²
	0.42	12.61	<.001	0.18	0.42	12.90	<.001	0.23	0.42	12.90	<.001	0.23

Table 4.3), narcissism was the predictor. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of

narcissism on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effect of narcissism on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. Symbolic preferences did not predict MIL. There was no indirect mediating effect of symbolic preferences. Hypothesis 2a was not supported.

Figure 4.1

Mediated Model of Symbolic Preference in Study 3



4.4.3.2.2 H2b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report greater state MIL via preferences for symbolic products (Replication)

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (

Effect	Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		b	SE	t	R ²	b	SE	t	R ²	b	SE	t	R ²

Total Effect:													
Narc → MIL		0.09	0.02	5.34*	0.16	0.04	0.08	5.24*	0.18	-0.03	-0.10	-0.06*	0.18
Main Effects:													
Narc → S Preference	a	0.12	0.02	5.81*	—	0.03	0.11	3.34*	—	0.03	0.13	2.62*	—
S Preference → MIL	b	0.10	0.06	1.62	—	0.09	0.06	3.33*	—	0.09	0.06	3.33*	—
Narc → MIL	c	0.08	0.02	4.25*	—	0.03	0.08	4.40*	—	0.04	0.10	4.34*	—
Indirect Effects:													
Narc → MIL					95% CI				95% CI				95% CI
Via S Preference	a * b	0.01	0.01	—	1, +.0294	0.07	0.03	—	.0135, +.1481	0.06	0.03	—	+0.128, +0.1426
Model Summary:													
		R	F	P	R²	R	F	P	R²	R	F	P	R²
		0.42	12.16	<.001	0.18	0.48	12.90	<.001	0.23	0.48	12.90	<.001	0.23

Table 4.3 Error! Reference source not found.), I entered admiration as the predictor,

and rivalry and impression management as covariates. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of admiration on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effect of admiration on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. The main effect of symbolic preferences on MIL was positive and

significant and symbolic preferences positively mediated the relation between admiration and MIL.

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (

Effect	Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		b	SE	t	R ²	b	SE	t	R ²	b	SE	t	R ²
Total Effect:													
Narc → MIL		0.09	0.02	5.34*	0.16	0.04	0.08	5.24*	0.18	-0.03	0.10	-3.66*	0.08
Main Effects:													0.14
Narc → S Preference	a	0.12	0.02	5.81*	—	0.03	0.11	3.34*	—	0.03	0.13	2.62*	—
S Preference → MIL	b	0.10	0.06	1.62	—	0.09	0.06	3.33*	—	0.09	0.06	3.33*	—
Narc → MIL	c	0.08	0.02	4.25*	—	0.03	0.08	4.40*	—	-0.04	0.10	-4.34*	—
Indirect Effects:					95% CI				95% CI				95% CI
Narc → MIL													
Via S Preference	a * b	0.01	0.01	—	.03, +.0294	0.07	0.03	—	.0135, +.1481	0.06	0.03	—	+0.128, +.1426
Model Sum		R	F	P	R²	R	F	P	R²	R	F	P	R²

mary

:

0.12	<	0.18	0.23	0.12	<.001	0.23	0.12	<.001	0.23
4	.1	.00	18	4	.9	.01	4	.9	.01
2	6	1		8	0		8	0	

Table 4.3 **Error! Reference source not found.**), I entered rivalry as the predictor, and

admiration and impression management as covariates. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The direct effect of rivalry on MIL was negative and significant, and the main effect of rivalry on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. The main effect of symbolic preferences on MIL was positive and significant and symbolic preferences positively mediated the relation between rivalry and MIL. Hypothesis 2b was supported.

Table 4.3*Mediation Analyses for Hypothesis 2 in Study 3*

Effect	Error! Reference source not found. Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry				
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	
Total Effect:														
Narc→MIL		0.09	0.02	5.34**	0.16	0.44	0.08	5.24**	0.18	-0.37	0.10	-3.66**	0.18	
Main Effects:													0.14	
Narc→S Preference	a	0.12	0.02	5.81**	—	0.37	0.11	3.34**	—	0.35	0.13	2.62*	—	
S Preference→MIL	b	0.10	0.06	1.62	—	0.19	0.06	3.33**	—	0.19	0.06	3.33*	—	
Narc→MIL	c	0.08	0.02	4.25**	—	0.37	0.08	4.40**	—	-0.43	0.10	-4.34**	—	
Indirect Effects:														
					95% CI						95% CI			
Narc→MIL	Via S Preference	a * b	0.01	0.01	—	-0.0031, +0.0294	0.07	0.03	—	+0.0135, +0.1481	0.06	0.03	—	+0.0128, +0.1426
Model Summary:														
		<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	
		0.42	12.16	<.001	0.18	0.48	12.90	<.001	0.23	0.48	12.90	<.001	0.23	

Note. *p <.05, **p <.001, Narc = narcissism, MIL = presence of meaning in life, S Preference = symbolic preferences, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile

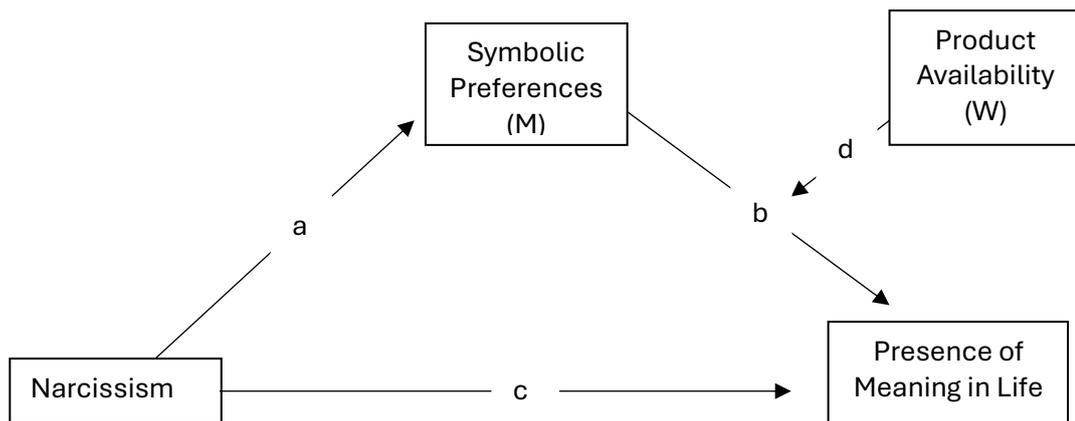
bootstrapped confidence intervals.

4.4.3.3 Product Availability as a Moderator of the Indirect Effect of Symbolic Preference on the Relation Between Narcissism and State Meaning in Life

To investigate Hypothesis 3a and 3b, I conducted three (narcissism, admiration, rivalry) moderation mediation analyses using PROCESS (version 4.1, Hayes, 2022) Model 14, with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. In all analyses, the outcome variable was state MIL, the mediator was symbolic preferences, and the moderator on path b was product availability (Figure 4.2). Impression management was included as a covariate.

Figure 4.2

Moderated Mediation Model in Study 3



4.4.3.3.1 H3a: The positive indirect effect of symbolic preferences on the relation between narcissism and state MIL will be reduced for those who are exposed to the product unavailable (versus product available) condition (New)

In a moderation regression analysis (Table 4.4), I entered narcissism as the predictor and admiration and impression management as covariates. The main effect of narcissism on symbolic preference was significant. The moderated mediation analysis showed that the

indirect effect of symbolic preference between narcissism and state MIL was not moderated by product availability. Hypothesis 3a was not supported.

4.4.3.3.2 H3b: The positive indirect effect of symbolic preferences on the relation between admirative and rivalrous narcissism and state MIL will be reduced for those who are exposed to the product unavailable (versus product available) condition (New)

In a moderation regression analysis (Table 4.4), I entered admiration as the predictor and rivalry and impression management as covariates. The main effect of admiration on symbolic preference was significant. The moderated mediation analysis showed that the indirect effect of symbolic preference between narcissism and state MIL was not moderated by product availability. In another moderation regression analysis (Table 4.4), I entered rivalry as the predictor and admiration and impression management as covariates. The main effect of rivalry on symbolic preference was significant. The moderated mediation analysis showed that the indirect effect of symbolic preference between narcissism and state MIL was not moderated by product availability. Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

4.4.3.4 Manipulation Check

I measured how 'happy' participants were with the thought of owning their chosen product and using a simple linear regression, tested whether narcissism predicted happiness. It did not (product available condition; $b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 1.75$, $p = .085$; product unavailable condition; $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -0.83$, $p = .411$). I ran a multiple regression with admiration and rivalry on happiness. Higher admiration predicted greater happiness in the product available condition, $b = 0.35$, $SE = 0.15$, $t = 2.39$, $p = .019$, but did not in the product unavailable condition, $b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.12$, $t = 1.62$, $p = .110$. Rivalry did not predict happiness in either product available, $b = -0.34$, $SE = 0.19$, $t = -1.76$, $p = .082$, or product unavailable condition, $b = -0.24$, $SE = 0.13$, $t = -1.81$, $p = .074$.

I also calculated whether narcissists were more likely to choose a symbolic product in the prize draw. Higher narcissism did not predict a symbolic choice in the prize draw ($b =$

0.01, $SE = 0.01$, $t = 0.52$, $p = .606$). The same was found for admiration ($b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = -0.49$, $p = .626$) and rivalry ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 1.90$, $p = .059$). I also controlled for impression management in all analyses.

Table 4.4*Moderated Mediation Analyses in Study 3*

Effect	Fig 9 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI
Main Effects:													
Narc→ Symb	a	0.12	0.02	5.81**	+ .0797, + .1618	0.37	0.11	3.34*	+ .1528, + .5935	0.35	0.13	2.62*	+ .0854, + .6100
Symb→ MIL	b	0.04	0.08	0.51	- .1140, +.1935	0.13	0.07	1.74	- .0176, + .2770	0.13	0.07	1.74	- .0176, + .2770
Moderated Mediation:													
Cond → Path b	d	0.01	0.01		- .0094, +.0380	0.04	0.04		- .0303, + .1207	0.04	0.04		- .0273, + .1317
Model Summary:													
		<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
		0.43	0.19	7.79	.000	0.50	0.25	9.27	.000	0.50	0.25	9.27	.000

Note. *p < .05, **p < .001, MIL = presence of meaning in life, Narc = narcissism, Symb = symbolic preferences, Cond = condition, *R*²-C = R square change, Fig =

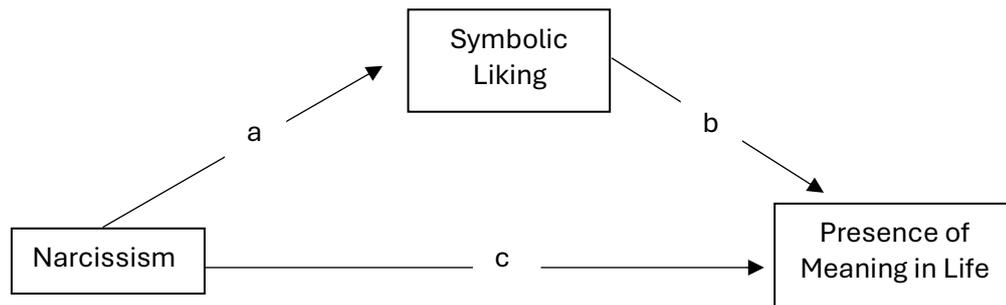
figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

4.4.4 Post Hoc

I tested in an exploratory analysis whether higher liking of symbolic products (whilst controlling for liking of utilitarian products) positively mediates the relation between narcissism and state MIL (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3

Mediation Model of Symbolic Liking in Study 3



I performed two simple regressions (narcissism on symbolic liking and utilitarian liking) and two multiple regressions (admiration and rivalry on symbolic liking and utilitarian liking; Table 4.5). I entered impression management as a covariate for all analyses. Higher narcissism and admiring narcissism predicted greater symbolic liking. Higher narcissism and narcissistic rivalry predicted lower utilitarian liking.

Table 4.5

Post Hoc

Predictor	Outcome	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Narcissism	Symbolic Liking	0.04	0.01	2.78	.006	0.06
	Utilitarian Liking	-0.05	0.01	-3.48	< .001	0.08
Admiration	Symbolic Liking	0.25	0.07	3.88	< .001	0.11
	Utilitarian Liking	-0.03	0.07	-0.46	.643	0.04
Rivalry	Symbolic Liking	0.04	0.08	0.46	.649	0.11
	Utilitarian Liking	-0.18	0.09	-2.16	.032	0.04

I tested the exploratory hypothesis, by performing three (i.e., narcissism, admiration, rivalry) mediation analyses using PROCESS in SPSS (version 4.1, Hayes, 2022) Model 4, with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. In all analyses, the

outcome variable was state MIL, and the mediator was symbolic liking (Figure 4.3). I entered impression management as a covariate in all models.

In a simple mediation regression analysis (Table 4.6), narcissism was the predictor. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effect of narcissism on symbolic liking was positive and significant. The main effect of symbolic liking on MIL was positive and significant and symbolic liking positively mediated the relation between narcissism and MIL. The main effect of narcissism on utilitarian liking was negative and significant. The main effect of utilitarian liking on MIL was not significant, thus did not mediate the relation between narcissism and MIL.

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 4.6), I entered admiration as the predictor, and rivalry and impression management as covariates. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of admiration on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effect of admiration on symbolic liking was positive and significant. The main effect of symbolic liking on MIL was positive and significant and symbolic liking positively mediated the relation between admiration and MIL. The main effect of admiration on utilitarian liking was not significant. The main effect of utilitarian liking on MIL was not significant, thus did not mediate the relation between admiration and MIL.

In a multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 4.6), I entered rivalry as the predictor, and admiration and impression management as covariates. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of rivalry on MIL was not significant. The direct effect of rivalry on MIL was negative and significant, and the main effect of rivalry on symbolic liking was not significant. The main effect of symbolic liking on MIL was positive and significant and symbolic liking did not mediate the relation between rivalry and MIL. The main effect of rivalry on utilitarian liking was negative and significant. The main effect of utilitarian liking on MIL was not significant, thus did not mediate the relation between admiration and MIL. Hypothesis E2 was supported with narcissism and admiration.

Table 4.6*Mediation Analyses for Exploratory Hypothesis 2 in Study 3*

Effect	Figure 4.3 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Total Effect:													
Narc→MIL		0.09	0.02	5.34**	0.16	0.44	0.08	5.34**	0.18	-0.37	0.10	-3.66**	0.18
Main Effects:													
Narc→ S Liking	a ₁	0.04	0.01	2.78*	—	0.25	0.07	3.88**	—	0.04	0.08	0.46	—
S Liking→ MIL	b ₁	0.24	0.10	2.49*	—	0.26	0.10	2.72*	—	0.26	0.10	2.72*	—
Narc→ U Liking	a ₂	-0.05	0.01	-3.48**	—	-0.03	0.07	-0.46	—	-0.18	0.08	-2.16*	—
U Liking→ MIL	b ₂	-0.01	0.09	-0.07	—	-0.15	0.09	-1.71	—	-0.15	0.09	-1.71	—
Narc→ MIL	c	0.08	0.02	4.55**	—	0.37	0.09	4.28**	—	-0.40	0.10	-4.05**	—
Indirect Effects:													
					95% CI				95% CI				
Narc→MIL													
Via S Liking	a ₁ * b ₁	0.01	0.01	—	+ .0008, + .0204	0.07	0.03	—	+ .0120, +.1430	0.01	0.02	—	- .0335, + .0599
Via U Liking	a ₂ * b ₂	<0.01	<0.01	—	- .0081, + .0091	<.01	0.01	—	- .0208, + .0372	0.03	0.02	—	- .0034, + .0853
Model Summary:													
		<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²
		0.44	10.17	<.001	0.19	0.47	9.83	<.001	0.22	0.47	9.83	<.001	0.22

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .001, Narc = narcissism, MIL = presence of meaning in life, S Liking = symbolic liking, U Liking = utilitarian Liking, Fig = figure, 95% CI =

percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

4.5 Discussion

The purpose of Study 3 was to experimentally test whether blocking access to a desired symbolic product would predict lower state MIL, for narcissists. I obtained support for the first hypothesis, that narcissism positively predicts symbolic preferences (replication). In both Study 2a and 2b, admiration did not predict symbolic preferences, however admiration, as well as narcissism and rivalry did positively predict symbolic preferences in this current study. Thus, previous findings that narcissists engage in conspicuous consumption (Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013; Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2007) may have been driven by both admiration and rivalry.

I tested whether symbolic preferences mediated the relation between narcissism and state MIL, regardless of the product availability condition (as in Study 2). Symbolic preferences did not mediate the relation between narcissism and state MIL but did positively mediate the relation between admiration and rivalry and state MIL. Pathways from narcissistic admiration and rivalry to symbolic preference and from symbolic preference to state MIL both positive and significant. I did not find any mediation of symbolic preferences in Study 2.

The consumer decision-making paradigm was modified in this study to make participants more invested in choosing a product they would want to own rather than just which they prefer. Therefore, by giving participants the chance to win their desired product the consumer decision-making paradigm is more realistic and more closely aligned with real shopping. However, the chance to win a product did not increase the state MIL derived from symbolic preferences for admiring or rivalrous narcissists.

In a post-hoc analysis, symbolic liking positively mediated the relation between narcissism and state MIL, with the pathways from narcissism to symbolic liking and from symbolic liking to state MIL both positive and significant, but this was only replicated with admiration, but not rivalry. This suggests that symbolic preferences are related to higher state MIL for admiring and rivalrous narcissists, but symbolic liking is related to higher state

MIL for admirative narcissists only. This suggests that rivalrous narcissists were not satisfied with the products available in the study. I did find that admirative narcissists reported greater happiness with their chosen product, whereas rivalrous narcissists did not. Considering the differences between admiration and rivalry and liking of symbolic and utilitarian products, admirative narcissists' symbolic preferences may boost their state MIL because of their high liking of the symbolic products. Alternatively, rivalrous narcissists' symbolic preferences may boost their state MIL from avoiding the utilitarian products, which they were more likely to dislike. Findings from this study suggest that admiration is linked to the liking of symbolic products, whereas rivalry is linked to the dislike of utilitarian products. Thus, these different motivations might have influenced the positive relation between all forms of narcissism and symbolic preferences.

The post-hoc analysis was correlational, however, and the experimental condition of product availability was not significant. This means that the chance of narcissists' winning their desired product did not influence their state MIL. Although the prize draw enhances the relevance of the products used in the study for participants, a limitation with this method is that it does not directly simulate the experience of conspicuous consumption, where luxurious products are attained straight away with guarantee. Creating a study where participants can conspicuously consume would be costly and difficult to standardise.

I also found that narcissists (and both admirative and rivalrous narcissists) were not more likely to choose a symbolic product for the prize draw. This may have been due to a further limitation with the prize draw in that there is a clear price difference between the products available to choose from. For example, the value of high specification headphones is more valuable than a luxury pen, so participants might have been inclined to choose the most expensive item. This suggests that the chosen products may not have reflected personal preference.

Furthermore, in retrospect, I should have included a funnel debrief to ask participants what they thought the hypotheses were or if they found anything suspicious about the study. I then would have been able to rule out anyone who guessed the aims of the

study. Further, it is possible that product availability did not moderate state MIL if participants did not want the specific products in the study. However, this is unlikely for narcissists and admiring narcissists, considering that the post-hoc analyses revealed that narcissism and admiration positively predicted symbolic liking, whereas rivalry did not. Only narcissism and rivalry negatively predicted utilitarian liking.

Despite that, the products in the prize draw included the fillers, which often had the more symbolic image paired with the more functional and practical description. Thus, it is unknown whether participants' chose a symbolic image of a filler because of its' symbolic quality, or because of its' higher specification. This is also dependent on whether the participant remembered the description that was paired to the photograph in the consumer decision-making paradigm. Due to the number of descriptions, it is unlikely that participants would remember the descriptions and it is likely that the product choice in the prize draw was based solely on the product photographs. Regardless, narcissists were not more likely to choose a symbolic product for the prize draw. This is problematic considering that the main hypothesis of my PhD refers specifically to conspicuous consumption, and whether this increases state MIL for narcissists. This study confirmed that admiring and rivalrous narcissists had higher state MIL partly due to their symbolic preferences in the consumer-decision task. However, as the experimental manipulation of product availability (versus unavailability) did not necessarily inhibit the availability of a symbolic product, it did not adequately measure whether the inhibition of conspicuous consumption lowers state MIL. In my next study I have created an alternative experimental design to assess whether conspicuous consumption increases state MIL for narcissists.

Chapter 5 Study 4 – Does Manipulating Meaning in Life Affect Symbolic Preferences for Narcissists?

5.1 Does Threatening vs. Affirming Meaning in Life Affect Symbolic Product Consumption?

Across Studies 2a, 2b, and 3 I found that narcissism positively predicted symbolic product preferences. This is consistent with studies that have used a similar consumer decision-making paradigm (Cisek et al., 2014; Sedikides et al., 2011). In expanding previous work that focused on overall narcissism scores, I found in Study 3 that both admiration and rivalry positively predicted symbolic product preferences.

I also found in Study 3 that narcissism and admiration were associated with increased state MIL following completion of the consumer decision-making paradigm. This was not moderated by whether the product was available to potentially own. However, regardless of whether the symbolic product was available or not, higher symbolic preferences positively mediated the relation between admiration and rivalry (not overall narcissism) and state MIL suggesting that narcissists can gain boosts in state MIL from conspicuous consumption.

The purpose of Study 4 is to assess, using a different experimental design, whether conspicuous consumption is related to meaning for narcissists. Here I examine the role of MIL in influencing conspicuous consumption, as opposed to testing whether conspicuous consumption affects MIL (as per Study 3). I do this by manipulating state MIL, instead of symbolic product availability, and examine how this affects symbolic preference. I hypothesise that by imbuing participants with meaning or threatening their meaning, their motivation to engage with activities that fulfil their MIL will be decreased or increased (respectively). This can be explained by the Meaning Maintenance Model (Heine et al., 2006) that states that humans find it hard to be confronted with meaninglessness and “seek to

reconstruct a sense of meaning whenever their meaning frameworks are disrupted” (p. 90).

The bigger the disruption, the more urgent their need is to restore their meaning. According to this model, fluid compensation is the act of responding to a meaning threat by affirming and strengthening an alternative meaning framework. This has been shown to reduce negative arousal induced by meaning threats (Taylor & Noseworthy, 2020).

I explored possible options for manipulating MIL in this study. One possible manipulation considered involves participants reading an essay on the argument that life has no meaning by a made-up philosopher, Dr James Park, of Oxford University (Routledge et al., 2011). I conducted an experimental pilot study to check the validity of this previously used meaning-threat manipulation (outlined in Appendix D). There was no difference in state MIL between those participants that read the meaning-threat essay and those that read the control essay (i.e., limitations of computers). Another option was to expose participants to a mortality salience condition, which is derived from terror management theory (TMT; Pyszczynski et al., 1999). According to TMT humans avoid the distress induced from mortality salience by fluid compensation. Mortality salience is one of the most studied meaning threat manipulations (Semko & Schulenberg, 2023) and has been experimentally shown to strengthen the desire for wealth and greed (Arndt et al., 2004) and increase desire for high-status goods (Mandel, 1999). Further, meaning threats heighten attachment of consumers towards their most attached brands (Tsai, 2014). Arndt et al (2004), Mandel (1999), and Tsai (2014) did not examine the individual difference of narcissism. As well as threatening MIL I aimed to affirm meaning in a separate condition to see whether this would decrease investment in conspicuous consumption for narcissists. Nostalgia has been shown to be a meaning-making resource (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018) and nostalgic recollections are predominantly social in nature (Wildschut, 2006). For narcissists, however, research has shown that narcissists are more likely to have nostalgic recollections that are agentic in nature (Hart et al, 2011). An issue with this approach is that the agentic nature of narcissists’ nostalgic recollections may prime them to engage in greater conspicuous consumption.

Instead of using mortality salience and nostalgia to manipulate participants' state MIL, I decided to affirm and threaten meaning in a more direct way. I did this by asking participants to reflect on a time when they felt their life was meaningful versus meaningless. I adapted Gino et al. (2015) authenticity and inauthenticity manipulation by replacing the words of authenticity and inauthenticity with meaningful and meaningless. This method ensures that I am directly manipulating state MIL.

5.2 Current Research

In Study 4, to test my hypothesis that conspicuous consumption increases state MIL for narcissists, I experimentally manipulated MIL (i.e., MIL threat versus MIL affirm versus control). I assessed if MIL threat and MIL affirm would influence the relation between narcissism and state MIL, in a moderated regression analysis. To manipulate MIL, participants were randomly allocated to either the meaning threat, meaning affirm, or control group. I assessed narcissism and admiration and rivalry as predictors. State MIL was the outcome variable.

5.2.1 Hypothesis 1: Narcissism and Symbolic Preference

Narcissists are prone to luxury consumption (Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013; Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2007, 2011). Martin et al. (2019) found that both admiring and rivalrous narcissists have a vain consumer lifestyle which implies conspicuous consumption. Further, Niesiobedzka and Konaszewski (2021) found that both admiration and rivalry are indirectly and directly related to greater conspicuous consumption, respectively. Despite limited research, I hypothesise that admiration and rivalry will all positively predict symbolic preferences as they are both motivated by grandiosity and agency.

- **H1a:** Narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (Replication)
- **H1b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic product (Replication)

5.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Narcissism and Willingness to Spend on Preferred Products

It was found by Lee et al. (2013) that narcissism predicts a greater willingness to spend more on symbolic products. No studies have tested this with admiration or rivalry. Considering that admiration and rivalry are both hypothesised to engage in conspicuous consumption I further expect that these forms will also be associated with a greater willingness to spend a higher amount of money on desired products.

- **H2a:** Narcissists will be willing to spend more on preferred products (Replication)
- **H2b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be willing to spend more on preferred products (Replication)

5.2.3 Hypothesis 3: Meaning Manipulation will Moderate the Relation Between Narcissism and Symbolic Preferences

Narcissists are likely to gain MIL from the consumption of luxury products (Sedikides, et al., 2013). If symbolic product purchasing serves the need for MIL, then the absence of MIL (MIL threat condition) will exacerbate such purchasing; that is, narcissists will show a greater preference for symbolic over utilitarian products, to compensate for relative lack of meaning in their life. However, when MIL is present (MIL affirmation condition), narcissists will be less likely to turn to symbolic product purchasing as a way of replenishing MIL.

- **H3a:** Narcissists who are exposed to the MIL threat condition (versus MIL affirm and control) will have greater symbolic preferences (New)
- **H3b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists who are exposed to the MIL threat condition (versus MIL affirm and control) will have greater symbolic preferences (New)

- **H3c:** Narcissists who are exposed to the MIL affirm condition (versus MIL threat and control) will have lesser symbolic preferences (New)
- **H3d:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists who are exposed to the MIL affirm condition (versus MIL threat and control) will have lesser symbolic preferences (New)

5.3 Method

5.3.1 Participants

I advertised the study, titled 'Personality and Life Experiences', on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter), Prolific, and on Call4Participants.com for participants over the age of 18 with access to the internet. Participants completed the study in exchange for the chance to win one of two £25 Amazon vouchers in a prize draw. Those who were recruited via Prolific completed the study in exchange for £2.25 in addition to the prize draw. I also recruited University of Southampton undergraduates for course credit.

In total, 443 participants completed the study. The a priori exclusion criteria were: (1) having more than 10% missing data (Bennett; 2001), (2) completing the study in under 5 minutes and (3) providing invariant responses (e.g., '1,1,1,1,1'). I excluded 200 participants based on the criteria 1,2, and 3. The final sample ($n = 243$) consisted of 150 female and 92 male (1 missing) participants. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 89 years ($M = 32.25$, $SD = 13.76$), and 19.8% of them were full-time students. Most participants were Caucasian (74.9%; 4.5% Indian; 4.8% Any other Asian background; 4.5% White & Hispanic; 3.3% Any other mixed background; 2.5% African; 0.8% Caribbean; 2.4% unknown). Regarding employment, 52.3% were employed full-time (and 15.2% part-time), 4.9% were unemployed, looking for work, 2.1% were retired, 1.6% were unable to work, 1.2% were homemakers, 0.8% were stay at home parents, 0.4% were unemployed, not looking for work, 1.6% reported other options for the employment question (self-employed, employed whilst a full-time student, student unable to work).

To determine the suitable sample size needed for this moderation analysis, I used a recent web app, INTXPower, that was designed to calculate power for interactions (Sommet et al., 2023). While the interface uses dichotomous predictors, INT×Power is also applicable to continuous predictors. A partial attenuated interaction was predicted thus the standard interaction of $+0.35|+0.50$ (simple slopes) was estimated for this between groups, one-tailed analysis. Results indicated that a sample size of 4397 would be sufficient to achieve 80% power with a standard significance level ($\alpha=0.05$). This suggests that this study is significantly underpowered, as the analyses were conducted using only 243 participants. However, Kline (2005) recommends 20 participants per parameter, which is a less conservative approach. There are 9 parameters in the most complex analysis (i.e., admiration, rivalry, impression management, meaning manipulation dummy1, meaning manipulation dummy2, admiration x meaning manipulation dummy1, admiration x meaning manipulation dummy2, rivalry x meaning manipulation dummy1, rivalry x meaning manipulation dummy2). There are 27 participants per parameter in this study.

5.3.2 Procedure and Measures

This experimental study lasted approximately 15 minutes. Participants read an information sheet before consenting to take part in the online survey (via Qualtrics). Then, they responded to demographic questions, followed by measures of narcissism and a measure of impression management. Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (MIL affirm, MIL threat, control). Following this, participants completed a consumer decision-making paradigm. Participants were then fully debriefed and compensated for their time (i.e., 5 course credits, or £2.25 and/or entered the prize draw).

5.3.2.1 Narcissism

To measure narcissism, I used the 40-item NPI scale (Raskin & Terry, 1988) and the NARQ (Back et al., 2013; 1 = *very uncharacteristic or untrue*, 8 = *very characteristic or true*).

5.3.2.2 Impression Management

To measure impression management, I used the impression management subscale of the BIDR-16 (Hart et al., 2015; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 8 = *strongly agree*).

5.3.2.3 Meaning in Life Manipulation

The aim of this manipulation was to alter participants state MIL. Participants were randomly assigned to either the MIL affirm, threat, or control condition. The manipulation was adapted from Gino et al. (2015) authenticity and inauthenticity manipulation. In the MIL affirm condition, participants were asked to remember and write down an event that made them feel meaningful/purposeful/significant (Appendix E). Participants in the MIL threat condition were asked to write down an event where they felt meaningless/ insignificant/ purposeless. Participants in the control condition were asked to explain to others how to tie their shoelaces which should not elicit any feelings of either meaningfulness or meaninglessness.

5.3.2.4 Consumer Decision-Making Paradigm

I used the same consumer decision-making paradigm as in Study 2b. Participants viewed 12 products. Two photographs were placed side by side for each product, showing two different versions of the same type of product. One photograph depicted a flashier and more luxurious version, whereas the other depicted a less flashy, more ordinary-looking product. For eight of the products (i.e., pen, lamp, coat, headphones, holdall, phone case, sports shorts/bra, wallet/purse) the flashier product was paired with a description (i.e., below the photograph) that was less practical and functional than the description paired with the more ordinary-looking product.

Participants were instructed to look at the pictures and descriptions of each pair of products and were asked to rate how much they liked the products in each pair individually (1 = *not very much*, 8 = *very much*). They were also asked to select which product from each of the pairs they would most likely buy. I summed the number of times participants favoured the luxury, less practical, product to create a symbolic preference variable. Therefore, if participants chose the flashier product despite lower functionality, then this was considered

a conspicuous consumption preference. They were asked to rate how much they would be willing to spend on their preferred products (1 = *not very much*, 8 = *very much*).

There were four filler products (i.e., suitcase, camera, Hoover, alarm clock) evenly distributed throughout the list to prevent suspicion (e.g., from guessing the pattern that the symbolic product always had a lower utilitarian description). For some of the filler products, I paired the more practical description with the flashier-looking products. For the remaining filler products, I used the photographs and descriptions that did not differ from each other in terms luxury and practicality, respectively. I did not include the ratings for the filler products in the analysis.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Variables and Scale Reliability

I computed 8 variables for the analyses. These were: narcissism (NPI; independent variable), narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry (NARQ; independent variables), symbolic preference (dependent variable), symbolic spend (dependent variable), and impression management (covariate), symbolic liking (post-hoc dependent variable), utilitarian liking (post-hoc dependent variable). The manipulation of state MIL (i.e., MIL affirm, MIL threat, control) was the moderator.

All scales were internally reliable with a Cronbach's alpha value greater than .70 apart for the Impression Management scale (Table 5.1). All scales were within the acceptable boundaries for skewness (i.e., -2 and +2) and kurtosis (i.e., -7 and +7; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011).

Table 5.1*Descriptive Statistics in Study 4*

Measure (Scale)	M(SD)	Range	Skew	Kurtosis	α
Narcissism (0-40)	12.90 (7.84)	0-37	0.63	-0.11	.87
Admiration (1-8)	4.14 (1.42)	1-8	0.22	-0.26	.87
Rivalry (1-8)	3.12 (1.49)	1-7.56	0.57	-0.57	.89
Symbolic Preference (0-8)	3.57 (2.20)	0-8	0.04	-0.96	-
Preferred Product Spend (1-8)	4.24 (1.41)	1.13-8	0.27	-0.46	-
Symbolic Liking (1-8)	4.64 (1.42)	1-8	-0.13	-0.59	
Utilitarian Liking (1-8)	4.60 (1.27)	1.25-8	-0.22	-0.18	
Impression Management (1-8)	4.68 (1.11)	1-7.88	-0.11	0.95	.65

5.4.2 Correlations

Analyses were conducted using SPSS software (version 29). Admiration and rivalry were positively related, and both were positively related with narcissism, which is consistent with previous research (Back et al., 2013; Table 5.2). Narcissism, admiration, and rivalry were positively related with symbolic preferences. Narcissism and admiration were positively related with participants' willingness to spend on each of their preferred products (i.e., for each pair of products). Further, impression management was negatively related all the variables apart for participant's willingness to spend on their preferred products. Therefore, impression management was controlled for in all subsequent analyses.

Table 5.2*Correlations in Study 4*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Narcissism	1							
2. Admiration	.71**	1						
3. Rivalry	.54**	.52**	1					
4. Symbolic Preference	.49**	.45**	.40**	1				
5. Preferred Product Spend	.40**	.46**	.24**	.34**	1			
6. Symbolic Liking	.42**	.46**	.28**	.67**	.50**	1		
7. Utilitarian Liking	-.10	.01	-.09	-.44**	.20**	.09	1	
8. Impression management	-.22**	-.19**	-.39**	-.13*	.09	-.04	.09	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

5.4.3 Main Regression and Moderation Analysis

5.4.3.1 Narcissism and Symbolic Preference

5.4.3.1.1 H1a: Narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products (Replication)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater symbolic preferences, $b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = 8.34$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.24$. Hypothesis 1a was supported.

5.4.3.1.2 H1b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to prefer symbolic products rivalry (Replication)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration and rivalry predicted greater symbolic preferences, $b = 0.52$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 5.02$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.24$, $b = 0.34$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 3.28$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = 0.24$, respectively. Hypothesis 1b was supported.

5.4.3.2 Narcissism and Willingness to Spend

5.4.3.2.1 H2a: Narcissists will be willing to spend more on preferred products (Replication)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater willingness to spend more on preferred products, $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.01$, $t = 7.51$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.20$. Hypothesis 2a was supported.

5.4.3.2.2 H2b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be willing to spend more on preferred products (Replication)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration predicted greater willingness to spend more on preferred products, $b = 0.46$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 7.08$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.25$, but higher

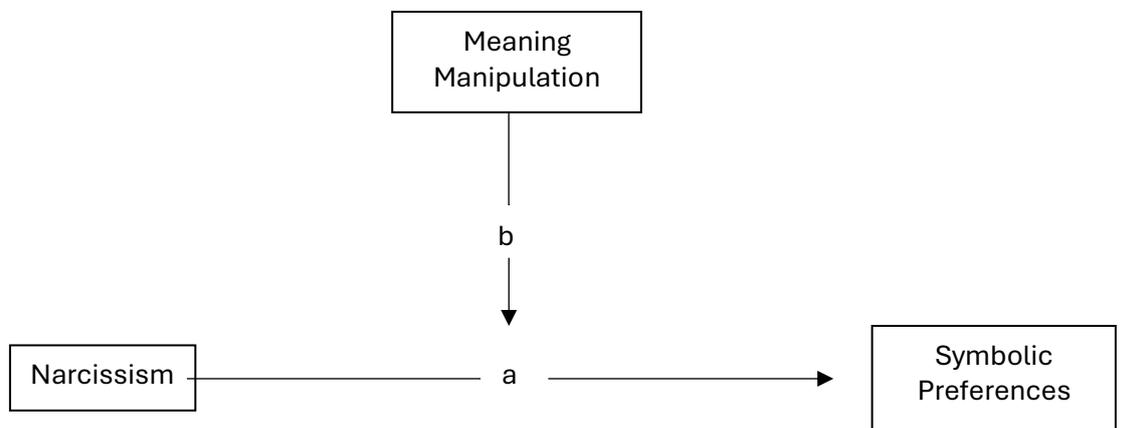
rivalry did not, $b = 0.07$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 1.01$, $p = .312$, $R^2 = 0.25$. Hypothesis 2b was supported for admiration only.

5.4.3.3 Meaning Manipulation as a Moderator of the Relation Between Narcissism and Symbolic Preferences

To investigate Hypothesis 3a and 3b, I conducted nine moderation analyses, using PROCESS in SPSS (version 4.1, Hayes, 2022) Model 1, with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. In all analyses, the outcome variable was symbolic preferences and the predictor variables were narcissism, admiration, and rivalry. The moderator variable was the condition in which participants were exposed to (MIL threat, MIL affirm, control; Figure 5.1). To compare the interaction between narcissism and each level of the moderator, dichotomous coding was used. In the first moderation analysis (moderation 1; Table 5.3), I tested the effect of threat (2) and affirm (3) in comparison to the reference group control (1). In the second moderation analysis (moderation 2; Table 5.4), I tested the effect of threat (2 [and control, 3]) in comparison to the reference group, affirm (1). In the third moderation analysis (moderation 3; Table 5.5), I tested the effect of affirm (2 [and control, 3]) in comparison to the reference group, threat (1). Moderation 1, 2, and 3 were conducted three times each to measure the predictors of narcissism, admiration, and rivalry in separate models. I entered impression management as a covariate in all analyses.

Figure 5.1

Moderation Model in Study 4



5.4.3.3.1 H3a: Narcissists who are exposed to the MIL threat condition (versus MIL affirm and control) will have greater symbolic preferences (New)

To test hypothesis 3a, I conducted moderation regression analyses. In the first analysis, I tested threat as a moderator with control as the reference group (moderation 1), and in the second analysis, I tested threat as a moderator with affirm as the reference group (moderation 2).

Narcissism was the predictor in a hierarchical moderation regression analysis (Table 5.3; Figure 5.2). Threat (2) and affirm (3) were entered as the moderators with control (1) as the reference group. The main effect of narcissism on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between narcissism and threat on symbolic preferences.

Narcissism was the predictor in a hierarchical moderation regression analysis (Table 5.4). Threat (2) and control (3) were entered as the moderators with affirm (1) as the reference group. The main effect of narcissism on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between narcissism and threat on symbolic preferences. Hypothesis 3a was not supported.

5.4.3.3.2 H3b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists who are exposed to the MIL threat condition (versus MIL affirm and control) will have greater symbolic preferences (New)

To test hypothesis 3b, I conducted four moderation regression analyses. In the first analysis (two for admiration and rivalry), I tested threat (and affirm) as a moderator with control as the reference group (moderation 1), and in the second analysis (two for admiration and rivalry), I tested threat (and control) as a moderator with affirm as the reference group (moderation 2).

5.4.3.3.2.1 Admiration

In a hierarchical moderation regression analysis (Table 5.3; Figure 5.3). I entered admiration as the predictor and rivalry as a covariate with impression management. Threat (2) and affirm (3) were entered as the moderators with control (1) as the reference group. The main effect of admiration on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between admiration and threat on symbolic preferences.

In a hierarchical moderation regression analysis (Table 5.4). I entered admiration as the predictor and rivalry as a covariate with impression management. Threat (2) and control (3) were entered as the moderators with affirm (1) as the reference group. The main effect of admiration on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between admiration and threat on symbolic preferences.

5.4.3.3.2.2 Rivalry

In a hierarchical moderation regression analysis (Table 5.3; Figure 5.4). I entered rivalry as the predictor and admiration as a covariate with impression management. Threat (2) and affirm (3) were entered as the moderators with control (1) as the reference group. The main effect of rivalry on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between rivalry and threat on symbolic preferences.

In a hierarchical moderation regression analysis (Table 5.4). I entered rivalry as the predictor and admiration as a covariate with impression management. Threat (2) and control (3) were entered as the moderators with affirm (1) as the reference group. The main effect of rivalry on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between rivalry and threat on symbolic preferences. Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

5.4.3.3.3 H3c: Narcissists who are exposed to the MIL affirm condition (versus MIL threat and control) will have lesser symbolic preferences (New)

To test hypothesis 3c, I conducted two moderation regression analyses. In the first analysis, I tested affirm (and threat) as a moderator with control as the reference group

(moderation 1), and in the second analysis, I tested affirm as a moderator with threat as the reference group (moderation 3).

Narcissism was the predictor in a moderation regression analysis (Table 5.3; Figure 5.2). Threat (2) and affirm (3) were entered as the moderators with control (1) as the reference group. The main effect of narcissism on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between narcissism and affirm on symbolic preferences.

Narcissism was the predictor in a moderation regression analysis (Table 5.5). Affirm (2) and control (3) were entered as the moderators with threat (1) as the reference group. The main effect of narcissism on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between narcissism and affirm on symbolic preferences. Hypothesis 3c was not supported.

5.4.3.3.4 H3d: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists who are exposed to the MIL affirm condition (versus MIL threat and control) will have lesser symbolic preferences (New)

To test hypothesis 3d, I conducted four moderation regression analyses. In the first analysis (two for admiration and rivalry), I tested affirm (and threat) as a moderator with control as the reference group (moderation 1), and in the second analysis (two for admiration and rivalry), I tested affirm (and control) as a moderator with threat as the reference group (moderation 3).

5.4.3.3.4.1 Admiration

In a moderation regression analysis (Table 5.3; Figure 5.3). I entered admiration as the predictor and rivalry as a covariate with impression management. Threat (2) and affirm (3) were entered as the moderators with control (1) as the reference group. The main effect of admiration on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between admiration and affirm on symbolic preferences.

In a moderation regression analysis (Table 5.5). I entered admiration as the predictor and rivalry as a covariate with impression management. Affirm (2) and control (3) were

entered as the moderators with threat (1) as the reference group. The main effect of admiration on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between admiration and affirm on symbolic preferences.

5.4.3.3.4.2 Rivalry

In a moderation regression analysis (Table 5.3; Figure 5.4). I entered rivalry as the predictor and admiration as a covariate with impression management. Threat (2) and affirm (3) were entered as the moderators with control (1) as the reference group. The main effect of rivalry on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between rivalry and affirm on symbolic preferences.

In a moderation regression analysis (Table 5.5). I entered rivalry as the predictor and admiration as a covariate with impression management. Threat (2) and control (3) were entered as the moderators with affirm (1) as the reference group. The main effect of rivalry on symbolic preferences was positive and significant. There was no interaction between rivalry and affirm on symbolic preferences. Hypothesis 3d was not supported.

Table 5.3*Moderation 1 with Threat and Affirm Conditions in Reference to the Control Condition in Study 4*

Effect	Figure 5.1 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
Main Effects:													
Narc → SP	a	0.16	0.03	5.63**	+ .1037, + .2152	0.59	0.16	3.77**	+ .2839, + .9054	0.65	0.15	4.39**	+ .3581, + .9408
Threat → SP		0.89	0.61	1.45	-.3146, +2.0860	0.28	0.95	0.30	-1.5882, +2.1574	0.31	0.79	0.39	-1.2521, +1.8756
Affirm → SP		0.36	0.57	0.63	-.7684, +1.4928	-1.22	0.98	-1.24	-3.1452, +.7107	0.43	0.71	0.61	-.9700, + 1.8327
Moderation:													
Narc*Threat → SP	b	-0.08	0.04	-1.95	-.1588, +.0009	-0.10	0.22	-0.45	-.5357, +.3353	-0.12	0.24	-0.52	-.5872, +.3415
Narc*Affirm → SP		-0.01	0.04	-0.17	-.0812, +.1628	0.31	0.22	1.42	-.1215, +.7501	-0.06	0.20	-0.31	-.4591, +.3330
Model Summary:													
		<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
		0.51	0.26	13.67	.000	0.47	0.22	10.99	.000	0.40	0.16	7.65	.000
THOUI:													
			<i>R</i> ² - <i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>		<i>R</i> ² - <i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>		<i>R</i> ² - <i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
			0.01	2.33	.100		0.01	1.88	.155		<.01	0.14	.869

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, the threat and affirm analyses are in reference to the control condition, Narc = narcissism, SP = symbolic preferences, Threat = meaning threat condition, THOUI = Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s), which is whether the change in R square is due to the interaction, R^2 - C = R square change, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

Table 5.4*Moderation 2 with Threat and Control Conditions with Reference to the Affirm Condition in Study 4*

Effect	Figure 5.1 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
Main Effects:													
Narc → SP	a	0.15	0.03	6.04**	+ .1031, + .2029	0.91	0.15	5.92**	+ .6062, + 1.2117	0.59	0.15	4.03**	+ .2999, + .8730
Threat → SP		0.52	0.58	0.90	-.6265, +1.6735	1.50	0.97	1.55	-.4048, +3.4085	-0.12	0.78	-0.15	-1.6612, +1.4219
Control → SP		-0.36	0.57	-0.63	-1.4928, +.7684	1.22	0.98	1.24	-.7107, + 3.1452	-0.43	0.71	-0.61	-1.8327, +.9700
Moderation:													
Narc* Threat → SP	b	-0.07	0.04	-1.84	-.1499, +.0049	-0.41	0.22	-1.86	-.8544, +.0253	-0.06	0.23	-0.26	-.5192, +.3995
Narc* Control → SP		0.01	0.04	0.17	-.0683, +.0812	-0.31	0.22	01.42	-.7501, +.1215	0.06	0.20	0.31	-.3330, +.4591
Model Summary:													
		<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
		0.51	0.26	13.67	.000	0.47	0.22	10.99	.000	0.40	0.16	7.65	.000
THOUI:													
			<i>R</i> ² - <i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>		<i>R</i> ² - <i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>		<i>R</i> ² - <i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
			0.01	2.33	.100		0.01	1.88	.155		.001	0.14	.869

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, the threat and control analyses are in reference to the affirm condition, Narc = narcissism, SP = symbolic preferences, Threat = meaning threat condition, THOUI = Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s), which is whether the change in R square is due to the interaction, R^2 - C = Rsquare change, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

Table 5.5*Moderation 3 with Affirm and Control Conditions in Reference to the Threat Condition in Study 4*

Effect	Figure 5.1 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI
Main Effects:													
Narc → SP	a	0.09	0.03	3.10*	+ .0331, + .1487	0.56	0.15	3.63	+ .2564, + .8647	0.58	0.18	3.30*	+ .2337., + .9240
Affirm → SP		-0.35	0.58	-0.61	-1.5037, + .7941	-1.10	0.97	-1.14	-3.0155, + .8102	0.38	0.77	0.49	-1.1394, +1.8962
Control → SP		-0.78	0.61	-1.28	-1.0706, + .4188	-0.05	0.94	-0.05	-1.8988, +.18087	-0.14	0.77	-0.19	-1.6648, +1.3769
Moderation:													
Narc* Affirm → SP	b	0.06	0.04	1.48	-.0192, + .1351	0.32	0.22	1.41	-.1239, + .7549	-0.02	0.23	-0.07	-.4612, + .4289
Narc* Control → SP		0.07	0.04	1.71	-.0103, + .1473	0.04	0.22	0.17	-.3914, + .4641	0.07	0.22	0.31	-.3705, + .5105
Model Summary:													
		<i>R</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
		0.50	0.25	13.38	.000	0.46	0.21	10.69	.000	0.40	0.16	7.67	.000
THOUI:													
			<i>R</i>²-<i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>		<i>R</i>²-<i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>		<i>R</i>²-<i>C</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
			0.01	1.69	.186		0.01	1.16	.314		.001	0.10	.908

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, the affirm and control analyses are in reference to the threat condition, Narc = narcissism, SP = symbolic preferences, Threat = meaning threat condition, THOUI = Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s), which is whether the change in R square is due to the interaction, R^2-C = R square change, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

Figure 5.2

Moderation Analysis with Narcissism as the Predictor in Study 4

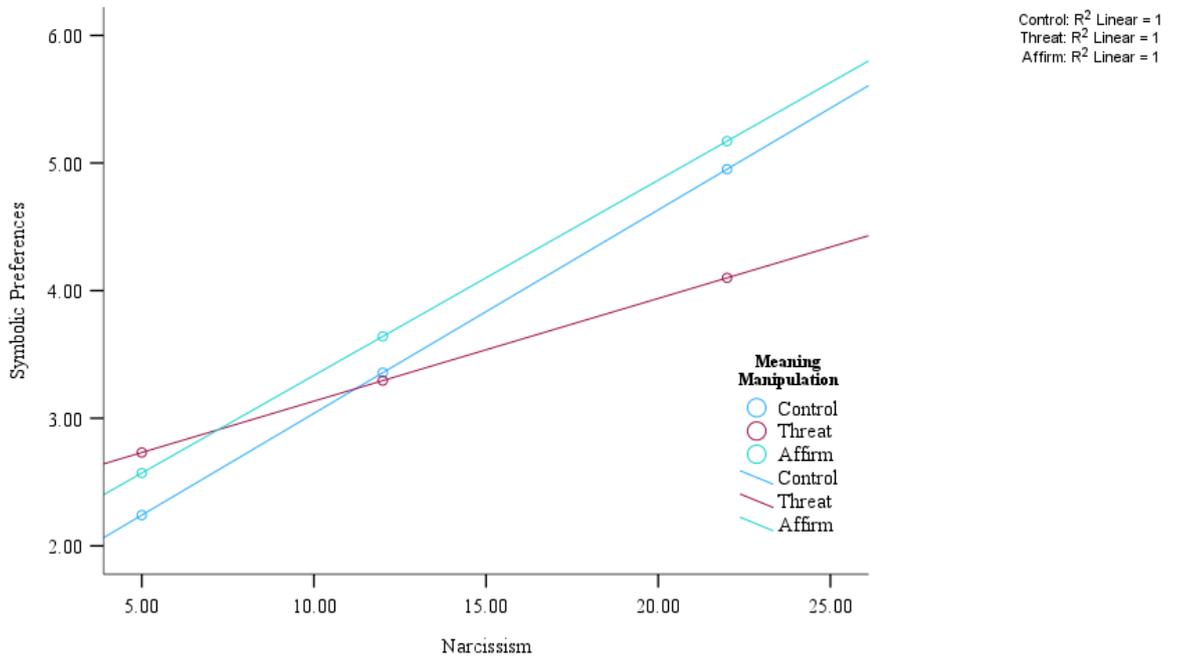


Figure 5.3

Moderation Analysis with Admiration as the Predictor in Study 4

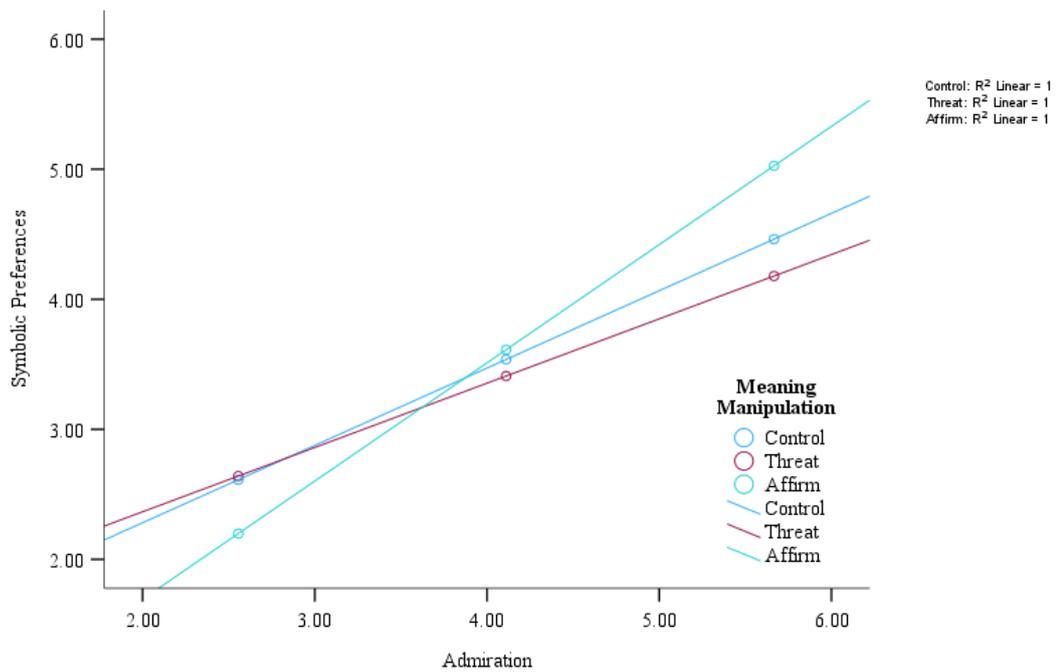
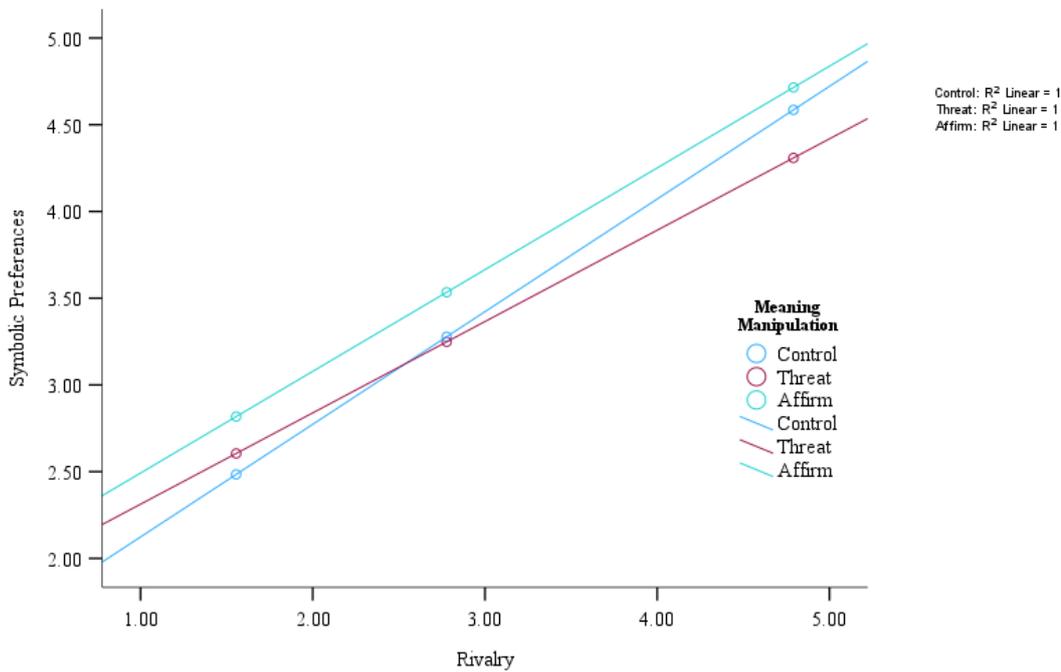


Figure 5.4

Moderation Analysis with Rivalry as the Predictor in Study 4



5.4.4 Post-Hoc

Even though the manipulation of state MIL did not moderate state MIL, I wanted to test whether (Exploratory 1; E1) narcissists were more likely to like symbolic than utilitarian products.

I found in a simple linear regression that higher narcissism predicted greater symbolic liking, $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.01$, $t = 7.28$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.18$. I found in a multiple linear regression, with admiration and rivalry entered as simultaneous predictors, that higher admiration predicted greater symbolic liking, $b = 0.43$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 6.38$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.22$, but higher rivalry did not, $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 1.12$, $p = .263$, $R^2 = 0.22$.

I found in a simple linear regression that higher narcissism did not predict utilitarian liking, $b = -0.01$, $SE = -0.01$, $t = -1.33$, $p = .186$, $R^2 = 0.02$. I found in a multiple linear regression, with admiration and rivalry entered as simultaneous predictors, that higher admiration and rivalry did not predict utilitarian liking, $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 1.14$, $p = .255$, $R^2 = 0.02$; $b = 0.10$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 1.44$, $p = .152$, $R^2 = 0.02$.

5.5 Discussion

The purpose of Study 4 was to experimentally examine the role of MIL in influencing symbolic (versus utilitarian) purchases. I obtained support for the first hypothesis, that narcissists are prone to conspicuous consumption (replication). This was also found for admiration and rivalry which was consistent with Study 3. I also obtained support for the second hypothesis, that narcissists are more likely to spend more on preferred products. This was found for admiration but not rivalry, which is consistent with both Study 2a and 2b. This suggests that previous associations between narcissism and spending on conspicuous consumption may be driven by admiration. It is noteworthy that in this current study, I only measured participants' willingness to spend on their preferred products and not specifically symbolic products. However, I have shown that all forms of narcissism show more symbolic product preferences, thus their willingness to spend on preferred products likely reflects willingness to spend on symbolic products. Despite this, it would have been advantageous to keep the spending measures consistent with Study 2. Nonetheless, this study shows that admiring narcissists are more likely to spend more on products.

Threatening MIL was not sufficient to increase the number of symbolic preferences, in narcissists. This finding was consistent for admiring and rivalrous narcissists. Affirming MIL was not sufficient to decrease the number of symbolic preferences, in narcissists. This finding was also consistent for admiring and rivalrous narcissists. Therefore, narcissists' conspicuous consumption may be unrelated to their MIL.

There were limitations with this experiment. Although narcissists preferred the symbolic products, this was a forced choice task which means the products might not have been appealing to them. Narcissists showed greater liking for the symbolic products, but this was only consistent for admiring but not rivalrous narcissists. Regardless, higher liking does not mean that those participants would buy those products in real life. It is therefore inconclusive as to whether conspicuous consumption in real life can boost state MIL.

Furthermore, there were no manipulation checks to assess whether the meaning manipulation was successful in attenuating the participants' state MIL. Although this manipulation was based on a well-established manipulation (Gino et al. (2015) and was a superior option to the alternative methods of altering MIL (i.e., Mortality-salience, nostalgia). Assessing the effectiveness of this manipulation (via manipulation checks) in future replications of this study would help improve the validity of the study and improve accuracy in the interpretation of the findings.

Additionally, irrespective of the effectiveness of the meaning manipulation, it may have been unrealistic to assume that participants symbolic preferences would adjust according to meaning affirmation and threat. With hindsight, it would have been useful to measure the amount participants would be willing to spend individually on the symbolic versus utilitarian versions of the products. The amount that participants were willing to spend on symbolic products may have been more malleable and influenced by the motivation to regain meaning (if conspicuous consumption does provide narcissists with meaning) than a change in something as robust as product taste.

Another problem with the consumer decision-making paradigm, that has been used throughout studies 2 to 4, is that it fails to measure participants motivation for symbolic preferences. Conspicuous consumption is the consuming of luxury products for the motivation of showing off to others, however, there are personal motives to luxury consumption, such as hedonism and congruity with internal self (Tsai, 2005; see Chapter One; Personal Motives). In my final study, I assess motivations behind luxury consumption to confirm that narcissists symbolic consumption reflects conspicuous consumption and the consequences of this for MIL.

Chapter 6 Study 5 – What Motivates Narcissists to Buy

What they Buy? What are the Consequences for Their

Meaning in Life?

6.1 Does Recalling a Recent Clothing Purchase Increase State Meaning in Life for Narcissists?

To this point I have measured conspicuous consumption via a hypothetical consumer decision-making paradigm. Although I have found that narcissists have symbolic preferences, I have been unable to demonstrate that this positively influences their state MIL. An issue with the consumer decision-making paradigm is that it is difficult to create a catalogue of products that would appeal to a wide range of participants. For example, the symbolic products used in my paradigm may not have been luxurious enough to be desirable for some participants. The forced-choice design resulted in greater symbolic preferences for narcissists, but it is uncertain whether they desired those products. Another issue with the paradigm is that it is limited in its ability to recreate an actual luxury purchase. Therefore, the paradigm may not have been realistic or exciting enough to simulate real life state changes from luxury purchases, even if the participants did desire the products used in the paradigm. Finally, in the previous studies, I did not measure motivations for symbolic preferences and thus I could not confirm that any preferences for luxury products were socially (i.e., conspicuously) motivated. Thus, the conclusion that narcissists' symbolic preference reflects conspicuous consumption specifically, cannot be drawn from studies that have used the consumer decision-making paradigm.

There are other ways to assess conspicuous consumption, such as self-report questionnaires; the conspicuous consumption orientation scale (Chaudhuri et al., 2011) and the conspicuous consumption scales (Chen et al., 2008, Chung & Fisher, 2001). I initially used the more behavioural consumer decision-making paradigm. Although the

questionnaires are more personally relevant and directly assess participants social motives for their symbolic purchases, they do not allow for in the moment state changes of MIL. This is because they require participants to reflect on their shopping habits, but do not simulate the experience of buying a product. Other methods to simulate the act of conspicuous consumption is to instruct participants to hypothetically imagine they are going to own a luxury product (Desields et al., 1997; Lee et al., 2013). The problem with this is that it is not personally relevant and may not arouse state changes involved with actually buying a luxury product. It could alternatively remind participants that they do not have such products. A solution is to instruct participants to recall a recent purchase that they are glad they bought. An actual bought product is personally relevant, and the fact that it is recent would suggest that any state changes in MIL should be fresh in mind.

6.2 Current Research

In my final study I investigated whether the recollection of a recent purchase would increase state MIL for narcissists. More specifically I examined whether narcissists were more likely to rate their recent purchase as symbolic (i.e., luxurious and attractive) and whether this predicted higher state MIL. An important aspect of this study is the measurement of motivations behind purchases. No previous research has assessed the social (status, stand out, fit in) and personal (hedonism, congruity with internal self) motivations that narcissists have for luxury consumption.

As explored in Chapter 1, there are both social and personal motives for luxury consumption (Tsai et al., 2005). Conspicuous consumption is a form of luxury consumption that is socially motivated (Das et al., 2021; Niesiołędzka, 2018) and is often referred to as status consumption because it reflects the desire to display status/wealth (Veblen, 1899). The literature on the different types of conspicuous consumption largely fixate on standing out, often known as the snob effect (Das et al., 2021; Kastanakis et al., 2011; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014) and fitting in, often termed as the bandwagon effect (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020; Parilti & Tunç, 2018; Stępień, 2018). Further, the literature on personal motivations for

luxury consumption often include hedonism (LeBe & Dubé, 2001; Shahid & Paul, 2021; Tsai et al., 2005; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) and congruity with internal self (Bharti et al., 2022; Gil et al., 2012; Tian et al., 2001; Tsai et al., 2005). This highlights that luxury consumption is not only a matter of conspicuousness; Huyen et al., 2016)

Personal and social motives may coexist and encourage luxury consumption, for example, those who have snobbish attitudes towards luxury consumption were more likely to strongly value hedonic benefits of luxury consumption, such as the fun-factor (Stępień, 2018). Additionally, Cho et al. (2022) found that hedonism partly accounted for both the social motives of need for uniqueness and bandwagon effect on purchase intentions. Narcissism is also positively associated with hedonism (Jonason et al., 2020; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002). Furthermore, narcissists have been found to have higher self-brand connections with publicly consumed products (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021). Although Fazli-Salehi et al (2021) did not necessarily measure luxury consumption, they did use popular brands for the public products (e.g., Apple, Toyota). The measurement for self-brand connections reflected congruity with internal self as it included items such as 'Brand X reflects who I am', 'I feel a personal connection to X', and 'I consider brand X to be me' (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). This suggests that narcissists may have simultaneous social and personal motives underlying their luxury consumption.

Neave and Fastoso (2020) and Zhu et al. (2021) demonstrated that narcissists are prone to conspicuous consumption using the conspicuous consumption orientation scale (Chaudhuri et al., 2011) and the conspicuous consumption scale (Chen, 2008), respectively. Study 5 extends this research by assessing the specific social and personal motives behind real luxury purchases. I included some of the items from Chaudhuri et al.'s (2021) conspicuous consumption orientation scale for the social motives of luxury consumption. The conspicuous consumption orientation scale includes social motives of both displaying status (e.g., 'I buy some products because I want to show others that I am wealthy') and standing out/uniqueness (e.g., 'By choosing a product having an exotic look and design, I show my friends that I am different'). The conspicuous consumption scale includes the

social motive of status ('People buy famous brands to make a good impression on others') and wanting to fit in ('People want to own brand-name products owned by their friends and colleagues'), otherwise known as the bandwagon effect (Niesiołędzka, 2018). Therefore, these self-report scales that measure conspicuous consumption seem to incorporate multiple social motives that also differ across scales, leading to issues with the validity and consistency of findings (Neave & Fastaso, 2020; Zhu et al., 2021). Therefore, they are inadequate for identifying the specific social luxury consumption motives of narcissists.

Other scales for conspicuous consumption that include multiple dimensions have been proposed by Bennett and Kottasz (2013), Mann and Sahni (2015), and Marcoux et al. (1997). These scales include dimensions of displaying status ('expression of status', 'ostentation and signalling', 'social status demonstration' respectively), standing out ('expression of uniqueness', 'uniqueness', 'dissociation from a group', respectively), and fitting in ('expression of conformity to an aspirational group', 'social conformity', 'communication of belonging to a group', respectively). Niesiołędzka and Konaszewski (2021) found a positive relation between both admiration (i.e., indirectly) and rivalry (i.e., directly) and conspicuous consumption using the conspicuous consumption scale by Chung and Fischer (2001), which has two dimensions; a general 'social motivation to consume' and 'fashion consciousness (Melo, 2022). Niesiołędzka and Konaszewski (2021) did not separate the dimensions of social motivation and fashion consciousness and instead combined the two and only reported an overall score. Thus, the conclusions that can be drawn from their research is quite vague in regard to conspicuous consumption. No study has assessed narcissism with the separate social dimensions of luxury consumption (i.e., status, standing out, fitting in). Therefore, it is unknown whether narcissism is associated with one specific form of social motivation, or all, not to mention the influence this has on state MIL.

This current study is unique in that it can assess whether specific social motivations (and personal) for luxury purchases, are positively related to narcissists' state MIL, following recollection of a recent real-life purchase. I assessed narcissism and admiration and rivalry as predictors. State MIL was the outcome variable.

6.2.1 Hypothesis 1: Narcissism and Symbolic Purchases

Narcissists tend to engage in luxury consumption (Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013; Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2007, 2011). I hypothesise that all narcissists (and both forms, admiration and rivalry) will be more likely to rate a recently bought product as more symbolic as they are motivated by grandiosity and agency (Back et al., 2013). Despite limited research, I hypothesise that admiration and rivalry will all positively predict symbolic preferences as they are both motivated by grandiosity and agency.

- **H1a:** Narcissists will be more likely to rate their recently purchased product as highly symbolic (New)
- **H1b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to rate their recently purchased product as highly symbolic (New)

6.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Narcissism and Amount Spent on Product

Narcissists are more likely to spend more on symbolic products (Lee et al., 2013). Considering that admiration and rivalry are both hypothesised to engage in luxury consumption I further expect that these forms will also be associated with a greater willingness to spend more on a recently purchased product.

- **H2a:** Narcissists will report spending more on a recently purchased product (New)
- **H2b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report spending more on a recently purchased product (New)

6.2.3 Hypothesis 3: Social Motives Will Mediate the Relation Between Narcissism and Symbolic Purchases

Narcissism is predictive of conspicuous consumption. So far, I have only demonstrated that narcissism (including admiration and rivalry) predicts symbolic product

preferences. I hypothesise that narcissists symbolic purchases are socially motivated as they are self-enhancers (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Krizan & Bushman, 2011; Sedikides, 2021b) and engage in self-regulatory strategies for self-promotion (Back et al., 2010; Hepper et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2018). Furthermore, narcissists are status driven (Grapsas et al., 2020) and this drive is consistent for both admiration and rivalry (Back et al., 2013; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). Therefore, I hypothesise that narcissism and both admiration and rivalry will predict status motives for luxury consumption. Admirative (but not rivalrous) narcissists are approach oriented and seek status through self-promotion (Back et al., 2013; Jordan et al., 2022; Sanyal & Sharma, 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). Rivalrous narcissists seek status largely through dominance and competitiveness (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019) thus are likely to seek status via conspicuous consumption by competing with others (Sedikides et al., 2018).

Beyond status, I expect narcissists to also engage in conspicuous consumption because it satisfies their desire to stand out and be unique (Lee et al., 2013). Narcissists crave attention and admiration (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008) and are also more likely to desire unique products (de Bellis et al., 2016). The need for uniqueness has explained the positive relation between narcissism and conspicuous consumption in a study that measured conspicuous consumption via a self-report scale (Neave & Fastoso., 2020). I also expect this to be true for the admirative form only as it is positively associated with the desire to be unique whereas rivalrous narcissism is unrelated to the need for uniqueness (Back et al., 2013; de Bellis et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2013). Martin et al. (2019) suggested that admirative narcissists believe they are special and want to be admired, whereas rivalrous narcissists want to look better than others. Additionally, Niesiobędzka and Konaszewki (2021) theorised that both admiration and rivalry would positively predict conspicuous consumption, but for different reasons (similarly to Sedikides et al., 2018). They hypothesised that admirative narcissists engage in conspicuous consumption because they believe they are special, want to be admired, strive to be unique, and have grandiose fantasies, whereas rivalrous narcissists conspicuously consume because they are defensive, want to be better than others, strive for supremacy, and have thoughts of

devaluing others. Therefore, previous rationale suggests that rivalrous narcissists use conspicuous consumption to compete with others, which is logical considering the name of this form of narcissism. However, Niesiołędzka and Konaszewki (2021) also suggested that rivalrous narcissists may conspicuously consume to self-protect because they fear social failure. This is plausible considering that rivalrous narcissists have low self-esteem (Zhang & Shrum, 2009) and thus might not have the confidence or skills to self-promote uniqueness through conspicuous consumption. Therefore, they may conspicuously consume to defend the self by signalling status and gaining social approval that comes through fitting in with popular trends and fashions. Niesiołędzka and Konaszewki's (2021) findings support this notion as rivalrous narcissists were more likely to conspicuously consume via self-verification, but not self-promotion on Facebook. This is further supported by the fact that rivalry was the only form to directly predict conspicuous consumption, but on a measure (Chung & Fischer, 2001) that focused on the fit in dimension of conspicuous consumption, that is, fashion-consciousness. The fact that admiration did not directly predict conspicuous consumption in this study also strengthens the hypothesis that admiring narcissists are more concerned with standing out than fitting in.

Additionally, I expect narcissists to buy luxury for hedonic motives (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002). Narcissists show greater hedonistic tendencies, (Jonason et al., 2020), are prone to novelty-seeking (Miller et al., 2009; Roberts & Robins, 2000), and are impulsive (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Rook, 1987; Vazire & Funder, 2006). This may be driven by rivalry and not admiration because only rivalry predicts impulsivity (Back et al., 2013) and relatedly impulsivity is also related to low self-esteem (Zhang & Shrum, 2009), similarly to rivalry (Leckelt et al., 2017). Lastly, I also expect narcissism to be positively associated with congruity with internal self (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021).

- **H3a:** Narcissists will report having purchased a more symbolic product and for social reasons (New)
- **H3b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report having purchased a more symbolic product and for social reasons (New)

6.2.4 Hypothesis 4: The Relation Between Narcissism and State MIL will be Mediated Sequentially by the Social Motive of Status and Recollection of a Recent Symbolic Purchase

Narcissism is positively associated with luxury consumption (Cunningham-Kim et al., 2011; Neave & Fastoso, 2020b) and I hypothesise that luxury products are meaningful to narcissists because they can help them to fulfil their motive to show off their grandiose self-image and status (Sedikides & Hart, 2022). I found no evidence that narcissists' symbolic preferences were related to their state MIL in studies 2a, 2b, 3, and 4. In this study, participants will report on their real-life purchases. I expect that narcissists gain boosts in meaning when they buy luxury products as luxury products will help them align with their desire for status (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). Specifically, I expect that narcissists are more likely to have status motives, which in turn increases likelihood of a symbolic recent purchase, and the recollection of such a purchase will lead to higher state MIL.

- **H4a:** Narcissists will report higher state MIL after recollection of the purchase of a symbolic product, that was bought for status motives (New)
- **H4b:** Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report higher state MIL after recollection of the purchase of a symbolic product, that was bought for status motives (New)

6.3 Method

6.3.1 Participants

This study was pre-registered (18/04/23). A copy of the pre-registration can be found here ([OSF Registries | Do Narcissists Gain Meaning from Conspicuous Consumption?](#)).

Participants over the age of 18 were recruited to take part in a study on 'How Does our Personality Influence the Clothes We Buy?' via social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter) and on Call4Participants.com for participants. They completed the study in exchange for the

chance to win one of two £25 Amazon vouchers in a prize draw. I also recruited University of Southampton undergraduates for course credit.

In total, 330 participants completed Part 1 of this two-part study and of those, 216 participants completed Part 2. Data cleaning of these 216 participants commenced. The a priori exclusion criteria were: (1) having more than 10% missing data (Bennett; 2001), (2) completing the study in under 15 minutes, (3) incorrectly responding to all attention check (there were four of them: e.g., 'Please tick number 4'; Oppenheimer et al., 2009), and (4) providing invariant responses (e.g., '1,1,1,1,1'). In total, 38 exclusions were made based on criteria 1 and 3. The final sample ($n = 178$) consisted of 136 female and 37 male (3 non-binary, 1 agender, 1 missing) participants. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 66 years ($M = 27.86$, $SD = 9.56$, with 1 participant missing), and 27.5% of them were full-time students. Most participants were Caucasian (78%; 3.4% Indian; 5.1% Any other Asian background; 7.3%; any mixed background; 2.2% African; 0.6%, 1.1% Caribbean; Any other /black/African/Caribbean background 1.1% Arab; 1.1% unknown). Regarding employment, 43.8% were employed full-time (and 20.2% part-time), 2.8% were unemployed, looking for work, 1.1% were unemployed, not looking for work, 1.1% were retired, 1.1% were homemakers, 0.6% were self-employed, 1.1% were unable to work, 0.6% were full time students who were employed part-time.

An a priori Monte Carlo simulation was conducted to determine the suitable sample size needed as this is the best practice for determining sample size in mediation models (Schoemann et al., 2017). The simulation was specifically tailored to a two-mediator, serial mediation model, which was the most complex analysis within this study. It was conducted using 10,000 iterations, with a standard significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), and desired power of 0.80. Results indicated that a sample size of 252 would be sufficient to achieve 80% power. This suggests that this study is slightly underpowered, as the analyses were conducted using only 178 participants. However, Kline (2005) recommends 20 participants per parameter, which is a less conservative approach. There are 6 parameters in the most complex analysis

(i.e., admiration, rivalry, impression management, status, symbolic product recollection, MIL). There are 29 participants per parameter in this study.

6.3.2 Procedure and Measures

This two part study lasted approximately 20 minutes (5 minutes for Part 1, 15 minutes for Part 2). In Part 1, participants read an information sheet before consenting to take part in this online survey (via Qualtrics). Then, they responded to demographic questions, followed by measures of narcissism and impression management. In Part 2, participants were asked to think about a recent item of clothing they had bought and to describe the item in detail. They were then asked to rate the item for four descriptive questions and state how much they spent on purchasing the item. Next, participants were asked to indicate their motivations for buying this item. This was followed by a question that assessed how meaningful the item of clothing made them feel. Finally participants completed a state measure of meaning.

6.3.2.1 Part 1

6.3.2.1.1 Narcissism

To measure narcissism, I used the 40-item NPI scale (Raskin & Terry, 1988) and the NARQ (Back et al., 2013; 1 = *very uncharacteristic or untrue*, 8 = *very characteristic or true*).

6.3.2.1.2 Impression Management

To measure impression management, I used the impression management subscale of the BIDR-16 (Hart et al., 2015; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 8 = *strongly agree*).

6.3.2.2 Part 2

6.3.2.2.1 Product Recall

Participants were asked to spend a few minutes to think about an item of clothing they have bought for themselves recently, that they are glad they purchased, and that they have or intended to wear in public. They were asked to use the provided text box to describe the item (e.g., how it looks, what material it is made from, what colour it is, where they will

wear the item). Next, participants rated the degree to which their product is attractive, ordinary, luxurious, and practical (1 = *not at all*, 8 = *very much so*). The attractive and luxurious ratings correlated ($r = 0.35, p < .001$) and were averaged to create the symbolic variable. The ordinary and practical ratings correlated and were averaged to create the utilitarian variable ($r = 0.35, p < .001$). Participants indicated how much they spent on their product using a rating scale (1 = *not very much*, 8 = *a lot*). This formed the subjective cost variable. Participants stated the amount of money they spent (and the currency they used) on their product. This formed the objective cost variable.

6.3.2.2.2 Motivations

Participants rated the degree to which a range (56) of buying motivations (Appendix F) influenced the purchase of their product using a rating scale (1 = *not at all*, 8 = *very much so*). The overarching motivations, based on the social and personal motivations discussed in Chapter One, include status, stand out, fit in, hedonism, and congruity with internal self. The motivation for status included statements such as ‘it shows others I am prestigious’ and ‘it’s high price says something about me’. The motivation to stand out included statements such as ‘it is unique and ‘it is limited edition’. The motivation to fit in included statements such as ‘It is trendy’ and ‘It is fashionable’. The motivation of hedonism included statements such as ‘I was bored’ and ‘I thought it would be a good way to pass the time’. The motivation of congruity with internal self included statements such as ‘It makes me feel like my true self’ and ‘It makes me feel confident in myself’. Most of these items were created for this study, although some items were adapted from the 11-item Conspicuous Consumption Orientation Scale (Chaudhuri et al., 2011).

6.3.2.2.3 Meaning in Life

Participants indicated the degree to which their product gives their life a sense of purpose on an eight-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 8 = *very much so*). I also used the state version

of the presence scale from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 8 = *strongly agree*).

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Factor Analysis

I conducted a Principle Components Analysis (PCA), using SPSS software (version 29), on the 44 items that measure motivations for buying a product. I originally categorised the 56 items into five overarching motivations: status, stand out, fit in, hedonism, congruity with internal self, and practicality/functionality (Appendix F). However, I decided to leave out the practicality and functionality items from the factor analysis. This decision was based on the fact that practicality and functionality (i.e., 'It will last me a while' and 'It is comfortable to wear') are not motives specifically for luxury consumption. Quality is a personal motive for luxury consumption, however I only assessed this with one item 'It is of superior quality', thus it was also left out of the factor analysis. I analysed the bivariate correlation matrix of all items to check for any items that were highly correlated. It is recommended to remove an item of a pair that correlates greater than 0.8 (Field, 2013). None of the 44 items correlated greater than 0.8 so no items were removed at this stage.

I used Principle Components method with the Direct Oblimin rotation, which is the standard oblique rotation, as this assumes that the factors in the analysis are correlated and not orthogonal (where factors are independent). The factors were extracted based on Eigenvalues greater than 1. I set the maximum iterations for convergence for the factor analysis to 50, which is recommended for a sample size that is less than 300. I also suppressed the small coefficients (<0.3) and sorted the coefficients by size to tidy the matrix (Field, 2013, p. 692; Leech et al., 2015).

After the initial analysis, the first criterion for conducting a PCA was not met. The determinant value of the correlation matrix was 3.66E-15 but should be greater than 0.00001 (Field, 2013). A lower score might indicate that groups of items have high intercorrelations

and a PCA would not be appropriate with all items. The second and third criterion were met; the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) of sampling adequacy was 0.92, which is greater than the minimum acceptable score of 0.5 (Kaiser, 1974), thus the data is scalable. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was $< .001$, which is lower than the critical value of $.05$. This means that the items have good correlations, and the variance can be partitioned.

I re-ran the analysis, but this time fixed the number of factors to extract instead of Eigenvalues greater than 1. As the criterion of Eigenvalue greater than 1 often create too many factors (Field, 2013; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), I used stricter criteria to determine the optimal level of factors (CAS, 2017). For example, acceptable factors had to have at least three items with a loading greater than 0.4 (Guadagnoli and Velicer, 1988), with majority of items that did not cross-load onto another factor, and a total variance at least 50% (Streiner, 1994). Based on these criteria, I fixed the number of factors to five, which explained 60.12% of the total variance and re-run the PCA. The determinant, KMO, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity stayed the same. I aimed to increase the determinant value to an acceptable level by removing items using a step-by-step approach and re-running the analysis each time, an item was deleted. The number of extracted factors were reduced during this process (CAS, 2017).

Firstly, I removed items based on communalities. Communalities are correlations between the items and the components (factors) and indicates how much variance is explained by each item. Any items lower than 0.2 were removed as low scores mean that those items may not load onto any components. Secondly, I deleted items if they had no factor loadings that were greater than 0.3. Thirdly, once the previous criteria were met, I removed items that had cross-loadings (i.e., factor loadings on more than one factor) with factor loadings greater than 75% of the largest factor loading (i.e., factor loadings were close in size across more than one factor). I started with the items that had the lowest maximum loading on all the factors. As I removed items based on the above criteria, the determinant was increasing gradually.

Each time I re-ran the PCA, I checked for changes to communalities, factor loadings, and cross-loadings, as they change slightly after each item is deleted and I re-ran the analysis. When the initial criteria were satisfied but the determinant was still lower than 0.00001, the threshold for removing items based on factor loadings increased from 0.3, to 0.4, to 0.5. As the Determinant value was not at an acceptable level, I started to remove the item with the lowest absolute loading in the pattern matrix.

After running 28 PCAs the determinant reached an acceptable level ($2.17E-5$) that is larger than 0.00001 (Field, 2013). The average within factor correlation ($r = 0.54$) in the final PCA is higher than the average between factor correlation ($r = 0.31$; CAS, 2017). The final PCA model had acceptable KMO (0.87) Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($< .001$) values. This PCA with 5 fixed factors explained 74.54% of the total variance and the rotation converged in seven iterations (Table 6.1 **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**). I checked the items in each factor and named them with themes. There was status (show off), uniqueness, fit in, congruity with internal self, and hedonism. These themes were mostly what I had intended to measure, however, I did not expect an overall status.

6.4.2 Variables and Scale Reliability

I computed 14 variables for the analyses. These were: narcissism (NPI), narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry (NARQ), impression management (covariate), subjective cost, objective cost, symbolic, utilitarian, the five motives for purchase; status, stand out, fit in, congruity with internal self, hedonism, and state MIL.

Table 6.1*Final Principal Components Analysis Pattern Matrix in Study 5*

Item	Component				
	Status	Stand Out	Fit in	Congruity	Hedonism
It shows others that I am wealthy.	0.88				
Its high price says something about me.	0.84				
It is a symbol of success.	0.83				
It shows others I am prestigious.	0.81				
It says a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	0.77				
It is rare		-0.85			
It is unique.		-0.83			
It's one of a kind.		-0.79			
It is limited edition.		-0.72			
It is trendy.			0.92		
It is fashionable			0.83		
It makes me feel like my true self.				0.821	
It boosts my self-confidence.				0.807	
I liked how it made me feel.				0.807	
It makes me feel confident in myself.				0.789	
It reflects who I really am.				0.742	
I was bored.					0.91
I thought it would be a good way to pass the time.					0.76

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

All scales were internally reliable with a Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) value greater than .70 (see Table 6.2). I computed correlation coefficients instead of Cronbach's alpha for symbolic, utilitarian, and fit in variables as they consisted of only two items. The symbolic items of attractive and luxurious correlated moderately, as did the utilitarian items of practical and ordinary. The fit in items of 'it is trendy' and 'it is fashionable' were highly correlated, as were the hedonism items of 'I was bored' and 'I thought it would be a good way to pass the time'. All scales were within the acceptable boundaries for skewness (i.e., -2 and +2) and kurtosis (i.e., -7 and +7; Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010).

Table 6.2*Descriptive Statistics in Study 5*

Measure (Scale)	<i>M(SD)</i>	Min Max	Skew	Kurtosis	α	<i>r</i>
Narcissism (0-40)	10.68 (7.18)	0-33	0.79	0.17	.88	-
Narcissistic Admiration (1-8)	3.82 (7.18)	1.33-7.44	0.50	0.16	.85	-
Narcissistic Rivalry (1-8)	2.64 (1.23)	1-7.44	1.14	1.47	.85	-
Impression Management (1-8)	4.68 (1.14)	1.75-7.50	0.21	-0.33	.71	-
Subjective Cost (1-8)	3.74 (1.82)	1-8	0.17	-0.72	-	-
Objective Cost (1-8)	34.55 (39.26)	1-250	3.07	11.89	-	-
Symbolic (0-8)	5.41 (1.41)	2.5-8	0.06	-0.66	-	.35**
Utilitarian (1-8)	5.39 (1.44)	1.5-8	-0.19	-0.52	-	.33**
Status (1-8)	2.09 (1.46)	1-8	1.72	2.73	.91	-
Stand Out (1-8)	2.77 (1.70)	1-8	1.10	0.28	.86	-
Fit In (1-8)	5.10 (1.74)	1-8	-0.31	-0.35	-	.67**
Congruity with Internal Self (1-8)	5.52 (1.51)	1-8	-0.30	-0.43	.87	-
Hedonism (1-8)	2.35 (1.49)	1-7.5	1.09	0.41	-	.48**
Presence of MIL (1-8)	4.91 (1.81)	1-8	-0.28	-0.72	.92	-

Note. ** = $p < .01$

6.4.3 Correlations

I carried out all analyses using SPSS software (version 29). Admiration and rivalry were positively related, and both were positively related with narcissism (see Table 6.3), consistent with previous research. Admiration was positively related with subjective cost, whereas both narcissism and admiration were positively related with the objective cost. Narcissism, admiration, but not rivalry was positively related with symbolic ratings for a recently purchased product. Narcissism and admiration were positively related with the motives of status, stand out, fit in, congruity with internal self, and hedonism. Rivalry was only positively related with the motives of status, stand out, and hedonism. Narcissism and admiration were positively related with MIL, whereas rivalry was not related with MIL. Further, impression management was negatively related to narcissism, admiration, and rivalry. Impression management was also positively related to MIL. Impression management was controlled for in all subsequent analyses.

Table 6.3*Correlations in Study 5*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Narcissism	1													
2. Admiration	.69**	1												
3. Rivalry	.51**	.45**	1											
4. Impress	-.33**	-.17*	-.50**	1										
5. S Cost	.06	.20**	.13	.09	1									
6. O Cost	.04	-.02	-.01	.11	.38**	1								
7. Symbolic	.40**	.48**	.12	-.08	.41**	.21	1							
8. Utilitarian	-.08	-.05	-.14	.04	-.24**	-.08	-.29**	1						
9. Status	.46**	.53**	.34**	-.07	.39**	.23*	.50**	-.10	1					
10. Stand Out	.33**	.33**	.15*	.02	.27**	.20	.49**	-.33**	.55**	1				
11. Fit in	.28**	.32**	.07	-.03	.13	-.02	.42**	-.17*	.32**	.30**	1			
12. Congruity	.25**	.35**	.11	-.08	.20**	-.02	.46**	-.14	.39**	.38**	.38**	1		
13. Hedonism	.19*	.21**	.22**	-.19**	.02	<.01	.13	-.07	.27**	.16*	.17*	.15*	1	
14. PMIL	.32**	.34**	-.10	.27**	.02	.05	.23**	-.05	.32**	.27**	.19**	.13	-.05	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Impress = impression management, S Cost = subjective cost, O Cost = objective cost, Congruity = congruity with internal self, PMIL =

presence of meaning in life.

6.4.4 Main Regression & Mediation Analysis

6.4.4.1 Narcissism and Symbolic Purchases

6.4.4.1.1 H1a: Narcissists will be more likely to rate their recently purchased product as highly symbolic (New)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism predicted greater symbolic ratings for a recently purchased product, $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.01$, $t = 5.74$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.17$. Hypothesis 1a was supported. Additionally, higher narcissism did not predict utilitarian ratings, $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -1.02$, $p = .311$, $R^2 = 0.01$.

6.4.4.1.2 H1b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will be more likely to rate their recently purchased product as highly symbolic (New)

A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration predicted greater symbolic ratings for a recently purchased product, $b = 0.60$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = 7.08$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.24$, whereas higher rivalry did not, $b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = -1.69$, $p = .093$, $R^2 = 0.24$. Hypothesis 1b was supported for admiration only. Additionally, higher admiration and rivalry did not predict utilitarian ratings, $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 0.26$, $p = .793$, $R^2 = 0.02$, $b = -0.20$, $SE = 0.11$, $t = -1.73$, $p = .085$, $R^2 = 0.02$, respectively.

6.4.4.2 Narcissism and Amount Spent on Product

6.4.4.2.1 H2a: Narcissists will report spending more on a recently purchased product (New)

A simple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Higher narcissism did not predict greater spending on a recently purchased product, $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -1.32$, $p = .189$, $R^2 = 0.02$ (subjective cost), $b = 0.72$, $SE = 0.44$, $t = 1.63$, $p = .105$, $R^2 = 0.02$ (objective cost). Hypothesis 2a was not supported.

6.4.4.2 H2b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report spending more on a recently purchased product (New)

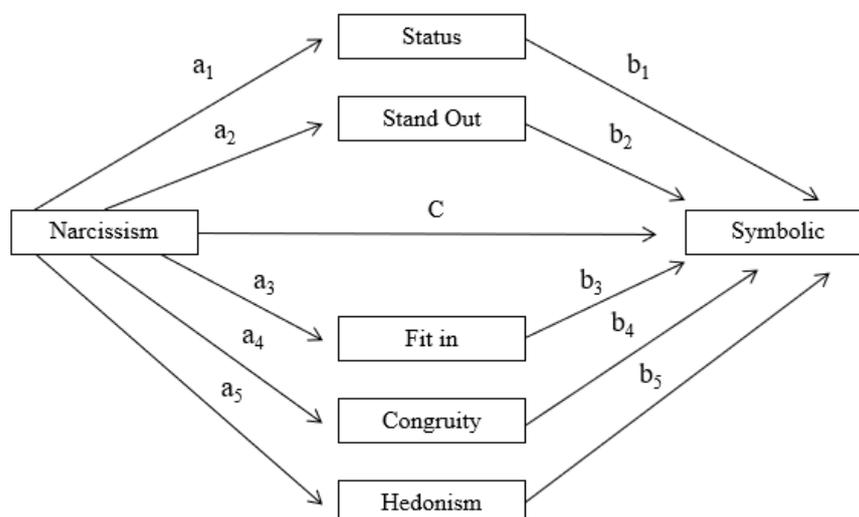
A multiple linear regression was run to test this hypothesis. Admiration and rivalry were entered as simultaneous predictors. Higher admiration did not predict greater spending on a recently purchased product, $b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.12$, $t = 1.91$, $p = .058$, $R^2 = 0.07$ (subjective cost), $b = 3.96$, $SE = 2.71$, $t = 1.49$, $p = .145$, $R^2 = 0.04$ (objective cost). Higher rivalry did not predict greater spending on a recently purchased product, $b = 0.24$, $SE = 0.14$, $t = 1.70$, $p = .092$, $R^2 = 0.07$ (subjective cost), $b = 3.50$, $SE = 3.08$, $t = 1.14$, $p = .258$, $R^2 = 0.04$ (objective cost). Hypothesis 2b was not supported.

6.4.4.3 Social Motives as Mediators of the Relation Between Narcissism and Symbolic Purchases

To test Hypothesis 3, I conducted three (i.e., narcissism, admiration, rivalry) multiple mediation analyses using PROCESS (version 4.1, Hayes, 2022) Model 4, with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. In all analyses, the outcome variable was the symbolic rating of a recently purchased product and the mediators were motives for buying the product (Figure 6.1). Impression management was entered as a covariate in all models.

Figure 6.1

Multiple Mediation Model for Hypothesis 3 in Study 5



6.4.4.3.1 H3a: Narcissists will report having purchased a more symbolic product and for social reasons (New)

In a mediation regression analysis (Table 6.4), narcissism was the predictor, the motives for buying were five mediators (3 social: status, stand out, fit in; 2 personal; congruity, hedonism) and symbolic was the outcome variable. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of narcissism on symbolic was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissism on symbolic was positive and significant. The main effects of narcissism on all motives were positive and significant, except for hedonism. Status, stand out, fit in, and congruity positively and significantly predicted symbolic. There was a positive indirect effect of all the social motives: status, stand out, fit in, and only one personal motive of congruity but not hedonism. Hypothesis 3a was supported.

6.4.4.3.2 H3b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report having purchased a more symbolic product and for social reasons (New)

In a mediation regression analysis (Table 6.4), admiration was the predictor (with rivalry as a covariate), the motives for buying were five mediators (3 social; status, stand out, fit in; 2 personal; congruity, hedonism) and symbolic was the outcome variable. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of admiration on symbolic was positive and significant. The direct effect of admiration on symbolic was positive and significant. The main effects of admiration on all motives were positive and significant, except for hedonism. Status, stand out, fit in, and congruity positively and significantly predicted symbolic. There was a positive indirect effect of all social motives: status, stand out, fit in, and only one personal motive of congruity but not hedonism.

In a mediation regression analysis (Table 6.4), rivalry was the predictor (with admiration as a covariate), the motives for buying were five mediators (3 social; stand out, fit in; 2 personal; congruity, hedonism) and symbolic was the outcome variable. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of rivalry on symbolic was not significant. The direct effect of rivalry on symbolic was negative and significant. The main effects of rivalry on motives were positive

and significant only for status. Status, stand out, fit in, and congruity positively and significantly predicted symbolic. There were no indirect effects. Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

Table 6.4*Mediation Analyses for Hypothesis 3 in Study 5*

Effect	Figure 6.1 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Total Effect: Narc→Sym		0.08	0.01	5.74**	0.16	0.60	0.08	7.08**	0.24	-0.16	0.10	-1.69	0.24
Main Effect:													
Narc→ Status	a ₁	0.10	0.01	6.80**	0.22	0.53	0.08	6.40**	0.29	0.20	0.10	2.10*	0.29
Narc→ Stand Out	a ₂	0.09	0.02	4.97**	0.13	0.44	0.11	3.98**	0.12	0.08	0.13	0.63	0.12
Narc→ Fit in	a ₃	0.07	0.02	4.02**	0.09	0.52	0.11	4.61**	0.12	-0.15	0.13	-1.16	0.12
Narc→ Congruity	a ₄	0.05	0.02	3.27*	0.06	0.46	0.10	4.73**	0.13	-0.11	0.11	-0.98	0.13
Narc→ Hedonism	a ₅	0.03	0.02	1.84	0.06	0.18	0.10	1.85	0.07	0.10	0.11	0.87	0.07
Status→ Sym	b ₁	0.18	0.07	2.43*	—	0.18	0.08	2.22*	—	0.17	0.08	2.18*	—
Stand Out→ Sym	b ₂	0.17	0.06	2.90*	—	0.18	0.06	3.08*	—	0.19	0.06	3.14*	—
Fit in→ Sym	b ₃	0.14	0.05	2.57*	—	0.12	0.05	2.27*	—	-0.12	0.05	2.27*	—
Congruity→ Sym	b ₄	0.20	0.06	3.19*	—	0.17	0.06	2.66*	—	0.17	0.06	2.65*	—
Hedonism→ Sym	b ₅	-0.05	0.06	-0.92	—	-0.05	0.06	-0.95	—	-0.05	0.06	-0.93	—
Narc→ Sym	c	0.03	0.01	2.14*	—	0.29	0.08	3.49**	—	-0.17	0.09	-2.00*	—
Indirect Effect: Narc→Sym													
					95% CI				95% CI				95% CI
Via Status	a ₁ * b ₁	0.02	0.01	—	+.0025, +.0347	0.09	0.05	—	+.0090, +.1874	0.04	0.02	—	-.0064, +.0890
Via Stand Out	a ₂ * b ₂	0.02	0.01	—	+.0040, +.0305	0.08	0.04	—	+.0201, +.1601	0.01	0.03	—	-.0297, +.0826
Via Fit in	a ₃ * b ₃	0.01	0.004	—	+.0021, +.0208	0.06	0.03	—	+.0060, +.1284	-0.02	0.02	—	-.0576, +.0123
Via Congruity	a ₄ * b ₄	0.01	0.01	—	+.0025, +.0221	0.08	0.04	—	+.0126, +.1527	-0.02	0.03	—	-.0588, +.0152
Via Hedonism	a ₅ * b ₅	-0.002	0.002	—	-.0065, +.0020	-0.01	0.01	—	-.0397, +.0111	-0.01	0.01	—	-.0377, +.0115
Model Summary:		<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²
		0.65	17.54	<.001	0.42	0.67	16.85	<.001	0.45	0.67	16.85	<.001	0.45

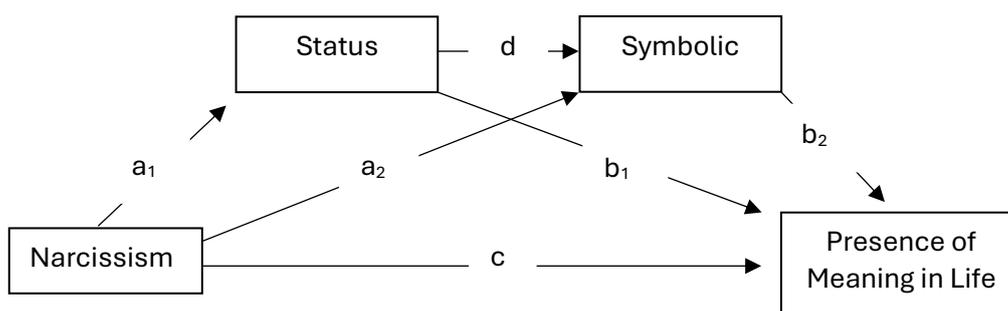
Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, Narc = narcissism, Sym = symbolic purchase, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped confidence intervals.

6.4.4.4 The relation between narcissism and state MIL will be mediated sequentially by the social motive of status and recollection of a recent symbolic purchase

To test Hypothesis 4, I conducted three (i.e., narcissism, admiration, rivalry) serial mediation analyses using PROCESS (version 4.1, Hayes, 2022) Model 6, with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. In all analyses, the outcome variable was the state MIL and the mediator variables were status and symbolic rating for recently purchased product (Figure 6.2). I entered impression management as a covariate in all models.

Figure 6.2

Serial Mediation Model for Hypothesis 4 in Study 5



6.4.4.4.1 H4a: Narcissists will report higher state MIL after recollection of the purchase of a symbolic product, that was bought for status motives (New)

Narcissism was the predictor in a serial mediation regression analysis (Table 6.5). The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of narcissism on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effects of narcissism on status and symbolic rating was positive and significant. The main effect of status motive on symbolic rating was positive and significant. Status positively predicted MIL, but symbolic ratings did not predict MIL. There was no serial indirect effect of status and

symbolic rating, however, status (and not symbolic rating) significantly mediated narcissism and MIL individually (Figure 6.3). Hypothesis 3a was not supported.

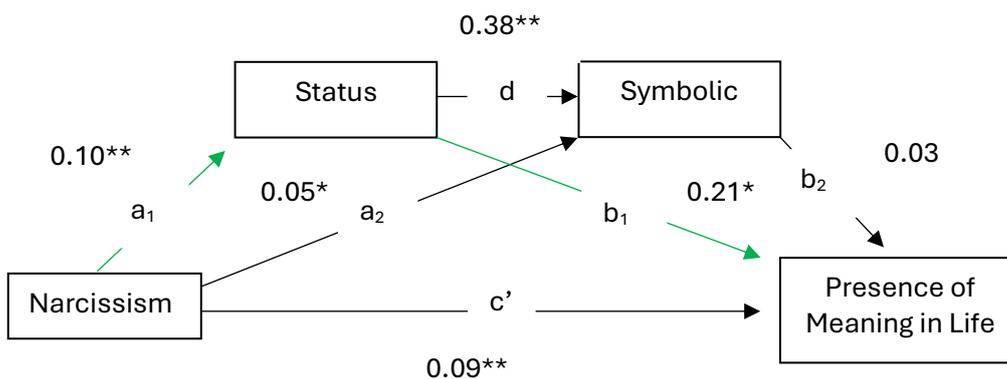
6.4.4.4.2 H4b: Admirative and rivalrous narcissists will report higher state MIL after recollection of the purchase of a symbolic product, that was bought for status motives (New)

In a serial multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 6.5), I entered admiration as the predictor and rivalry as a covariate. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of admiration on MIL was positive and significant. The direct effect of admiration on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effects of admiration on status and symbolic rating was positive and significant. The main effect of status motive on symbolic rating was positive and significant. Status positively predicted MIL, but symbolic ratings did not predict MIL. There was no serial indirect effect of status and symbolic rating, however, status (and not symbolic rating) significantly mediated admiration and MIL individually (Figure 6.4).

In a serial multiple mediation regression analysis (Table 6.5), I entered rivalry as the predictor and admiration as a covariate. The total effect (i.e., direct + indirect) of rivalry on MIL was negative and significant. The direct effect of rivalry on MIL was positive and significant, and the main effects of rivalry on status and symbolic rating was not significant. The main effect of status motive on symbolic rating was positive and significant. Status positively predicted MIL, but symbolic ratings did not predict MIL. There was no serial indirect effect of status and symbolic preference (Figure 6.5). Neither status or symbolic rating mediated rivalry and MIL individually. Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

Figure 6.3

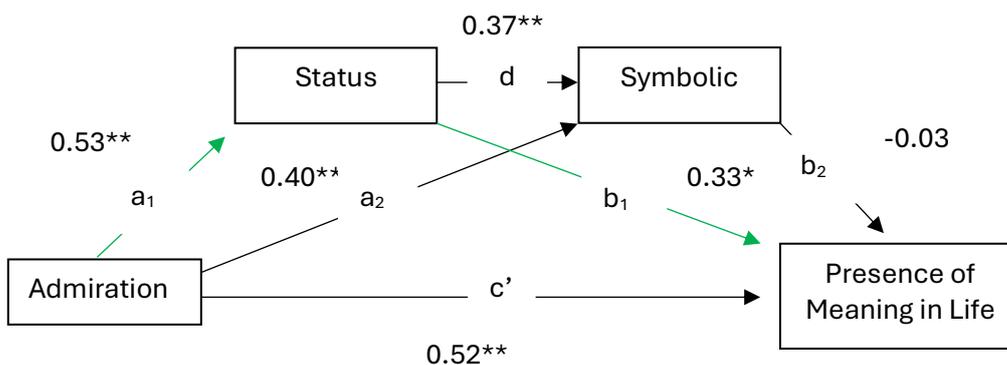
Beta Coefficients for Serial Mediation Model in Study 5 with Narcissism as the Predictor



Note. $* p < .05$, $** p < .001$, c' = direct effect

Figure 6.4

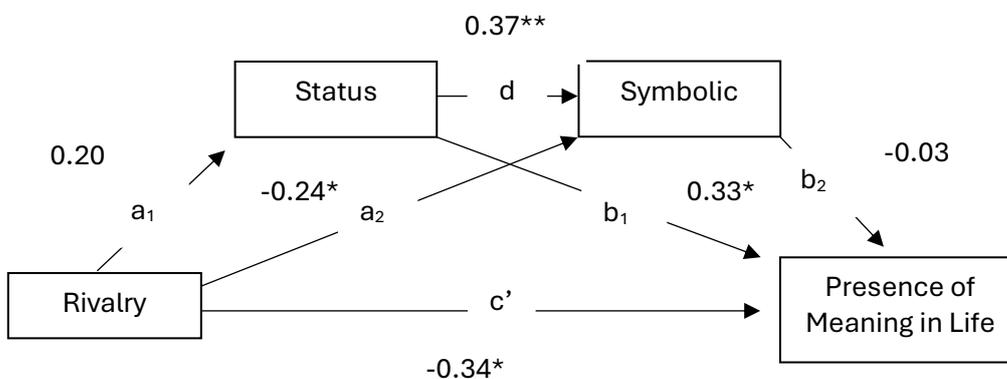
Beta Coefficients for Serial Mediation Model in Study 5 with Admiration as the Predictor



Note. $* p < .05$, $** p < .001$, c' = direct effect

Figure 6.5

Beta Coefficients for Serial Mediation Model in Study 5 with Rivalry as the Predictor



Note. $* p < .05$, $** p < .001$, c' = direct effect

Table 6.5*Serial Mediation Analyses for Hypothesis 4 in Study 5*

Effect	Figure 6.2 Path	Narcissism				Narcissistic Admiration				Narcissistic Rivalry			
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Total Effect:													
Narc → MIL		0.12	0.02	6.72**	—	0.68	0.11	6.28**	—	-0.27	0.13	-2.12*	—
Main Effects:													
Narc → Status	a ₁	0.10	0.01	6.80**	0.22	0.53	0.08	6.40**	0.29	0.20	0.10	2.10	0.29
Narc → Symb	a ₂	0.05	0.01	3.01*	0.29	0.40	0.09	4.59**	0.34	-0.24	0.09	-2.58*	0.34
Status → Symb	d	0.38	0.07	5.43**	0.29	0.37	0.07	5.03**	0.34	0.37	0.07	5.03**	0.34
Status → MIL	b ₁	0.21	0.10	2.09*	0.29	0.33	0.10	3.17*	0.29	0.33	0.10	3.17*	0.29
Symb → MIL	b ₂	0.03	0.10	0.34	0.29	-0.03	0.10	-0.28	0.29	-0.03	0.10	-0.28	0.29
Narc → MIL	c	0.09	0.02	4.73**	0.29	0.52	0.13	4.19**	0.29	-0.34	0.13	-2.67*	0.29
Indirect Effects:													
95% CI													
Narc → MIL													
Via Status	a ₁ * b ₁	0.02	0.01	—	+.0019, + .0392	0.18	0.06	—	+.0704, +.2880	0.07	0.04	—	-.0125, + .1589
Via Symb	a ₂ *b ₂	<.01	<.01	—	-.0074, + .0110	-0.01	0.04	—	-.0935, + .0726	0.01	0.02	—	-.0483, + .0533
Via Status → Symb	a ₁ *d*b ₂	<.01	<.01	—	-.0062, + .0096	-0.01	0.02	—	-.0485, +.0347	-0.002	0.01	—	-.0222, +.0141
Model Summary:													
		<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²	<i>R</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>²
		0.54	17.30	<.001	0.29	0.54	13.94	<.001	0.29	0.54	13.94	<.001	0.29

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, Narc = narcissism, MIL = presence of meaning in life, Symb = symbolic purchase, Fig = figure, 95% CI = percentile bootstrapped

confidence intervals.

6.5 Discussion

The first aim of Study 5 was to test that narcissists are more likely to buy symbolic products. Narcissists rated their recent purchase as symbolic. Although this is a novel finding with regards to measuring real life purchases, it is consistent with my previous findings where I measured symbolic preferences with a hypothetical consumer decision-making paradigm (Studies 2-4). The hypothesis that both admiring and rivalrous narcissists are more likely to buy symbolic products was supported only regarding admiration. In my previous studies the conclusion was made that rivalrous narcissists may not have desired the luxury products available in the consumer decision-making paradigm, however, in this study participants were asked to reflect on a real recent purchase. Therefore, perhaps rivalrous narcissists are not prone to luxury consumption. The second aim of Study 5 was to check whether narcissists spend more on their products. Narcissists did not spend more on their recent purchase which is inconsistent with previous findings (Lee et al., 2013) and with my previous studies that measured hypothetical willingness to spend (Studies 2b and 4). The same was found for admiration and rivalry.

The third aim was to test whether narcissists' symbolic purchases are partly explained by social motives. The social motive of status partly explained the positive relation between narcissism and symbolic purchases, as hypothesised. Narcissists are status driven (Grapsas et al., 2020) and this finding suggests that luxury consumption is an avenue for narcissists to demonstrate their status. The finding also shows that narcissists' luxurious purchases reflect conspicuous consumption, as they are motivated by the desire to show off wealth, success, and prestige (i.e., status; Chaudhuri et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2008; Veblen, 2011). This is consistent with studies that have measured conspicuous consumption via self-report questionnaires (Taylor & Strutton, 2015; Velov, 2014; Zhu et al., 2021). Status also partly explained the positive relation between admiring narcissism and symbolic purchases. This was expected as admiration also predicts a drive for status (Back et al., 2013; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). This is in line with my previous findings where I measured

symbolic preferences with a hypothetical consumer decision-making paradigm (Studies 3 and 4). However, only one other study has found a positive relation between admiring narcissism and conspicuous consumption and that was measured via a self-report questionnaire and only indirectly (Niesiobedzka & Konaszewski, 2021). Although rivalry was not related to symbolic purchases, rivalry was positively associated with the social motive of status. However, previous studies have shown that the positive relation between rivalry and status-seeking is weaker than admiration and status-seeking (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019).

Further, the social motives of stand out and fit in also partly explained the positive relation between narcissism and symbolic purchases. As all social motives were positively associated with symbolic purchases, it is likely that luxury consumption is another self-regulatory strategy (Buss and Chiodo, 1991; Campbell, 1999; Hepper et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2018), where narcissists can self-promote by being unique or fitting in with current fashion trends. These social motives also partly explained the positive relation between admiring narcissism and symbolic purchases. I expected admiring narcissists to be motivated by the desire to stand out as they tend to seek status through self-promotion (Back et al., 2013; Jordan et al., 2022; Sanyal & Sharma, 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019) and have the desire for uniqueness (Back et al., 2013; de Bellis et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2013). The need for uniqueness explained the positive relation between narcissism and conspicuous consumption in one previous study (Neave & Fastoso, 2020), however this has not previously been found with the specific form of admiration. Relatedly, the purchase of unique luxury products can serve as a sexual signalling strategy (Buss, 1989, 1994; Koliototis, 2022; Lycett & Dunbar, 2000; Sedikides et al., 2018; Sundie et al., 2011) and narcissists' short term mate appeal has been primarily attributed to admiration and not rivalry in a series of 7 studies ($n = 3560$; Wurst et al., 2017). Thus, admiring narcissists might flaunt their uniqueness with symbolic products to gain admiration from potential partners.

Additionally, I did not expect for the social motive of fit in to partly explain admiring narcissists symbolic purchases. This motive reflects the desire for buying trendy and fashionable products. This is known as the bandwagon effect, where the desirability of a

product increases because others are also consuming the same product (Leibenstein, 1950). Bandwagon consumers are often described as consumer copycats (Husic & Cicic, 2009) as they consume mainstream luxury. This is theoretically opposite to the desire of standing out and being unique (i.e., snob consumers) which in a consumer context are the desires of the trendsetters (Husic & Cicic, 2009). Therefore, admiring narcissists may seek both individual status from unique purchases and group status from mainstream purchases. However, this is in line with the previous finding that admiration was positively related with a vain consumer style that included the item 'keeping up with trends' (Martin et al., 2019). Furthermore, admiration has been associated with higher levels of social identity in response to ingroup success, regardless of individual performance (Benson et al., 2018). This suggests that admiring narcissists also self-enhance by group-affiliation. This can be explained by the optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991). According to this theory, individuals seek to balance the fundamental needs of the need to be unique and the need to belong (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021). The motive to fit in, for admiring narcissists, may not necessarily indicate the desire for common trends, but might reflect the need to belong with the trends of smaller, more prestigious, groups in order to gain social recognition and acknowledgement from insiders (i.e., ingroup members; Jiang et al., 2021; Stępień, 2018).

Rivalry was not associated with the social motives of stand out and fit in. It was expected that rivalrous narcissism would not be associated with the motive of uniqueness because individuals high in this form of narcissism are associated with low self-esteem (Zhang & Shrum, 2009) and are thought to fear social failure (Niesiobedzka & Konaszewski, 2021). Thus, rivalrous narcissists would theoretically play it safe in a consumer context. For the same reason, it was expected that rivalry would be associated with the motive to fit in. However, it appears that rivalrous narcissists might disengage with common fashion trends, which also makes theoretical sense considering that they are more likely to devalue others and tend to distance themselves from groups that they are in (Benson et al., 2018), which is an example of a defensive strategy to self-protect (Back et al., 2013). Therefore, instead of the motive to be different from or the same as a relative group in terms of style, rivalrous

narcissists might simply show off expensive and flashy products as a mechanism to enhance one's social standing and status (Chauduri et al., 2011; Veblen, 1899). Alternatively, rivalrous narcissists may not engage in conspicuous consumption and instead only seek status via dominance-based strategies (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). It was found by Zeigler-Hill et al. (2019) that rivalrous narcissists were positively associated with an antagonistic and dominant orientation to the pursuit of status such as using conflict instead of prestige strategies (i.e., display of competence). The reverse was found for admiring narcissists.

The personal motive of congruity with internal self also partly explained the positive relation between narcissism and symbolic purchases. This finding aligns with a previous finding that narcissists are more likely to have a self-brand connection for public products (Fasli-Salehi et al., 2021). Study 5 therefore extends this research by showing that it is also relevant for the specific public product of clothing. It also explained the positive relation between admiring narcissism and symbolic purchases. Although I did not expect a specific form of narcissism to drive this link, it makes theoretical sense, considering that admiring narcissism was positively associated with intrinsic aspirations in Study 1. However, despite hypothesising that the personal motive of hedonism would explain symbolic purchases for all narcissists, hedonism was unrelated to narcissism and both admiring and rivalrous narcissism. As most motives for narcissists and admiring narcissists' symbolic purchases were social, their symbolic purchases reflect conspicuous consumption.

Narcissists were more likely to recall a symbolic purchase that was motivated by the desire for status. Furthermore, the status motive positively predicted recollection of a symbolic purchase. Despite this, status and symbolic purchase recollection did not serially influence state MIL. However, the social motive of status, which does imply conspicuous consumption, did positively mediate the relation between narcissism and MIL, individually, with pathways from narcissism to status and from status to state MIL both positive and significant. This was consistent for admiration, but not rivalry. This suggests that narcissists, and admiring narcissists, are more likely to gain state MIL from conspicuous consumption. Although the positive relation between admiration and dispositional MIL was positively

mediated by intrinsic and negatively by extrinsic goals (Study 1), the extrinsic goal of showing off status with an item of clothing is related to higher state MIL.

This study was useful to determine the underlying motivations behind narcissists' symbolic consumption. Previous studies that have demonstrated narcissists' symbolic preferences have not distinguished between the social and personal motives for their symbolic consumption (Cisek et al., 2014; Fastoso et al., 2018; Sedikides et al., 2011; Sedikides et al., 2018). Furthermore, the studies that have demonstrated narcissists' conspicuous consumption have not assessed admiration and rivalry (Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Zhu et al., 2021). Additionally, no study has examined whether conspicuous consumption is related to higher state MIL for narcissists. It is rare for conspicuous consumption to be measured with real life purchases because it is normally measured via self-report questionnaires. By asking participants to recall a recently purchased item of clothing, that they were happy they bought, it is more likely to access true state changes in participants that occur when they buy products, as it is personally relevant and unique to each participant. It is difficult to access true state changes with the consumer decision-making paradigm due to individual differences in personal taste and inability to buy the products in the task. Further, the decision to ask about items of clothing is that clothing is a popular route for individuals to show off with. Lastly, it was useful to include both admiration and rivalry as only one study has measured this distinction in the context of conspicuous consumption and MIL (Niesiobędzka & Konaszewski, 2021). However, Niesiobędzka and Konaszewski measured conspicuous consumption via a self-report questionnaire and only measured dispositional MIL.

There were some limitations with this study. First, it was a correlational design which means I could not determine causality between the predictor and outcome variables. Second, the motives to purchase questionnaire was very long (56 items) thus might have led to fatigue. Some participants commented that they thought there were too many questions and that many of the items were very similar. I needed multiple items because I conducted a factor analysis, but perhaps I could have reduced this prior to data collection. Third, there

were far fewer fit in (5) than stand out (22) items which is why the fit in scale consisted only of two items, after factor analysis. This may have affected the findings. Additionally, I decided to not include the practical and functional questions from the factor analysis because these are not predictors of luxury consumption. Quality, however, is a predictor of luxury consumption. I only included one item referring to the motive of quality (i.e., 'it is of superior quality'). Therefore, I did not include this in the Principal Component Factor Analysis. As luxury products are usually associated with superior quality (Bian & Forsythe, 2011; Husic & Cicic, 2009a), narcissists may engage in luxury consumption partly for its quality, thus quality may have been a valid motive to include in the study had I included more items pertaining to superior quality. This is supported indirectly by Fastoso et al. (2018) who found that narcissists were less prone to buying counterfeit products, which often sacrifice quality (Tsai, 2005). Therefore, narcissists might engage in luxury consumption for the durability and comfort of higher quality materials. Kang and Park (2016) also found that narcissists were more likely to reject low-quality and counterfeit products, however, this was tied to social motives. For example, narcissists rejected low-quality products because they claimed that only high-quality products could give them dignity and superiority. Therefore, superior quality may serve as an important symbol in luxury products for narcissists to signal their status to others.

Chapter 7 General Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate whether conspicuous consumption is related to MIL for narcissists. Previous research has both theorised and shown that narcissists are prone to luxury consumption (Cisek et al. 2014; Sedikides et al. 2018), and in particular, conspicuous consumption (Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017). Only one study has demonstrated that those scoring higher in narcissism differ from those scoring lower in narcissism in that they gain state MIL from extrinsic pursuits (Abeyta et al. 2017). No study has investigated whether this finding extends to the extrinsic behaviour of conspicuous consumption, whilst assessing the grandiose narcissistic forms of admiration and rivalry. One study assessed the influence of conspicuous consumption on MIL for grandiose and vulnerable narcissists, however, this was only correlational, and it measured conspicuous consumption via a self-reported questionnaire (Zhu et al., 2021).

I expanded on this limited research area in several ways. Firstly, I have made methodological contributions to the measurement of luxury consumption. I have developed the consumer decision-making paradigm (Cisek et al., 2014; Sedikides et al., 2011) by updating the products to meet current fashions and by including gender specific products rather than only unisex ones (Studies 2-4). This enabled the inclusion of products such as clothing, which are particularly relevant for conspicuous consumption. Secondly, I have experimentally tested whether narcissists' luxury consumption is related to their state MIL using the consumer decision-making paradigm (Studies 3-4). Finally, I have conducted a factor analysis to create a questionnaire of both social and personal motivations for luxury consumption. This enabled me to test whether narcissists' luxury consumption does reflect conspicuous consumption (i.e., socially motivated; Study 5). This questionnaire can be used in future research to assess luxury consumption motives for various personality traits.

Theoretical contributions were also made to the narcissism, consumerism, and MIL literature. For example, I assessed narcissism as well as the distinct forms of admiration and rivalry (Studies 1-5). This gave me insight into the unique contribution of admiration and

rivalry which helped me to interpret previous contrasting findings of studies that only measured narcissism. No study has explored admiration and rivalry in relation to MIL, nor the contribution of conspicuous consumption. Also, no study has assessed such a wide range of sources of meaning in relation to narcissism (Study 1). As MIL can arise from a diverse range of sources of meaning (Schnell, 2011), it was necessary to examine this to understand how conspicuous consumption may contribute to narcissists' MIL amongst other sources. This gave perspective on the relation between different forms of narcissism and dispositional MIL. Previous research has established the link between intrinsic aspirations and the presence of MIL, however, limited research has assessed individual differences in the sources that give rise to MIL. Therefore, this thesis is novel as it provides an in-depth analysis of how different forms of narcissism link to a variety of sources of MIL (Study 1), and it assesses how conspicuous consumption is associated with MIL for narcissists.

7.1 Overview of Studies

I conducted a programmatic series of six studies. In Study 1 (Chapter 2), I examined the extrinsic (and agentic) and intrinsic (and communal) aspirations that narcissists' consider meaningful. I also assessed the relation between narcissism and dispositional MIL directly and through these aspirations.

In Study 2a (Chapter 3), I sought to demonstrate that narcissists gain state MIL through their conspicuous consumption. Conspicuous consumption was measured using a consumer decision-making paradigm. This study was repeated (Study 2b) with improved products.

In Study 3 (Chapter 4), I experimentally tested whether conspicuous consumption (more specifically whether the availability of a symbolic product) influences narcissists' state MIL. Here I used the same consumer decision-making paradigm as in Study 2b.

In Study 4 (Chapter 5), I conducted another experiment to test whether the manipulation or affirmation of MIL would affect the motivation to engage in conspicuous consumption. Again, I used the same consumer decision-making paradigm as in Study 2b.

Studies 2 through 4 measured luxury consumption. The consumer decision-making paradigm did not assess motivations behind symbolic preferences, only the degree to which participants prefer flashy and luxury (i.e., symbolic) products at the expense of inferior practicality and functionality. Although a symbolic preference in this consumer decision-making paradigm indicates that the preference is based on the prioritisation of how it looks, it is unknown from this paradigm, whether the preference is solely socially motivated or instead/also personally motivated with congruity with internal self, and/or hedonism (that I have discussed, in Chapter 1, are valid motivations for luxury consumption).

In Study 5 (Chapter 6), I measured whether narcissists' symbolic consumption is socially motivated and whether narcissists engage in the extrinsic behaviour of conspicuous consumption specifically. I accomplished this by assessing real-life purchases, rather than hypothetical ones and assessing motivations underlying this real-life purchase. Participants rated their chosen product on how symbolic and utilitarian it was, expanding on the forced choice option given in the consumer decision-making paradigm. I also assessed the two distinct forms of narcissism, admiration, and rivalry in all studies.

7.2 Summary of the Findings

In Study 1, I found that narcissists perceive extrinsic (fame, wealth, image) and agentic (power, achievement, individualism) aspirations meaningful, but they did not perceive intrinsic (personal growth, community, relationships) or communal (care, harmony, social commitment) aspirations meaningful. Narcissists were also more likely to have higher dispositional MIL which was partly through agentic aspirations only. Further, narcissists were more likely to have a higher search for meaning.

Admirative narcissists, similarly, perceived extrinsic and agentic aspirations meaningful, but also intrinsic and communal aspirations meaningful too. This form of narcissism was also more likely to have higher dispositional MIL, and this was partly through agentic, intrinsic and communal, but not extrinsic aspirations. Admirative narcissists also were more likely to search for meaning.

The only aspiration that rivalrous narcissists found meaningful was image. Rivalrous narcissists also were less likely to find individualism meaningful. This form of narcissist had lower dispositional MIL which was partly through their lower meaning perceptions of intrinsic and communal aspirations. Rivalrous narcissists were more likely to have a crisis of meaning.

Narcissists were consistently more likely to show symbolic preferences in the consumer decision-making paradigm in Studies 2a, 2b, 3, and 4. Narcissists were also more likely to rate a recent purchase as symbolic (but not utilitarian) in Study 5. I also demonstrated in Study 5 that such symbolic preferences were explained partly through the social motives of status, standing out, and fitting in (also the personal motive of congruity with internal self). This means that narcissists are prone to conspicuous consumption.

The findings for admirative and rivalrous narcissists with regards to symbolic preferences are less consistent. Admirative narcissists were found to have symbolic preferences in Studies 3 and 4. Admirative narcissists were also more likely to rate a recent purchase as symbolic (but not utilitarian) in Study 5. Like grandiose narcissists, admirative narcissists' symbolic preferences were explained partly through the social motive of status. This suggests that admirative narcissists are also prone to conspicuous consumption. Admirative narcissists were more likely to have social motives of both stand out (uniqueness) and fit in (also the personal motive of congruity with internal self).

Rivalrous narcissists were found to have symbolic preferences in Studies 2a, 3, and 4. They were not more likely to rate their recent purchase as symbolic in Study 5, therefore, rivalrous narcissists may not be prone to conspicuous consumption. However, rivalrous narcissists were more likely to have the social motive of status.

Symbolic preferences did not explain narcissists higher state MIL in any study. Symbolic preferences did explain admirative and rivalrous narcissists higher state MIL in Study 3. Both narcissists and admirative narcissists symbolic purchases were partly motivated by the personal motive of congruity with internal self. Although recollection of a symbolic purchase did not predict higher state MIL for narcissists, their higher state MIL was

explained by the social motive of status (i.e., conspicuous consumption). Therefore, grandiose and admirative narcissists' conspicuous consumption influences higher state MIL.

7.3 Implications of these Findings

7.3.1 What Provides Narcissists with MIL?

The findings from Study 1 indicate that individuals high in narcissistic admiration differ from those high in overall narcissism in that they are more likely to perceive a large range of extrinsic (and agentic) and intrinsic (and communal) aspirations as meaningful. Furthermore, these aspirations, except for extrinsic aspirations, partly explain why admirative narcissists were associated with higher MIL at the dispositional level. Therefore, admirative narcissists appear to have many sources of meaning, which could explain why this form of narcissism is positively associated with well-being (Burgmer et al., 2019; Leckelt et al., 2019; Schnell, 2011).

Abeyta et al. (2017) found that although narcissism was positively associated with the perception that extrinsic aspirations were meaningful, intrinsic aspirations were still perceived as more meaningful (than extrinsic aspirations), regardless of narcissism. As admiration and rivalry were not assessed in Abeyta et al., (2017) study, the findings from Study 1 (in this thesis) indicate that Abeyta et al.'s findings might have reflected the admiration rather than the rivalrous form of narcissism.

Study 1 therefore contributes to the literature by extending Abeyta et al.'s (2017) research into whether narcissists gain MIL from extrinsic aspirations. Although they demonstrated that narcissists were more likely to perceive extrinsic aspirations as meaningful, that is not the same as the presence of MIL. They did not measure dispositional MIL. I demonstrated that all forms of narcissists perceive extrinsic aspirations as meaningful, but extrinsic aspirations were associated with lower dispositional MIL and even explained lower levels of dispositional MIL for admirative narcissists. This indicates that narcissists may differ from their non-narcissistic counterparts in that they are more likely to perceive

extrinsic things, such as image and wealth, as meaningful. However, these aspirations cannot provide them with stable dispositional MIL (Grouden & Jose, 2015; Kasser et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2013; Schlegel et al., 2009; Weinstein et al., 2012).

The finding that extrinsic aspirations were related to lower dispositional MIL may be more problematic for rivalrous (than admiring) narcissists considering that they were only more likely to perceive image as meaningful. Admiring narcissists, on the other hand, were positively associated with dispositional MIL through their higher intrinsic and communal aspirations. These findings support the existing literature which describes admiration as the adaptive part of narcissism that is positively associated with intra (e.g., self-esteem, positive self-evaluations) and inter-personal (e.g., being perceived as sociable, prosocial, attractive) adjustment (Back et al., 2013; Burgmer et al., 2019; Leckelt et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2019). Furthermore, the finding that rivalrous narcissists were not more likely to find intrinsic and communal aspirations meaningful is in line with research that has found this form to be positively associated with intra (e.g., low self-esteem, negative self-evaluations) and inter-personal (e.g., low empathy, antagonistic reactions, perceived and perceiving others as aggressive) maladjustment (Back et al., 2013; Rogoza et al., 2018). Additionally, previous research has found that rivalry is associated with lower subjective well-being (Leckelt et al., 2019) and emotion dysregulation (i.e., problematic responses to emotions and poor recognition of emotions; Cheshire et al., 2020). Poor recognition of emotions may contribute to the lack of empathy that rivalrous narcissists tend to have (Burgmer et al., 2019). Study 1 contributes an additional novel finding that rivalrous narcissists were more likely to have a crisis of MIL. This might explain why this form of narcissism is associated with lower well-being but may also be a consequence of low well-being and self-esteem (Damásio et al., 2013; Keyes et al., 2002; Reker et al., 1987; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Schnell, 2009). Rivalrous narcissists therefore may have low well-being and a crisis of MIL because they prioritise extrinsic aspirations only. Furthermore, they may have given up on self-enhancement considering they believe they have low-status (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). Rivalrous narcissism

is also associated with and overlaps with vulnerable narcissism (Back et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2014), which is also closely aligned with narcissistic personality disorder.

Agentic aspirations such as power, achievement, and individualism explain both narcissists and admiring narcissists' higher dispositional MIL. The implicit agentic aspirations were different to the explicit extrinsic aspirations in that the items measuring the agentic aspirations were more adaptive and focused on self-improvement in the agentic domain. For example, items for power, achievement, and individualism included 'I like to be able to influence other people', 'I am an achievement-oriented person', and 'it is my aim in life to discover and live out my abilities and interests', respectively. Although these aspirations are agentic in nature, they are not reliant purely on an external outcome such as fame, wealth, or achieving a certain image.

Specifically, to the main purpose of my PhD, the findings from Study 1 imply that narcissists' extrinsic tendencies, such as conspicuous consumption, are not related to dispositional MIL. Although I did not measure conspicuous consumption specifically (in Study 1), the extrinsic goal of image does include specific aspirations of 'to keep up with fashions in hair and clothes', 'to achieve the "look" I've been after', and 'to have an image that others find appealing', which are related to conspicuous consumption. This supports Zhu et al.'s (2021) findings that conspicuous consumption does not influence dispositional MIL for narcissists. Study 1 suggests that this is also true for admiring and rivalrous narcissists.

In Study 1, dispositional MIL was measured, however, few studies have measured state MIL in relation to narcissism. Abeyta et al. (2017) found in an experiment that narcissists were more likely to have higher state MIL following a task that highlighted extrinsic aspirations as opposed to a control. Although they did not measure conspicuous consumption, the findings from their study suggest that narcissists can gain state MIL from extrinsic aspirations, such as wealth. Thus, what people find meaningful may increase *state* as opposed to *dispositional* MIL. Dispositional MIL may be influenced by a range of intrinsic, agentic, and communal aspirations that are fulfilled over a longer period of time (Newman et

al., 2018; Schnell, 2016), instead of extrinsic aspirations. Most of my studies focused on whether the extrinsic behaviour of conspicuous consumption is associated with narcissists' state MIL.

7.3.2 Does Conspicuous Consumption Provide Narcissists with MIL?

7.3.2.1 Does Luxury Consumption Reflect Conspicuous Consumption for Narcissists?

The findings from Studies 2-4 indicate that narcissists are prone to symbolic consumption. This is consistent with previous studies that have used a consumer decision-making paradigm (Cisek et al., 2014; Sedikides et al., 2011). Therefore, narcissists prioritise the aesthetic over practical features of a range of public and private products. These findings also support numerous studies which have demonstrated that narcissists prefer prestigious, branded, and luxury products (Cunningham-Kim & Darke, 2011; Lee et al., 2013; Pilch & Gornik-Durose, 2017). Studies 2-4 extend such research by separating narcissism into the admiration and rivalrous forms. This was confirmed as both admiration and rivalry were more likely to prefer symbolic (as opposed to utilitarian) products in at least two studies. Although it was implied that narcissists' symbolic (luxury) consumption is socially motivated, given the theoretical justification that they use luxury products to self-enhance and gain status (Sedikides et al., 2011), very few studies have adequately analysed the specific motivations behind their luxury consumption to confirm their conspicuous intentions with such purchases. It was demonstrated by Neave and Fastoso (2020) and Zhu et al. (2021) that narcissists are prone to conspicuous consumption via the conspicuous consumption orientation scale (Chaudhuri et al., 2011) and the conspicuous consumption scale (Chen, 2008), respectively. I extended this research in Study 5, by assessing the specific social and personal motives behind narcissists' real luxury purchases. Findings from Study 5 confirmed that narcissists' luxury purchases are motivated by status, stand out, and fit in (as well as congruity with internal self). Therefore, this study supports previous theoretical (Sedikides et al., 2011) and observational findings (Neave & Fastoso, 2020; Zhu et al., 2021) that

narcissists engage in conspicuous consumption. It also shows that narcissists are motivated to show off status, be unique, but also fit in with current trends and fashions, with their purchases of luxury clothes.

Associations between admiration and rivalry and conspicuous consumption have largely remained theoretical in the limited research that have addressed these narcissistic forms. For example, Sedikides and Hart (2022) theorised that both forms are likely to engage in conspicuous consumption, however it was suggested that admiring would have a stronger inclination and rivalry would only engage in conspicuous consumption in competitive settings. Niesiobędzka and Konaszewki (2021) found positive relations between admiration (i.e., indirect) and rivalry (i.e., direct) on conspicuous consumption and Martin et al., (2019) found that both forms are predictors of a vain consumer style (i.e., posting photos, reading celebrity news, keeping up with the trends).

In Study 5, I found that both forms were positively associated with the social motive of status, and this explained admiring narcissists' symbolic purchases. This demonstrates that admiring narcissists are prone to conspicuous consumption. However, rivalrous narcissists were not more likely to rate their recent purchase as symbolic (i.e., attractive and luxurious). This suggests that rivalrous narcissists were motivated to buy their product to show off wealth, success, prestige, and therefore status, however, they were not more likely to perceive their product as attractive or luxurious.

The finding that admiring narcissists purchased the symbolic purchase partly because of their motive to stand out and be unique is consistent with and thus strengthens previous rationale (Back et al., 2013; de Bellis et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2019; Niesiobędzka & Konaszewki, 2021). Admiring narcissists tend to have higher self-esteem and perhaps more confidence to stand out with products. Admiring narcissists were also more likely to purchase symbolic purchases because of their desire to fit in with fashions and trends. Martin et al. (2019) also found that admiring narcissism was positively associated with a vain consumer style, which included 'keeping up with trends'. Congruity with internal self was also a motive of admiring narcissists'

symbolic purchases. Therefore, narcissists, and admiring narcissists, have a range of social motives for their symbolic purchases and the specific personal motive of congruity with internal self. Thus, their luxury consumption does reflect conspicuous consumption.

7.3.2.2 Do Narcissists Gain State MIL from Conspicuous Consumption?

Symbolic preferences did not explain narcissists' higher state MIL in any study but did explain admiring and rivalrous narcissists higher state MIL in Study 3. However, majority of the studies indicate that either, symbolic preference (and symbolic purchase in Study 5) is unrelated to narcissists' presence of MIL, or that the consumer decision-making task is not valid in its assessment of conspicuous consumption. Findings from Study 5, which assessed the motivations behind a real-life symbolic purchase (thus whether such purchases were conspicuously motivated or not) suggest that conspicuous consumption does provide narcissists with state MIL. Although the motive of status and recollection of a symbolic purchase did not serially mediate the positive relation between narcissism and state MIL, the social motive of flaunting status did mediate narcissism and state MIL, independently. This was also found for admiring but not rivalrous narcissists. This finding adds to the literature by showing that the extrinsic behaviour of conspicuous consumption explains higher state MIL in narcissists, similarly to how the extrinsic aspiration of wealth was associated with higher state MIL for narcissists in Abeyta et al.'s (2017) study. Although this current study was not experimental, like Abeyta et al., it did indicate that the admiration is the form which can gain momentary boosts in state MIL from extrinsic aspirations.

The role that rivalry plays in the relation between narcissism and conspicuous consumption is inconclusive. The only aspiration that rivalrous narcissists were more likely to find meaningful in Study 1 was image. Furthermore, it was found in Study 3 that symbolic preference explained the positive relation between rivalry and state MIL. Also, in Study 5, rivalrous narcissists were more likely to have the motive to show off wealth, success, and prestige with their recent purchased item of clothing. Although narcissistic rivalry is negatively related to dispositional MIL, Study 3 demonstrated the possibility that individuals high in this form can experience state MIL in relation to symbolic preferences.

Despite the inconsistencies with rivalrous narcissism, overall narcissists and admiring narcissists are more likely to derive high state MIL from conspicuous consumption. This is a novel finding and therefore adds to the literature where this has only been tested for dispositional MIL and not with the breakdown of admiration and rivalry. State MIL does not necessarily predict dispositional MIL (Newman et al., 2018) and considering that the extrinsic aspiration of image is unrelated to dispositional MIL, narcissists' conspicuous consumption is unlikely to contribute to their long-term wellbeing.

7.4 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

7.4.1 Strengths and Limitations

This research has strengths and limitations. Across the six studies, I used a mixture of methodologies, including a correlational design (Studies 1, 2a, 2b, and 5) and a between-participants experimental design (Studies 3 and 4). Throughout the thesis, I used mediation analysis to examine the influence of various aspirations on the relation between narcissism and dispositional MIL (Study 1), the influence of symbolic preferences on the relation between narcissism and state MIL (Study 2a, 2b, and 3), and the influence of recalling a recent symbolic purchase and social/personal motives on the relation between narcissism and state MIL (Study 5). I used moderated mediation analysis to assess whether the indirect effect of symbolic preference on the relation between narcissism and state MIL was moderated by blocking the chance to win a symbolic product (Study 3). I also used moderation to assess the effect that affirming or threatening MIL had on the relation between narcissism and symbolic preferences (Study 4).

Firstly, the main limitation with this research is that all studies are underpowered (due small sample sizes) according to the more conservative power analysis techniques (Schoemann et al., 2017; Sommet et al., 2023). However, according to Kline (2005), all studies had more than enough participants per parameter (i.e., more than 20 participants per parameter). Nevertheless, the findings should be approached with caution, especially as

older methods for power analysis do not accurately account for the more complex statistical techniques, such as multiple mediation and moderation. A further limitation with this research is that in most studies, a consumer decision-making paradigm is used to measure conspicuous consumption. This is a measure that firstly did not include products with brands or logos (in efforts to reduce potential biases). This leads to queries over the generalisability (and relevance) of this shopping task to real-life shopping scenarios, as brands and logos are important and considered features that are integrated in the luxury consumption experience. Secondly, this measure fails to capture participants' motivation behind their symbolic choices. Luxury consumption generally is conspicuous in nature (flashy, attractive), but does not equate to conspicuous consumption, as there are both social (conspicuous) and personal motives for luxury consumption. I demonstrated in Study 5 that both narcissists and admiring narcissists' higher state MIL was not due to recollecting the purchase of a symbolic product but was partly influenced by reflecting on their status motives for buying their product. This suggests that it is specifically the social motives behind symbolic purchases that are related to higher state MIL rather than the symbolic purchase itself. Additionally, Study 5 is superior in that it measures real-life spending as opposed to hypothetical shopping with products that may not be desirable to all participants.

Furthermore, all data were cross-sectional which limits the extent to which causation can be inferred. Therefore, as the data only captured a one-time measurement of participants' symbolic preferences, or their recent purchase, I was unable to demonstrate that this behaviour is consistent over time for narcissists. A participant's most recent purchase may not have reflected their general purchases, for example. A daily diary study, where participants reflect on several purchases over a longer period of time might be a more valid method as it could provide a more robust conclusion about narcissists' consumer behaviour. This would also better capture the relation between consumption and state changes in MIL. Such a study would require a large budget as it would be time intensive.

Many of the conclusions of this thesis relate to the distinction between dispositional and state MIL, which I measured using the meaning in life questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006). The difference between the dispositional and state scale is in the instruction the participant reads. The dispositional scale states, 'answer each item in terms of how you feel generally' and the state scale states, 'answer how each item in terms of how you feel in this very moment'. With such a minute difference between scales, it is plausible that they measured the same thing (i.e., how participants generally feel as opposed to in the moment, or vice versa). This possibility is also strengthened with the fact that the relation between narcissism, admiring, and rivalrous narcissism, and MIL was the same for the dispositional and state version. That is, overall narcissism and admiring narcissism was positively, and rivalrous narcissism negatively, related, to the presence of MIL at the dispositional and state level, regardless of mediators (Study 1, 2a, 2b, and 5) and moderators (Study 3). If it was the case that participants responded to the state MIL scale in terms of how they feel generally, then this would change the meaning of my findings. For example, it would suggest that the recollection of a recent purchase might not create state changes in MIL and instead would suggest that the motivation to display status with products relates to general levels of dispositional MIL. It is therefore difficult to conclude that conspicuous consumption can provide state MIL. An improvement to the measurement of state MIL would be to measure state MIL prior to the task, and then again after, to assess whether the task leads to an increase or decrease in state MIL. Such a study would also benefit the use of an experimental design. The issue with including an additional scale is that participants may be affected by the recency effect (i.e., they can simply recall how they answered the scale the first time they completed it) and the fatigue effect, thus this should be carefully considered in future research.

The issue with fatigue effect might be relevant for some of my studies. Study 1 and 2 took about 30 minutes to complete, followed by Study 3 at 25 minutes (then Study 5 at 20 minutes, and Study 4 only 15 minutes). With long, online surveys, participants may disengage and not take the time to answer carefully. I did attempt to control for this to improve the

quality of the data by using a range of criteria to remove participants who did not fully attend to the study. These included failed attention checks, where participants needed to respond in a certain way to show they were paying attention (e.g., 'Please tick number 4'; Oppenheimer et al., 2009), invariant responses (e.g. '1,1,1,1,1), and more than 10% missing data (Bennett; 2001). Still, future research should focus on designing shorter and more engaging tasks such as with the consumer-decision-making paradigm, which are also higher in mundane realism.

As my studies were conducted online, I used self-report-measures to capture narcissism, aspirations, and state/dispositional MIL. There are issues with relying on participants' opinions of themselves, such as social desirability (Hart et al., 2015), recall bias (Althubaiti, 2016), and biased self-insights (Grijalva & Zhang, 2016). Research has previously found that narcissism is positively associated with socially desirable responding (Brunell & Buelow, 2019; Kowalski et al., 2018). Therefore I tried to limit this risk by including the 8-item impression management scale from The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form (BIDR-16; Hart et al. 2015) to assess participants' tendency to respond in a socially desirable way. Consistent with older findings (Hart et al., 2015; Sedikides et al., 2004), however, narcissism was negatively correlated with impression management across all the studies where it was included (Studies 2a, 2b, 3, 4, 5). Although this meant that I had to control for this in all subsequent analyses, it does give confidence that those who score high in narcissism (including admiration and rivalry) are less likely to lie, at least in these studies.

Finally, there was a large gender imbalance across studies 1, 2a, 2b, and 5, with most participants identifying as female (85%, 78%, 88%, 76%, respectively). This is a limitation of the thesis as the findings of these studies might be disproportionately relevant for females only, and thus might overlook the nuances of how narcissism, conspicuous consumption and MIL relate and manifest in other genders, particularly men. Research has shown that men generally score higher in narcissism than females (Grijalva et al. 2015; Weidmann et al., 2023) and suggests that narcissism can display differently in males and females (Green et

al., 2024), thus the findings from this thesis could potentially misrepresent how narcissism presents across genders.

7.4.2 Future Research

To summarise and extend some of my suggestions, future research could build on my studies by combining the MIL threat manipulation (i.e., from Study 4) with the task of recalling a recent purchase (i.e., from Study 5). For example, using an experimental design, all participants could have their MIL threatened. Participants could then be assigned to either the product recall condition or a control condition. If symbolic purchases increase narcissists' state MIL, then I would expect narcissists in the product recall condition would have higher state MIL compared to narcissists in the control condition. This would have the advantage that it would still measure personally relevant purchases, however, an experimental design would help to determine causality of symbolic purchases on state MIL.

However, studies assessing state MIL as an outcome variable in a correlational study would benefit from measuring dispositional MIL on a prior occasion and state MIL both before and after the main task. This would be an appropriate way to measure any changes that can be attributed to the consumer task, for example, and ensure that the state measure is not simply measuring dispositional MIL.

A longitudinal diary study would be beneficial to assess narcissists' daily (or weekly) shopping habits. This would allow for the assessment of daily changes in state MIL due to multiple recent purchases and this could be compared to participants' dispositional MIL (which could be measured at the start and end of the study). This would also allow for a more detailed measure of the recent purchases beyond whether the product is attractive and luxurious. For example, questions could determine whether it is branded and limited edition. A diary study would also allow for a more detailed and qualitative measure of motives for the purchases. An extension of this would be to measure other sources of meaning at the state level. For example, daily evaluations of a range of intrinsic and extrinsic goals could be measured and assessed in terms of their influence on state MIL. Newman et al. (2018) also

highlighted the importance for research to assess how daily search for meaning impacts state and dispositional MIL.

Future research should explore ways to reduce the time between the purchase and the measurement of their state MIL. It may be too time-inducive and ethically questionable to wait in a shopping centre to interview shoppers. With the rise of online shopping, researchers should partner with large retailers, such as Amazon, to directly access consumers once they have purchased an item. However, it is also plausible that any state changes in a person related to the purchase of a new product may be detectable during or just after the purchase, but also when the product arrives (in the case of online shopping), and the first time the product is used. Therefore, it would be ideal to recruit participants at the point of purchase and request that they do the survey again once they have received the item, and again once they have used the product. Thus, a diary study with the recruitment of online shoppers may be the ideal approach. Furthermore, a diary study in conjunction with an interview would provide an even richer combination of data.

More broadly, conspicuous consumption can also relate to the consumption of experiences, such as holidays, restaurant meals, or spa days. These are known as experiential purchases and have been defined as “spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience – an event or series of events that you personally encounter or live through” (Boven & Gilovich, 2003, p.1194). Research has found that participants who were reminded of an experiential purchase were happier compared to those who were reminded of a material purchase (Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Furthermore, in a separate study, the initial satisfaction that participants reported having from an experiential and material purchase declined with time for the material possession, but not for the experiential purchase (Carter & Gilovich, 2010). Research also suggests that experiential consumption is more long-lasting in terms of hedonic benefits (Nicolao et al., 2009), compared to material consumption. This indicates that experiential consumption may be a less toxic form of consumption in that it is more robust to the hedonic treadmill of needed to acquire more and more possessions to achieve the same hedonic benefits (Brickman &

Campbell, 1971). It is thought that experiential purchases give rise to more social connectedness (Caprariello & Reis, 2013) and Howell and Hill (2009) found that experiential purchases are associated with higher wellbeing partly due to the decreased social comparison with experiential, compared to material possessions. Additionally, research suggests that experiential purchases are more important to a persons' identity (Carter & Gilovich, 2012) and that experiential appreciation (valuing ones experiences) is uniquely tied to perceptions of MIL (Kim et al., 2022). Previous research has not assessed the individual differences that may influence whether experiential purchases can generate MIL (Schlegel et al., 2018). This suggests potential opportunities for future research to explore the influence that experiential conspicuous consumption has on narcissists' state MIL in comparison to material purchases.

Experiential conspicuous consumption, however, differs from the general definition of experiential purchases in that the primary intention of such conspicuous purchases would be to show off with these life experiences (similarly to material possessions). Therefore, previous research that has tied experiential purchases to wellbeing (Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2022; Gilovich et al., 2015) have not distinguished between general experiential purchases and socially motivated experiential purchases (experiential conspicuous consumption). Narcissists should theoretically gain state MIL through conspicuous experiential consumption, similarly to material conspicuous consumption. Such extrinsically motivated purchases (i.e., bragging about an expensive holiday), would help to fulfil narcissists' grandiose and agentic goals of status and achievement (purpose), would be consistent and aligned with their other luxurious material purchases (i.e., buying holiday clothes for a luxurious stay at a villa), thus providing a sense of order and coherence, and would also supply narcissists with a sense of importance and value (significance). Experiential consumption is popular to share on social platforms such as Instagram. Furthermore, the rise of influencers showing off their flashy experiences on their Instagram stories and sharing links to buy the clothes they are wearing, encourages both the conspicuous consumption of material and experiential products. Therefore, it is a worthwhile endeavour to analyse how

the different forms of conspicuous consumption (material and experiential) affect narcissists' state MIL.

In addition to the above suggestions for future research, it would be worthwhile to consider how conspicuous consumption may mediate the relation between narcissism and each component of MIL, separately. The three facets of MIL (significance, purpose, coherence) are distinct (George & Park, Heintzelman & King, 2014), thus empirical research that distinguishes between these components is needed to provide a more accurate model of the experience of MIL and the unique sources of MIL (Martela & Steger, 2016). Conspicuous consumption should theoretically mediate the link between, narcissism and significance, narcissism and purpose, and narcissism and coherence. The consumption of flashy products is likely to make a narcissist feel important (significance), align with their agentic, grandiose goals (purpose), and provide a sense of consistency with their usual consumption habits (coherence). However, conspicuous consumption may have a stronger influence on one of the components of MIL than the others. Recent research has demonstrated that significance is the strongest precursor to MIL judgements (Costin & Vinales, 2019, 2020), however, narcissists' higher levels of significance was not due to their conspicuous consumption in Zhu et al.'s study (2021). This suggests that more research is needed to consider whether conspicuous consumption is related to the other components of meaning (purpose and coherence). It has been suggested, however, that coherence may best be conceptualised as an outcome, rather than a predictor of MIL (Costin & Vignoles, 2019; Womick et al., 2020).

Lastly, future research should examine this topic with different types of narcissism. Past research has shown that vulnerable narcissism is negatively related to dispositional MIL (Zhu et al., 2021), like rivalry. Vulnerable narcissism was also found to be positively associated with conspicuous consumption and unlike grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissists did not have high levels of significance, but did through conspicuous consumption (Zhu et al., 2021). Therefore, perhaps the relation between narcissists conspicuous consumption and MIL might be particularly relevant for the vulnerable form,

which was not assessed in this current research. It would be useful to compare admiration and rivalry with the vulnerable form of narcissism, with regards to conspicuous consumption and its influence on state MIL. This is especially important because vulnerable narcissism, as pointed out by Neave and Fastoso (2020), may be the more prevalent form of narcissism among younger generations (e.g., millennials). This is based on findings that millennials are more likely to display approval-seeking behaviours (Sturt, 2017) which are characteristic of the vulnerable form of narcissism.

Communal narcissism is another form of grandiose narcissism that has not been considered in this thesis. This form of narcissism, similarly to agentic narcissism, characterises individuals who are motivated by grandiosity, self-esteem, entitlement, and power, however, communal narcissists satisfy these needs by showing off with communal (warmth, morality, prosociality), instead of agentic characteristics (uniqueness, intelligence, ambition; Gebauer et al., 2012; Nehrlich, 2019; Sedikides, 2021; Womick et al., 2020; Yang, 2018). Considering that these narcissists view themselves as communal, it might be presumed that these individuals are likely to gain MIL through communal instead of agentic sources of meaning. Therefore, extrinsic aspirations such as image, which may be satisfied through conspicuous consumption, was considered to be more relevant to agentic, rather than communal narcissism. Research, however, has shown that despite communal narcissists' prosocial self-perceptions, they are not more likely to behave prosocially than agentic narcissists (Nehrlich, 2019; Yang, 2018). It would be worthwhile for future research to compare agentic and communal narcissism in terms of conspicuous consumption and MIL. Communal narcissists may be more inclined to conspicuously consume with eco-friendly products (Naderi, 2018), which in turn might provide them with a sense of MIL.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

Three pilot, four correlational, and two experimental studies were conducted with the aim to assess whether conspicuous consumption is related to meaning in life for narcissists. To address this question, three substantial literatures on narcissism, conspicuous

consumption, and meaning in life have been brought together. Very limited research exists on the combination of these topics (Sedikides & Hart, 2022). The only other existing study did not address the admiration and rivalry distinction (Zhu et al., 2021). Considering the rising levels of narcissism (Twenge et al., 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Twenge, 2013) and an ever-growing consumer culture (Das & Jebarajakirthy, 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Souiden et al., 2011; Zhang & Wang, 2019). I hope this research paves the way to discover the implications that conspicuous consumption has not only regarding our meaningful experience, but to our mental health more generally. Rivalrous narcissists may suffer the most from a crisis of meaning because they find very few things meaningful, except for their image. However, this research also indicates that narcissistic admiration in particular drives conspicuous consumption in narcissists. Although conspicuous consumption may contribute to the momentary experience of meaningfulness, it is unlikely to contribute to stable, more lasting dispositional MIL. This might explain why narcissistic individuals are also more prone to compulsive buying because they are in search of meaning. They may be spending resources on short term hits of meaning, rather than investing in communal sources of meaning which are evidently associated with lasting, dispositional MIL. However, it seems that admiring narcissists may have a healthy balance of agentic and communal sources of MIL. Regardless, momentary meaningfulness may create addictive luxury consumption behaviours which are undoubtedly destructive behaviours, for the narcissist themselves, those around them, and to the environment. Therefore, efforts to attempt to curtail these behaviours and encourage other sources of MIL are needed, even if that simply means the encouragement of the consumption of alternative eco-friendly products.

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Appendix A

A.1 Pilot Study 1

A.1.1 Method

I collected images of a range of unisex products with the help from third-year undergraduate students. To avoid potential biases, we chose images that did not include an obvious brand or logo. In a discussion session, we decided which products would be good to include in the consumer decision-making paradigm. For each type of product, we selected two images, each a different version of the same type of product. We chose one flashy and luxury version of the product and one more practical and neutral version. For each pair of images, we wrote two product descriptions (Figure 7.1). We created one description in each pair to be more functional and practical than the other. The 21 products (private and public) that we created were: a kettle, a bike, luggage, a water bottle, a wind stopper coat, a laptop, a fan, a fitness tracker, a Hoover, a mobile phone case, headphones, a thermal mug, a blender, a toaster, an electric toothbrush, a camera, portable speakers, a coffee maker, satellite navigation, a sound system, and a lamp.

To check whether the image of the symbolic version of the products were perceived as significantly more symbolic than the other version and that the utilitarian descriptions were significantly rated more utilitarian than the other, I conducted two pilot studies. In both, I presented participants with a series of pairs of descriptions (via iSurvey), followed by a series of paired images. In Pilot Study 1, participants ($N = 22$ [13 men, 9 women]; age range: 20–64, $M = 35.81$, $SD = 17.37$) viewed the images of half of the products and viewed the descriptions of the other half of the products. In Pilot Study 2, participants ($N = 18$ [11 women, 7 men]; Age: *range* = 17–65 years, $M = 29.83$, $SD = 15.35$) viewed the reverse. Participants rated each product (i.e., image/description) in terms of how luxurious, attractive, functional, and practical it was (1 = *not at all*, 8 = *very much so*).

A.1.2 Results

I analysed the data using SPSS software (version 26). For a product to be chosen for Study 2a, the symbolic image needed to be rated significantly more symbolic than the other image and needed to be rated significantly lower or equal to the other image for the utilitarian question. Additionally, the utilitarian description needed to be rated significantly more utilitarian than the other description and needed to be rated significantly lower or equal to the other description for the symbolic question. Responses to the questions (i.e., luxurious, flashy, functional, practical) were correlated for each image and description, for each product (Table 7.1). If the luxurious and flashy questions positively correlated, then I averaged them to create one symbolic measure. If the functional and practical questions positively correlated, then I averaged them to create one utilitarian measure.

I intended to assess (in the context of the consumer decision-making paradigm) the degree to which a participant would favour a symbolic looking product at the expense of it having lower utilitarian value than an alternative version of the product. Therefore, I would need to pair the symbolic image with the lower utilitarian description in the task. To check whether the symbolic image was rated significantly more symbolic than the alternative image, I conducted a paired samples t-test for each product. Similarly, to check whether the utilitarian description was rated significantly more utilitarian than the alternative description, I conducted a paired samples t-test for each product.

If the symbolic images were rated as more utilitarian than the less symbolic image, this could affect the validity of the consumer decision task. Therefore, I checked that the images were at least rated equally utilitarian, if not in the direction they were intended to be (i.e., symbolic image, less utilitarian). I also checked that the descriptions were at least rated equally symbolic, if not in the direction they were intended to be.

To control for potential suspicion due to this continuous pattern (i.e., symbolic image with lower utilitarian description), I placed fillers throughout the task. The fillers consisted of the products that did not meet the criteria (i.e., no difference between the descriptions, or images, or in the opposite direction to expected). I altered the descriptions of the fillers so

that symbolic images were either paired with higher and more exaggerated utilitarian descriptions (i.e., opposite to the others), or were made to be equal, in utilitarian value, to the alternative description.

A.1.3 Correlations

The practical and functional questions positively correlated for each description for every product except for the utilitarian description for kettle, and the utilitarian description for luggage (Table 7.1). The luxurious and flashy questions positively correlated for each description for every product except for the less-utilitarian description for luggage, and the utilitarian description for satellite navigation.

For the paired t-tests, I averaged responses to the luxurious and flashy questions into one symbolic measure for all product images and most descriptions, and I averaged responses to the practical and functional questions into one utilitarian measure for all product images and most descriptions. I used the functional question as the utilitarian measure in the paired t-tests for kettle and luggage descriptions. I used the luxurious question as the symbolic measure in the paired t-tests for the luggage and satellite navigation descriptions.

A.1.4 Paired t-tests

I tested whether the symbolic images were rated significantly more symbolic and at least equal or less utilitarian than the alternative product image. I also tested whether the utilitarian descriptions were rated significantly more utilitarian and at least equal or less symbolic than the alternative product description. If any of the images or descriptions for each product did not meet these criteria, then I did not use whole product (and relegated it to the status of a filler product).

Participants rated the less-utilitarian kettle description as more utilitarian than the utilitarian description (Table 7.2), implying that kettle was used as a filler product.

Participants rated the utilitarian bike and electric toothbrush images as more symbolic than the symbolic bike and electric toothbrush images (respectively); thus, I used these products

as fillers. Furthermore, they rated the symbolic fan image as more utilitarian than the utilitarian image. Lastly, they rated the utilitarian Hoover description as more symbolic than the less-utilitarian Hoover description, and the symbolic satellite navigation image as more utilitarian than the utilitarian satellite navigation image.

Table 7.1

Correlations for Pilot Study 1

Version	Product	Descriptions	r	Image	r
Utilitarian	Kettle	Practical * Functional	.25	Luxurious*Flashy	.91**
Symbolic	Kettle	Practical * Functional	.81**	Luxurious*Flashy	.91**
Utilitarian	Bike	Practical * Functional	.89**	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**
Symbolic	Bike	Practical * Functional	.87**	Luxurious*Flashy	.76**
Utilitarian	Luggage	Practical * Functional	.42	Luxurious*Flashy	.88**
Symbolic	Luggage	Practical * Functional	.74**	Luxurious*Flashy	.81**
Utilitarian	Water Bottle	Practical * Functional	.70**	Luxurious*Flashy	.84**
Symbolic	Water Bottle	Practical * Functional	.77**	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**
Utilitarian	Coat	Practical * Functional	.86**	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**
Symbolic	Coat	Practical * Functional	.60**	Luxurious*Flashy	.91**
Utilitarian	Laptop	Practical * Functional	.89**	Luxurious*Flashy	.89**
Symbolic	Laptop	Practical * Functional	.84**	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**
Utilitarian	Fan	Practical * Functional	.80**	Luxurious*Flashy	.86**
Symbolic	Fan	Practical * Functional	.87**	Luxurious*Flashy	.61**
Utilitarian	Fitness Tracker	Practical * Functional	.91**	Luxurious*Flashy	.90**
Symbolic	Fitness Tracker	Practical * Functional	.92**	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**
Utilitarian	Hoover	Practical * Functional	.91**	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**
Symbolic	Hoover	Practical * Functional	.83**	Luxurious*Flashy	.84**
Utilitarian	Mobile Phone Case	Practical * Functional	.83**	Luxurious*Flashy	.97**
Symbolic	Mobile Phone Case	Practical * Functional	.94**	Luxurious*Flashy	.98**
Utilitarian	Headphones	Practical * Functional	.87**	Luxurious*Flashy	.89**
Symbolic	Headphones	Practical * Functional	.89**	Luxurious*Flashy	.91**
Utilitarian	Thermal Mug	Practical * Functional	.82**	Luxurious*Flashy	.96**
Symbolic	Thermal Mug	Practical * Functional	.67**	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**
Utilitarian	Blender	Practical * Functional	.61**	Luxurious*Flashy	.93**
Symbolic	Blender	Practical * Functional	.59**	Luxurious*Flashy	.84**
Utilitarian	Toaster	Practical * Functional	.93**	Luxurious*Flashy	.84**
Symbolic	Toaster	Practical * Functional	.60**	Luxurious*Flashy	.72**
Utilitarian	Electric Toothbrush	Practical * Functional	.86**	Luxurious*Flashy	.84**
Symbolic	Electric Toothbrush	Practical * Functional	.64**	Luxurious*Flashy	.91**
Utilitarian	Camera	Practical * Functional	.93**	Luxurious*Flashy	.96**
Symbolic	Camera	Practical * Functional	.91**	Luxurious*Flashy	.93**
Utilitarian	Portable Speaker	Practical * Functional	.49**	Luxurious*Flashy	.90**
Symbolic	Portable Speaker	Practical * Functional	.80**	Luxurious*Flashy	.67**
Utilitarian	Coffee Maker	Practical * Functional	.83**	Luxurious*Flashy	.96**
Symbolic	Coffee Maker	Practical * Functional	.90**	Luxurious*Flashy	.86**
Utilitarian	Satellite Navigation	Practical * Functional	.74**	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**
Symbolic	Satellite Navigation	Practical * Functional	.87**	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**
Utilitarian	Sound System	Practical * Functional	.61**	Luxurious*Flashy	.49*
Symbolic	Sound System	Practical * Functional	.64**	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**
Utilitarian	Lamp	Practical * Functional	.62**	Luxurious*Flashy	.89**
Symbolic	Lamp	Practical * Functional	.72**	Luxurious*Flashy	.80**

Version	Product	Descriptions	r	Image	r
Utilitarian	Kettle	Luxurious*Flashy	.71**	Practical *	.87**
Symbolic	Kettle	Luxurious*Flashy	.91**	Functional	.59*
Utilitarian	Bike	Luxurious*Flashy	.77**	Practical *	.73**
Symbolic	Bike	Luxurious*Flashy	.54**	Functional	.73**
Utilitarian	Luggage	Luxurious*Flashy	.84**	Practical *	.73**
Symbolic	Luggage	Luxurious*Flashy	.33	Functional	.79**
Utilitarian	Water Bottle	Luxurious*Flashy	.86**	Practical *	.96**
Symbolic	Water Bottle	Luxurious*Flashy	.63**	Functional	.93**
Utilitarian	Coat	Luxurious*Flashy	.77**	Practical *	.95**
Symbolic	Coat	Luxurious*Flashy	.69**	Functional	.81**
Utilitarian	Laptop	Luxurious*Flashy	.79**	Practical *	.92**
Symbolic	Laptop	Luxurious*Flashy	.68**	Functional	.80**
Utilitarian	Fan	Luxurious*Flashy	.70**	Practical *	.93**
Symbolic	Fan	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Functional	.78**
Utilitarian	Fitness Tracker	Luxurious*Flashy	.89**	Practical *	.95**
Symbolic	Fitness Tracker	Luxurious*Flashy	.70**	Functional	.90**
Utilitarian	Hoover	Luxurious*Flashy	.90**	Practical *	.86**
Symbolic	Hoover	Luxurious*Flashy	.86**	Functional	.97**
Utilitarian	Mobile Phone Case	Luxurious*Flashy	.70**	Practical *	.94**
Symbolic	Mobile Phone Case	Luxurious*Flashy	.55**	Functional	.89**
Utilitarian	Headphones	Luxurious*Flashy	.64**	Practical *	.94**
Symbolic	Headphones	Luxurious*Flashy	.65**	Functional	.93**
Utilitarian	Thermal Mug	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**	Practical *	.97**
Symbolic	Thermal Mug	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**	Functional	.81**
Utilitarian	Blender	Luxurious*Flashy	.71**	Practical *	.95**

Symbolic	Blender	Luxurious*Flashy	.86**	Practical *	
				Functional	.65**
				Practical *	
Utilitarian	Toaster	Luxurious*Flashy	.86**	Functional	.89**
				Practical *	
Symbolic	Toaster	Luxurious*Flashy	.79**	Functional	.95**
				Practical *	
Utilitarian	Electric Toothbrush	Luxurious*Flashy	.76**	Functional	.89**
				Practical *	
Symbolic	Electric Toothbrush	Luxurious*Flashy	.81**	Functional	.94**
				Practical *	
Utilitarian	Camera	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**	Functional	.77**
				Practical *	
Symbolic	Camera	Luxurious*Flashy	.67**	Functional	.81**
				Practical *	
Utilitarian	Portable Speaker	Luxurious*Flashy	.70**	Functional	.86**
				Practical *	
Symbolic	Portable Speaker	Luxurious*Flashy	.60**	Functional	.73**
				Practical *	
Utilitarian	Coffee Maker	Luxurious*Flashy	.93**	Functional	.93**
				Practical *	
Symbolic	Coffee Maker	Luxurious*Flashy	.74**	Functional	.86**
				Practical *	
Utilitarian	Satellite Navigation	Luxurious*Flashy	.45	Functional	.56**
				Practical *	
Symbolic	Satellite Navigation	Luxurious*Flashy	.51*	Functional	.97**
				Practical *	
Utilitarian	Sound System	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**	Functional	.90**
				Practical *	
Symbolic	Sound System	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**	Functional	.88**
				Practical *	
Utilitarian	Lamp	Luxurious*Flashy	.89**	Functional	.92**
				Practical *	
Symbolic	Lamp	Luxurious*Flashy	.88**	Functional	.94**

Table 7.2

Difference Tests For Products in Pilot Study 1

Product	Description				Image			
	Difference in utilitarian ratings between utilitarian and less-utilil description				Difference in symbolic ratings between utilitarian and symbolic image			
	Utilitarian	Symbolic			Symbolic	Utilitarian		
	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>t</i> (df)	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>t</i> (df)	<i>p</i>
Kettle	6.32 (1.43)	7.27 (0.99)	-2.93 (21)	.004	6.39 (1.74)	2.47 (1.58)	8.43 (17)	< .001
Bike	7.14 (0.89)	6.11 (1.38)	3.17 (21)	.002	4.75 (1.72)	5.94 (1.52)	-2.48 (17)	.012
Luggage	6.91 (1.44)	5.86 (1.55)	3.09 (21)	.003	5.72 (1.71)	4.53 (1.98)	2.40 (17)	.014
Water Bottle	7.30 (0.78)	5.98 (1.74)	3.63 (21)	< .001	5.64 (1.73)	3.42 (1.63)	4.24 (17)	< .001
Coat	7.30 (0.78)	5.23 (1.44)	5.93 (21)	< .001	5.81 (1.93)	3.69 (1.73)	4.99 (17)	< .001
Laptop	7.11 (0.74)	6.20 (1.10)	4.39 (21)	< .001	6.89 (1.40)	4.31 (1.69)	6.65 (17)	< .001
Fan	6.89 (1.17)	6.07 (1.45)	2.74 (21)	.006	7.22 (0.89)	4.17 (1.98)	7.11 (17)	< .001
Fitness Tracker	7.23 (1.00)	6.07 (1.16)	4.23 (21)	< .001	7.15 (1.04)	4.44 (2.21)	5.53 (16)	< .001
Hoover	7.18 (0.88)	6.50 (0.87)	3.30 (21)	.002	6.61 (1.53)	3.11 (1.90)	8.18 (17)	< .001
Mobile Phone Case	7.48 (0.61)	5.32 (1.48)	6.25 (21)	< .001	6.03 (2.20)	4.69 (2.18)	2.65 (17)	.008
Headphones	7.07 (0.73)	6.04 (1.16)	3.60 (21)	< .001	6.28 (1.79)	4.06 (1.85)	3.98 (17)	< .001
Thermal Mug	6.86 (1.20)	5.64 (1.26)	4.21 (17)	< .001	5.79 (1.84)	3.12 (1.63)	6.48 (20)	< .001
Blender	6.97 (1.01)	4.71 (1.38)	6.76 (16)	< .001	6.80 (1.23)	3.07 (1.66)	8.25 (20)	< .001
Toaster	6.75 (1.64)	4.39 (1.53)	6.46 (17)	< .001	6.57 (1.48)	2.43 (1.33)	10.61 (20)	< .001
Electric Toothbrush	7.25 (0.86)	5.03 (1.66)	6.61 (17)	< .001	4.84 (1.92)	5.80 (1.54)	-2.16 (21)	.021
Camera	7.00 (1.06)	5.17 (1.50)	5.46 (17)	< .001	5.75 (1.71)	3.43 (1.98)	4.05 (21)	< .001
Portable Speaker	6.59 (1.31)	5.12 (1.52)	5.14 (16)	< .001	6.61 (1.75)	3.91 (1.51)	5.83 (21)	< .001
Coffee Maker	6.94 (0.86)	3.81 (1.79)	6.71 (17)	< .001	6.66 (1.32)	3.30 (1.44)	7.67 (21)	< .001
Satellite Navigation	7.06 (0.87)	5.83 (1.78)	2.35 (17)	.016	6.54 (1.46)	3.20 (1.52)	8.17 (21)	< .001
Sound System	7.00 (0.69)	5.67 (1.00)	6.02 (17)	< .001	6.59 (1.27)	4.39 (1.27)	5.41 (21)	< .001
Lamp	6.64 (1.28)	5.72 (1.32)	4.93 (17)	< .001	6.36 (1.39)	3.82 (1.62)	6.84 (21)	< .001

Product	Description				Image			
	Difference in symbolic ratings between utilitarian and less-util description				Difference in utilitarian ratings between utilitarian and symbolic image			
	Symbolic	Utilitarian			Utilitarian	Symbolic		
	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>t</i> (df)	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>t</i> (df)	<i>p</i>
Kettle	5.77 (2.31)	5.09 (2.20)	1.35 (21)	.097	6.64 (1.04)	6.33 (1.18)	1.16 (17)	.13-
Bike	6.32 (1.21)	5.52 (1.95)	2.10 (21)	.024	6.69 (1.19)	6.42 (1.13)	0.98 (17)	.171
Luggage	6.45 (1.74)	5.45 (1.65)	2.82 (21)	.005	6.94 (0.95)	6.39 (1.31)	2.56 (17)	.010
Water Bottle	5.81 (1.46)	5.25 (1.78)	1.50 (21)	.075	6.33 (1.50)	6.36 (1.37)	-0.11 (17)	.455
Coat	5.80 (1.48)	4.70 (1.37)	3.16 (21)	.002	6.33 (1.50)	6.81 (0.93)	-1.64 (17)	.059
Laptop	5.80 (1.31)	5.45 (1.57)	0.98 (21)	.169	6.58 (1.22)	6.22 (1.22)	1.64 (17)	.060
Fan	5.95 (1.45)	5.32 (1.59)	1.67 (21)	.055	6.33 (1.24)	6.94 (0.82)	-2.24 (17)	.019
Fitness Tracker	6.32 (1.12)	5.91 (1.44)	0.98 (21)	.170	6.68 (1.32)	6.62 (1.26)	0.33 (16)	.371
Hoover	4.91 (1.56)	5.91 (1.68)	-4.58 (21)	< .001	6.50 (1.33)	6.53 (0.95)	-0.10 (117)	.460
Mobile Phone Case	6.86 (1.20)	4.75 (1.42)	5.10 (21)	< .001	6.42 (1.20)	6.03 (1.30)	1.23 (17)	.118
Headphones	6.36 (1.06)	5.73 (1.12)	2.16 (21)	.021	6.19 (1.41)	5.97 (1.31)	1.00 (17)	.166
Thermal Mug	4.75 (1.67)	4.33 (1.43)	1.07 (17)	.150	6.74 (1.33)	5.14 (1.99)	3.50 (20)	.001
Blender	6.15 (1.52)	4.65 (1.69)	2.49 (16)	.012	6.63 (1.14)	5.395 (1.26)	2.05 (21)	.027
Toaster	6.53 (1.60)	4.19 (1.71)	4.93 (17)	< .001	6.81 (1.08)	6.17 (1.43)	1.85 (20)	.039
Electric Toothbrush	5.58 (1.76)	5.19 (1.95)	1.05 (17)	.155	6.93 (0.78)	6.68 (1.19)	1.80 (21)	.043
Camera	6.14 (1.63)	4.94 (1.93)	2.94 (17)	.005	5.95 (1.45)	6.23 (1.07)	-0.95 (21)	.177
Portable Speaker	6.29 (1.61)	5.47 (1.58)	2.27 (16)	.019	6.32 (0.97)	6.02 (1.25)	1.27 (21)	.108
Coffee Maker	6.23 (1.79)	4.92 (1.98)	2.39 (17)	.014	6.48 (1.32)	6.70 (0.88)	-0.89 (21)	.193
Satellite Navigation	6.56 (1.65)	5.22 (1.80)	3.06 (17)	.004	5.98 (1.63)	7.00 (1.10)	-2.74 (21)	.006
Sound System	6.50 (1.52)	5.50 (1.73)	2.96 (17)	.004	6.20 (1.54)	6.20 (1.12)	0.00 (21)	.500
Lamp	6.69 (1.53)	4.19 (2.02)	5.77 (17)	< .001	7.11 (0.74)	6.77 (1.15)	1.36 (21)	.095

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In all, the test products for the consumer task were: phone cover, blender, headphones, coffee maker, camera, toaster, bottle, lamp, laptop, sound system. The filler products were: kettle, bike, electric toothbrush, fan, Hoover, satellite navigation, portable speaker, watch, thermal mug, luggage, and coat.

Appendix B

B.1 Pilot Study 2

B.1.1 Method – Part 1

I collected images of a range of female, male, and unisex products with the help from a different group of third-year undergraduate students. We proceeded to decide which products would be good to include in the consumer decision task. For each type of product, we selected two images, each a different version of the same type of product. We chose one flashy and luxury version of the product and one more practical and neutral version. In an initial pilot study, participants ($n = 63$]; 38 women, 25 men]; Age: *range* = 17–63 years, $M = 23.42$, $SD = 8.00$) viewed a series of paired images (in Qualtrics). The female products were matched with similar male products. There were 16 pairs of images for the unisex products (i.e., suitcase, laptop case, fan, camera, coffee maker, pen, hoover, reading glasses x2, portable speaker, keyboard, toaster, face-mask, water bottle, speakers, sunglasses), 13 pairs of images for male products (i.e., headphones, lamp, back pack, phone case, sports-shorts, coat, wallet, holdall, bike, alarm clock, boots, watch, bum bag), and 13 pairs of images for female products (i.e., headphones, lamp, back pack, phone case, sport-bra, coat, purse, holdall, bike, alarm clock, boots, watch, bum bag), so each participant saw 29 products in this pilot study (i.e., males only saw male and unisex versions and females only saw female and unisex versions). I tested whether the symbolic image would be rated as more symbolic than the less symbolic image, and whether the symbolic image was at least equal or less utilitarian than the less symbolic image.

B.1.2 Results – Part 1

I analysed the data via SPSS software (version 26). I split the file for women and men, given that they answered separate products. Responses to questions (i.e., luxurious, flashy, functional, practical) were correlated for each image and description for each product (see

Table 7.3). If the luxurious and flashy questions positively correlated, then I averaged them to create one symbolic measure. If the functional and practical questions positively correlated, then I averaged to create one utilitarian measure.

For a product to be chosen for the second part of the pilot study, where it would have descriptions written for it the symbolic image needed to be rated significantly more symbolic than the other image. It also needed to be rated lower or equal to the other image for the utilitarian measure (not more). Furthermore, images that did not meet these criteria were considered as fillers. Those that were selected as fillers also had descriptions written for them.

B.1.3 Correlations

The luxurious and flashy questions positively correlated for each image for most products (see Table 7.3) except for men's ratings of the Hoover, lamp, holdall, and watch and women's ratings of lamp, sports bra, and purse. The functional and practical questions positively correlated for each image for most products, except for women's ratings of the pen, sunglasses, and headphones.

For the paired t-tests, I averaged responses to the luxurious and flashy questions into one symbolic measure for products where these questions correlated for both product images. I also averaged responses to the practical and functional questions into one utilitarian measure for products where these questions correlated for both product images.

The luxurious question was used as the symbolic measure in the paired t-tests for the men's ratings of the Hoover, lamp, holdall, and watch, and females ratings of lamp, sports bra, and purse. The functional question was used as the utilitarian measure in the paired t-tests for the women's ratings of the pen, sunglasses, and headphones.

Table 7.3

Correlations for Pilot Study 2

Gender	Version	Product	Image	r	Image	r
Male	Utilitarian	Suitcase	Chapter 7 Luxurious*Flashy	.68**	Practical*Functional	.64**
	Symbolic	Suitcase		Luxurious*Flashy	.85**	Practical*Functional
Female	Utilitarian	Suitcase	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**	Practical*Functional	.87**
	Symbolic	Suitcase	Luxurious*Flashy	.77**	Practical*Functional	.93**
Male	Utilitarian	Laptop	Luxurious*Flashy	.53*	Practical*Functional	.83**
	Symbolic	Laptop	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Practical*Functional	.91**
Female	Utilitarian	Laptop	Luxurious*Flashy	.94**	Practical*Functional	.56**
	Symbolic	Laptop	Luxurious*Flashy	.80**	Practical*Functional	.59**
Male	Utilitarian	Fan	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**	Practical*Functional	.64**
	Symbolic	Fan	Luxurious*Flashy	.51*	Practical*Functional	.85**
Female	Utilitarian	Fan	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**	Practical*Functional	.69**
	Symbolic	Fan	Luxurious*Flashy	.43*	Practical*Functional	.82**
Male	Utilitarian	Camera	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**	Practical*Functional	.74**
	Symbolic	Camera	Luxurious*Flashy	.75**	Practical*Functional	.76**
Female	Utilitarian	Camera	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**	Practical*Functional	.82**
	Symbolic	Camera	Luxurious*Flashy	.74**	Practical*Functional	.78**
Male	Utilitarian	Coffee Maker	Luxurious*Flashy	.75**	Practical*Functional	.85**
	Symbolic	Coffee Maker	Luxurious*Flashy	.65**	Practical*Functional	.72**
Female	Utilitarian	Coffee Maker	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**	Practical*Functional	.63**
	Symbolic	Coffee Maker	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**	Practical*Functional	.78**
Male	Utilitarian	Pen	Luxurious*Flashy	.64**	Practical*Functional	.86**
	Symbolic	Pen	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Practical*Functional	.94**
Female	Utilitarian	Pen	Luxurious*Flashy	.90**	Practical*Functional	.39
	Symbolic	Pen	Luxurious*Flashy	.61**	Practical*Functional	.72**
Male	Utilitarian	Hoover	Luxurious*Flashy	.41	Practical*Functional	.82**
	Symbolic	Hoover	Luxurious*Flashy	.53*	Practical*Functional	.70**
Female	Utilitarian	Hoover	Luxurious*Flashy	.76**	Practical*Functional	.81**
	Symbolic	Hoover	Luxurious*Flashy	.88**	Practical*Functional	.84**
Male	Utilitarian	Reading Glasses 1	Luxurious*Flashy	.58**	Practical*Functional	.88**
	Symbolic	Reading Glasses 1	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Practical*Functional	.78**
Female	Utilitarian	Reading Glasses 1	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**	Practical*Functional	.63**
	Symbolic	Reading Glasses 1	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Practical*Functional	.94**
Male	Utilitarian	Portable Speaker	Luxurious*Flashy	.81**	Practical*Functional	.78**
	Symbolic	Portable Speaker	Luxurious*Flashy	.66**	Practical*Functional	.65**
Female	Utilitarian	Portable Speaker	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**	Practical*Functional	.63**
	Symbolic	Portable Speaker	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Practical*Functional	.94**
Male	Utilitarian	Keyboard	Luxurious*Flashy	.74**	Practical*Functional	.87**
	Symbolic	Keyboard	Luxurious*Flashy	.71**	Practical*Functional	.46*
Female	Utilitarian	Keyboard	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**	Practical*Functional	.73**
	Symbolic	Keyboard	Luxurious*Flashy	.80**	Practical*Functional	.78**
Male	Utilitarian	Toaster	Luxurious*Flashy	.60**	Practical*Functional	.76**
	Symbolic	Toaster	Luxurious*Flashy	.58**	Practical*Functional	.72**
Female	Utilitarian	Toaster	Luxurious*Flashy	.70**	Practical*Functional	.72**
	Symbolic	Toaster	Luxurious*Flashy	.89**	Practical*Functional	.81**
Male	Utilitarian	Reading Glasses 2	Luxurious*Flashy	.84**	Practical*Functional	.65**
	Symbolic	Reading Glasses 2	Luxurious*Flashy	.89**	Practical*Functional	.84**
Female	Utilitarian	Reading Glasses 2	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Practical*Functional	.75**
	Symbolic	Reading Glasses 2	Luxurious*Flashy	.80**	Practical*Functional	.71**
Male	Utilitarian	Face Mask	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**	Practical*Functional	.66**
	Symbolic	Face Mask	Luxurious*Flashy	.68**	Practical*Functional	.95**
Female	Utilitarian	Face Mask	Luxurious*Flashy	.88**	Practical*Functional	.77**
	Symbolic	Face Mask	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Practical*Functional	.87**
Male	Utilitarian	Water Bottle	Luxurious*Flashy	.70**	Practical*Functional	.81**

	Symbolic	Water Bottle	Luxurious*Flashy	.51*	Practical*Functional	.70**
Female	Utilitarian	Water Bottle	Luxurious*Flashy	.74**	Practical*Functional	.89**
	Symbolic	Water Bottle	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**	Practical*Functional	.86**
Male	Utilitarian	Speakers	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**	Practical*Functional	.49*
	Symbolic	Speakers	Luxurious*Flashy	.49*	Practical*Functional	.86**
Female	Utilitarian	Speakers	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**	Practical*Functional	.69**
	Symbolic	Speakers	Luxurious*Flashy	.76**	Practical*Functional	.84**
Male	Utilitarian	Sunglasses	Luxurious*Flashy	.81**	Practical*Functional	.91**
	Symbolic	Sunglasses	Luxurious*Flashy	.47*	Practical*Functional	.79**
Female	Utilitarian	Sunglasses	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**	Practical*Functional	.27
	Symbolic	Sunglasses	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**	Practical*Functional	.87**
Male	Utilitarian	Headphones	Luxurious*Flashy	.72**	Practical*Functional	.83**
	Symbolic	Headphones	Luxurious*Flashy	.60**	Practical*Functional	.82**
Female	Utilitarian	Headphones	Luxurious*Flashy	.86**	Practical*Functional	.52*
	Symbolic	Headphones	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**	Practical*Functional	.42
Male	Utilitarian	Lamp	Luxurious*Flashy	.28	Practical*Functional	.61**
	Symbolic	Lamp	Luxurious*Flashy	.88**	Practical*Functional	.83**
Female	Utilitarian	Lamp	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**	Practical*Functional	.61**
	Symbolic	Lamp	Luxurious*Flashy	.07	Practical*Functional	.82**
Male	Utilitarian	Backpack	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**	Practical*Functional	.81**
	Symbolic	Backpack	Luxurious*Flashy	.57**	Practical*Functional	.76**
Female	Utilitarian	Backpack	Luxurious*Flashy	.63**	Practical*Functional	.85**
	Symbolic	Backpack	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**	Practical*Functional	.83**
Male	Utilitarian	Phone Case	Luxurious*Flashy	.88**	Practical*Functional	.90**
	Symbolic	Phone Case	Luxurious*Flashy	.80**	Practical*Functional	.82**
Female	Utilitarian	Phone Case	Luxurious*Flashy	.84**	Practical*Functional	.62**
	Symbolic	Phone Case	Luxurious*Flashy	.58**	Practical*Functional	.67**
Male	Utilitarian	Sports Shorts	Luxurious*Flashy	.48*	Practical*Functional	.66**
	Symbolic	Sports Shorts	Luxurious*Flashy	.47*	Practical*Functional	.55*
Female	Utilitarian	Sports Bra	Luxurious*Flashy	.58*	Practical*Functional	.46*
	Symbolic	Sports Bra	Luxurious*Flashy	.32	Practical*Functional	.84**
Male	Utilitarian	Coat	Luxurious*Flashy	.67**	Practical*Functional	.77**
	Symbolic	Coat	Luxurious*Flashy	.71**	Practical*Functional	.91**
Female	Utilitarian	Coat	Luxurious*Flashy	.70**	Practical*Functional	.94**
	Symbolic	Coat	Luxurious*Flashy	.71**	Practical*Functional	.88**
Male	Utilitarian	Wallet	Luxurious*Flashy	.47*	Practical*Functional	.85**
	Symbolic	Wallet	Luxurious*Flashy	.67**	Practical*Functional	.70**
Female	Utilitarian	Purse	Luxurious*Flashy	.26	Practical*Functional	.47*
	Symbolic	Purse	Luxurious*Flashy	.57**	Practical*Functional	.87**
Male	Utilitarian	Holdall	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**	Practical*Functional	.71**
	Symbolic	Holdall	Luxurious*Flashy	.27	Practical*Functional	.67**
Female	Utilitarian	Holdall	Luxurious*Flashy	.76**	Practical*Functional	.61**
	Symbolic	Holdall	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**	Practical*Functional	.93**
Male	Utilitarian	Bike	Luxurious*Flashy	.92**	Practical*Functional	.82**
	Symbolic	Bike	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**	Practical*Functional	.54*
Female	Utilitarian	Bike	Luxurious*Flashy	.79**	Practical*Functional	.79**
	Symbolic	Bike	Luxurious*Flashy	.71**	Practical*Functional	.63**
Male	Utilitarian	Alarm Clock	Luxurious*Flashy	.76**	Practical*Functional	.61**
	Symbolic	Alarm Clock	Luxurious*Flashy	.58**	Practical*Functional	.69**
Female	Utilitarian	Alarm Clock	Luxurious*Flashy	.93**	Practical*Functional	.85**
	Symbolic	Alarm Clock	Luxurious*Flashy	.88**	Practical*Functional	.75**

Male	Utilitarian	Boots	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**	Practical*Functional	.75**
	Symbolic	Boots	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**	Practical*Functional	.89**
Female	Utilitarian	Boots	Luxurious*Flashy	.68**	Practical*Functional	.85**
	Symbolic	Boots	Luxurious*Flashy	.46*	Practical*Functional	.80**
Male	Utilitarian	Watch	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**	Practical*Functional	.73**
	Symbolic	Watch	Luxurious*Flashy	.41	Practical*Functional	.88**
Female	Utilitarian	Watch	Luxurious*Flashy	.92**	Practical*Functional	.74**
	Symbolic	Watch	Luxurious*Flashy	.75**	Practical*Functional	.96**
Male	Utilitarian	Bum Bag	Luxurious*Flashy	.60**	Practical*Functional	.73**
	Symbolic	Bum Bag	Luxurious*Flashy	.65**	Practical*Functional	.80**
Female	Utilitarian	Bum Bag	Luxurious*Flashy	.66**	Practical*Functional	.78**
	Symbolic	Bum Bag	Luxurious*Flashy	.69**	Practical*Functional	.86**

B.1.4 Paired t.tests

The paired t.tests were used to see if the symbolic images were rated significantly more symbolic and at least equal or less utilitarian than the alternative product image. If any of the images or descriptions for each product did not meet these criteria then the whole product for both male and females was not used and automatically considered as a filler product in the consumer task.

The symbolic suitcase image was not rated significantly more symbolic than the utilitarian image, by males (Table 7.6), which means suitcase was considered as a filler product. The same was found for portable speaker, face mask, bike and alarm clock (i.e., all considered as filler products). The symbolic keyboard image was not rated significantly more symbolic than the utilitarian image by females, which means keyboard was considered as a filler product. The utilitarian camera and hoover images were rated less utilitarian than the symbolic images, by females, which means camera and hoover were also considered as filler products.

The products that were chosen to have descriptions written for them as potential test products in study 2b were laptop, fan, coffee maker, pen, speakers, sunglasses, headphones, lamp, backpack, phone case, sports shorts (bra), coat, purse, and holdall. The products that were considered as the filler products and therefore had descriptions written for them were suitcase, camera, hoover, bike, and alarm clock.

Table 7.4*Difference Tests for Pilot Study 2*

Product	Image		Difference in symbolic ratings between symbolic and utilitarian image				Difference in utilitarian ratings between utilitarian and symbolic image			
	Symbolic	Utilitarian	<i>t</i> (df)	<i>p</i>	Utilitarian	Symbolic	<i>t</i> (df)	<i>p</i>		
	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)			<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)				
F. Suitcase	5.52 (1.68)	2.78 (1.56)	7.17 (26)	< .001	6.57 (1.31)	6.11 (1.61)	1.63 (26)	.058		
M. Suitcase	4.88 (1.81)	4.13 (1.66)	1.44 (19)	.084	5.38 (1.28)	5.65 (1.03)	-0.96 (19)	.175		
F. Laptop	5.98 (1.72)	2.63 (1.49)	8.11 (22)	< .001	7.07 (0.87)	6.11 (1.02)	4.03 (22)	< .001		
M. Laptop	4.73 (1.93)	3.52 (1.37)	2.69 (21)	.007	6.11 (1.28)	5.43 (1.61)	1.67 (21)	.055		
F. Fan	7.46 (0.75)	3.04 (1.75)	12.56 (24)	< .001	5.90 (1.44)	6.26 (1.24)	-0.95 (24)	.175		
M. Fan	6.16 (1.14)	3.05 (1.53)	8.87 (21)	< .001	6.16 (1.12)	4.80 (1.67)	3.30 (21)	.002		
F. Camera	5.96 (1.24)	3.27 (1.76)	5.89 (23)	< .001	6.75 (1.58)	5.31 (1.34)	-2.13 (23)	.022		
M. Camera	5.10 (2.01)	2.88 (1.70)	3.96 (19)	< .001	4.98 (1.82)	5.45 (1.61)	-1.48 (19)	.078		
F. Coffee Maker	6.69 (1.34)	3.15 (1.91)	8.27 (25)	< .001	6.12 (1.34)	6.60 (1.09)	-1.69 (25)	.052		
M. Coffee Maker	5.90 (1.39)	3.07 (1.73)	5.15 (20)	< .001	5.60 (1.44)	5.67 (1.40)	-0.21 (20)	.417		
F. Pen	6.08 (1.08)	2.10 (1.39)	11.39 (24)	< .001	7.12 (1.20)	6.88 (1.05)	1.10 (24)	.141		
M. Pen	6.26 (1.57)	1.98 (1.02)	10.48 (20)	< .001	6.14 (1.60)	5.86 (1.48)	0.97 (20)	.173		
F. Hoover	6.67 (1.50)	1.83 (1.34)	12.40 (23)	< .001	6.17 (1.33)	7.02 (1.17)	-2.34 (23)	.014		
M. Hoover	5.52 (1.54)	2.14 (0.96)	8.73 (20)	< .001	6.36 (1.52)	5.40 (1.66)	1.97 (20)	.032		
F. Reading Glasses 1	4.35 (1.87)	2.13 (1.45)	4.76 (22)	< .001	6.87 (1.17)	6.50 (1.36)	1.34 (22)	.097		
M. Reading Glasses 1	5.00 (1.80)	3.48 (1.23)	3.18 (19)	.002	5.73 (1.62)	5.20 (1.38)	1.44 (19)	.083		
F. Portable Speaker	6.32 (1.29)	4.76 (1.49)	4.08 (24)	< .001	6.48 (1.11)	5.84 (1.30)	2.03 (24)	.027		
M. Portable Speaker	4.98 (1.73)	4.23 (1.52)	1.59 (19)	.064	6.20 (1.34)	4.68 (1.70)	3.72 (19)	< .001		
F. Keyboard	5.50 (2.08)	4.58 (2.04)	1.50 (24)	.073	6.70 (1.78)	4.78 (1.85)	4.44 (24)	< .001		
M. Keyboard	5.72 (2.12)	4.09 (2.04)	2.32 (22)	.015	5.89 (1.86)	4.41 (1.57)	3.13 (22)	.002		

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F. Toaster	6.79 (1.68)	3.52 (1.52)	6.32 (23)	< .001	7.19 (0.93)	3.69 (1.83)	7.57 (23)	< .001
M. Toaster	6.84 (1.08)	3.32 (1.39)	8.15 (21)	< .001	6.63 (1.23)	3.16 (1.68)	6.36 (21)	< .001
F. Reading Glasses 2	4.68 (1.96)	2.84 (1.95)	3.07 (21)	.003	6.86 (1.27)	4.68 (1.99)	4.96 (21)	< .001
M. Reading Glasses 2	4.66 (1.95)	2.95 (1.36)	2.99 (21)	.004	5.93 (1.40)	4.89 (1.71)	2.59 (21)	.009
F. Face Mask	5.10 (1.95)	3.40 (2.09)	2.88 (24)	.004	6.36 (1.67)	6.02 (1.38)	0.90 (24)	.189
M. Face Mask	3.52 (1.98)	3.00 (1.70)	0.99 (21)	.168	5.93 (1.44)	5.20 (1.72)	1.61 (21)	.062
F. Water Bottle	6.09 (1.69)	3.39 (1.56)	5.55 (21)	< .001	6.73 (1.43)	5.80 (1.18)	2.54 (21)	.010
M. Water Bottle	5.78 (1.23)	3.35 (1.35)	5.33 (19)	< .001	6.58 (0.92)	4.65 (1.42)	4.39 (19)	< .001
F. Speakers	6.85 (1.35)	3.98 (1.82)	5.77 (26)	< .001	6.50 (1.12)	5.50 (1.81)	2.60 (26)	.008
M. Speakers	6.50 (1.16)	4.45 (1.72)	6.03 (20)	< .001	6.71 (0.73)	4.24 (1.76)	6.03 (20)	< .001
F. Sunglasses	6.27 (1.84)	2.57 (1.27)	8.13 (21)	< .001	6.64 (1/15)	6.12 (1.36)	1.96 (24)	.031
M. Sunglasses	6.32 (1.03)	3.68 (1.48)	8.01 (21)	< .001	5.70 (1.42)	5.25 (1.26)	1.48 (21)	.077
F. Headphones	6.12 (1.56)	3.02 (1.75)	5.93 (20)	< .001	6.65 (1.14)	5.75 (1.33)	2.35 (19)	.015
M. Headphones	5.91 (1.50)	3.45 (1.54)	5.11 (21)	< .001	6.36 (1.51)	4.27 (1.79)	4.34 (21)	< .001
F. Lamp	6.79 (1.7)	2.92 (2.28)	7.10 (23)	< .001	7.06 (1.04)	4.56 (1.90)	6.23 (23)	< .001
M. Lamp	6.10 (1.26)	2.76 (1.26)	7.42 (20)	< .001	6.29 (1.10)	3.38 (1.31)	6.82 (20)	< .001
F. Backpack	5.21 (1.73)	2.27 (1.17)	6.95 (23)	< .001	7.28 (1.14)	4.74 (1.53)	7.07 (22)	< .001
M. Backpack	5.60 (1.17)	3.02 (1.49)	7.00 (20)	< .001	6.60 (1.14)	4.36 (1.32)	5.07 (20)	< .001
F. Phone Case	6.02 (1.58)	2.98 (1.54)	6.77 (24)	< .001	7.20 (0.90)	4.36 (1.79)	6.81 (24)	< .001
M. Phone Case	6.52 (1.43)	3.09 (1.49)	7.71 (21)	< .001	6.45 (1.30)	4.57 (1.81)	4.07 (21)	< .001
F. Sports Bra	5.83 (1.95)	3.30 (1.49)	4.46 (22)	< .001	7.33 (0.63)	4.11 (1.71)	7.31 (22)	< .001
M. Sports Shorts	4.24 (1.37)	3.07 (1.18)	3.18 (20)	.002	5.83 (1.24)	5.60 (1.27)	1.23 (20)	.117
F. Coat	5.76 (1.32)	2.67 (1.34)	8.19 (22)	< .001	6.48 (1.16)	5.35 (1.31)	3.34 (22)	.001
M. Coat	5.90 (1.30)	3.14 (1.16)	6.52 (20)	< .001	5.83 (1.43)	4.79 (1.66)	1.93 (20)	.034
F. Purse	6.12 (1.48)	2.62 (1.55)	8.73 (25)	< .001	6.46 (1.10)	5.31 (1.39)	4.72 (25)	< .001
M. Wallet	6.14 (1.32)	2.02 (1.12)	9.27 (20)	< .001	6.00 (1.19)	5.00 (1.10)	2.75 (20)	.006
F. Holdall	6.81 (1.04)	2.54 (1.57)	12.21 (23)	< .001	7.13 (0.71)	5.52 (1.43)	4.99 (23)	< .001
M. Holdall	6.20 (1.24)	3.00 (1.62)	5.97 (19)	< .001	6.70 (0.99)	5.00 (1.31)	4.80 (19)	< .001
F. Bike	5.52 (1.58)	4.23 (1.76)	3.07 (25)	.003	5.98 (1.55)	6.37 (1.28)	-1.20 (25)	.121
M. Bike	5.93 (1.51)	5.00 (2.15)	1.51 (19)	.073	5.65 (1.51)	5.58 (1.42)	0.19 (19)	.425

F. Alarm Clock	6.11 (1.66)	4.52 (2.54)	2.33 (22)	.015	6.50 (1.41)	6.09 (1.50)	1.11 (22)	.140
M. Alarm Clock	5.20 (1.58)	4.35 (2.04)	1.38 (19)	.092	6.15 (1.72)	5.63 (1.73)	1.01 (19)	.162
F. Boots	6.38 (1.18)	3.73 (1.30)	7.90 (25)	< .001	6.54 (1.41)	4.40 (1.67)	5.28 (25)	< .001
M. Boots	5.75 (1.34)	3.25 (1.69)	5.80 (19)	< .001	5.23 (1.58)	4.70 (1.55)	1.83 (19)	.041
F. Watch	6.67 (1.22)	3.29 (1.98)	6.46 (25)	< .001	7.08 (0.84)	3.38 (1.97)	9.98 (25)	< .001
M. Watch	6.05 (1.68)	4.27 (2.05)	3.81 (21)	< .001	6.57 (1.20)	4.27 (1.93)	4.73 (21)	< .001
F. Bum Bag	5.81 (1.42)	2.38 (1.31)	7.63 (25)	< .001	6.48 (1.23)	4.81 (1.74)	4.38 (25)	< .001
M. Bum Bag	4.43 (1.71)	2.57 (1.15)	4.08 (20)	< .001	5.76 (1.28)	4.33 (1.32)	3.07 (20)	.003

B.1.5 Method – Part 2

With the help from third year undergraduate students, I wrote descriptions for the products. For each pair of images, I wrote two descriptions to describe the products. We created one description in each pair to be more functional and practical than the other. The descriptions for the filler products were written to be either equal in functionality and practicality, or one more functional and practical than the other (i.e., which would be paired with the symbolic image if chosen as a filler).

The descriptions were the same for males and females for the unisex products (i.e., laptop, fan, coffee maker, pen, speakers, and bike), but were slightly adjusted for the gender specific products (i.e., sunglasses, headphones, lamp, backpack, phone case, sports shorts/bra, coat, wallet, purse, holdall, suitcase, camera, Hoover, and alarm clock).

In the second part of the pilot study, participants ($N = 71$ [44, female, 22, male]; age range: 16 – 74, $M = 33.03$; $SD = 15.43$) were presented with these paired descriptions (via Qualtrics). There were 5 pairs of descriptions for the unisex products (i.e., laptop, fan, coffee maker, pen, and speakers), 9 pairs of descriptions for male products (i.e., sunglasses, headphones, lamp, backpack, phone case, sports short, coat, wallet, and holdall), 9 pairs of descriptions for female products (i.e., sunglasses, headphones, lamp, backpack, phone case, sports bra, coat, purse, and holdall), and 5 pairs of descriptions for fillers (i.e., suitcase, camera, Hoover, alarm clock, and bike). Therefore, each participant saw 19 products in this pilot study (i.e., males only saw male and unisex versions and females only saw female and unisex versions).

B.1.6 Results – Part 2

The data from this pilot study was analysed using SPSS software (version 26). The file was split for males and females as they answered separate products in the pilot study (some were the same, but still answered by male and female separately).

All the questions (i.e., luxurious, flashy, functional, practical) were correlated for each image and description for each product (Table 7.5). If the luxurious and flashy questions

positively correlated, then they were averaged to create one symbolic measure. If the functional and practical questions positively correlated, then they were averaged to create one utilitarian measure.

For a product to be chosen the utilitarian description needed to be rated significantly more utilitarian than the other description and needed to be rated significantly lower or equal to the other description for the symbolic measure (not more).

B.1.7 Correlations

The practical and functional questions positively correlated for each description for most products (se) except for males rating of the alarm clock. The luxurious and flashy questions positively correlated for each description for most products, except for male rating the wallet.

For the paired t.tests, the practical and functional questions were also merged (i.e., averaged) into one utilitarian measure for products where these questions correlated for both product descriptions. The luxurious and flashy questions were merged into one symbolic measure for products where these questions correlated for both product descriptions.

The functional question was used as the utilitarian measure in the paired t.tests for males ratings of the alarm clock. The luxurious question was used as the symbolic measure in the paired t.tests for males ratings of the wallet.

Table 7.5

Correlations 2 for Pilot Study 2

G	Version	Product	Descriptions	r	Descriptions	r
B	Utilitarian	Suitcase	Practical * Functional	.79**	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**
	Symbolic	Suitcase	Practical * Functional	.78**	Luxurious*Flashy	.54**
B	Utilitarian	Laptop	Practical * Functional	.80**	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**
	Symbolic	Laptop	Practical * Functional	.80**	Luxurious*Flashy	.75**
B	Utilitarian	Fan	Practical * Functional	.67**	Luxurious*Flashy	.69**
	Symbolic	Fan	Practical * Functional	.70**	Luxurious*Flashy	.79**
B	Utilitarian	Camera	Practical * Functional	.85**	Luxurious*Flashy	.81**
	Symbolic	Camera	Practical * Functional	.58**	Luxurious*Flashy	.62**
B	Utilitarian	Coffee Maker	Practical * Functional	.76**	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**

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	Symbolic	Coffee Maker	Practical * Functional	.78**	Luxurious*Flashy	.90**
B	Utilitarian	Pen	Practical * Functional	.74**	Luxurious*Flashy	.83**
	Symbolic	Pen	Practical * Functional	.84**	Luxurious*Flashy	.74**
B	Utilitarian	Hoover	Practical * Functional	.63**	Luxurious*Flashy	.76**
	Symbolic	Hoover	Practical * Functional	.76**	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**
B	Utilitarian	Speakers	Practical * Functional	.70**	Luxurious*Flashy	.59**
	Symbolic	Speakers	Practical * Functional	.80**	Luxurious*Flashy	.81**
B	Utilitarian	Headphones	Practical * Functional	.67**	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**
	Symbolic	Headphones	Practical * Functional	.81**	Luxurious*Flashy	.66**
B	Utilitarian	Lamp	Practical * Functional	.75**	Luxurious*Flashy	.80**
	Symbolic	Lamp	Practical * Functional	.73**	Luxurious*Flashy	.64**
B	Utilitarian	Sunglasses	Practical * Functional	.75**	Luxurious* Flashy	.74**
	Symbolic	Sunglasses	Practical * Functional	.59**	Luxurious* Flashy	.78**
M	Utilitarian	Backpack	Practical * Functional	.84**	Luxurious*Flashy	.71**
	Symbolic	Backpack	Practical * Functional	.61**	Luxurious*Flashy	.80**
F	Utilitarian	Backpack	Practical * Functional	.77**	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**
	Symbolic	Backpack	Practical * Functional	.79**	Luxurious*Flashy	.52**
M	Utilitarian	Phone Case	Practical * Functional	.73**	Luxurious*Flashy	.70**
	Symbolic	Phone Case	Practical * Functional	.60**	Luxurious*Flashy	.51*
F	Utilitarian	Phone Case	Practical * Functional	.75**	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**
	Symbolic	Phone Case	Practical * Functional	.72**	Luxurious*Flashy	.75**
M	Utilitarian	Sports Shorts	Practical * Functional	.53*	Luxurious*Flashy	.65**
	Symbolic	Sports Shorts	Practical * Functional	.73**	Luxurious*Flashy	.59**
F	Utilitarian	Sports Bra	Practical * Functional	.75**	Luxurious*Flashy	.64**
	Symbolic	Sports Bra	Practical * Functional	.94**	Luxurious*Flashy	.74**
M	Utilitarian	Coat	Practical * Functional	.63**	Luxurious*Flashy	.82**
	Symbolic	Coat	Practical * Functional	.73**	Luxurious*Flashy	.71**
F	Utilitarian	Coat	Practical * Functional	.89**	Luxurious*Flashy	.78**
	Symbolic	Coat	Practical * Functional	.81**	Luxurious*Flashy	.87**
M	Utilitarian	Wallet	Practical * Functional	.76**	Luxurious*Flashy	.88**
	Symbolic	Wallet	Practical * Functional	.81**	Luxurious*Flashy	.26
F	Utilitarian	Purse	Practical * Functional	.79**	Luxurious*Flashy	.74**
	Symbolic	Purse	Practical * Functional	.78**	Luxurious*Flashy	.73**
M	Utilitarian	Holdall	Practical * Functional	.83**	Luxurious*Flashy	.79**
	Symbolic	Holdall	Practical * Functional	.86**	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**
F	Utilitarian	Holdall	Practical * Functional	.81**	Luxurious*Flashy	.76**
	Symbolic	Holdall	Practical * Functional	.58**	Luxurious*Flashy	.72**
M	Utilitarian	Bike	Practical * Functional	.64**	Luxurious*Flashy	.52*
	Symbolic	Bike	Practical * Functional	.77**	Luxurious*Flashy	.52*
F	Utilitarian	Bike	Practical * Functional	.74**	Luxurious*Flashy	.85**
	Symbolic	Bike	Practical * Functional	.66**	Luxurious*Flashy	.89**
M	Utilitarian	Alarm Clock	Practical * Functional	.76**	Luxurious*Flashy	.68**
	Symbolic	Alarm Clock	Practical * Functional	.30	Luxurious*Flashy	.72**
F	Utilitarian	Alarm Clock	Practical * Functional	.82**	Luxurious*Flashy	.72**
	Symbolic	Alarm Clock	Practical * Functional	.82**	Luxurious*Flashy	.79**

Note. G = Gender, B = Both, F = Female, M = Male

B.1.8 Paired t.tests

The paired t.tests were used to see if the utilitarian descriptions were rated significantly more utilitarian and at least equal or less symbolic than the alternative product descriptions. If any of the descriptions for each product did not meet these criteria then the whole product was not used. The purpose of checking the filler descriptions was to determine whether the descriptions were equal for the utilitarian and symbolic measures, or if one description was more or less utilitarian and symbolic than the paired description. These filler descriptions were then paired to the images in a pattern that was different to the test pattern for Study 2b (i.e., symbolic image always paired with less utilitarian description). Therefore, some filler products would have images that were rated equally symbolic with descriptions that were rated the same on the utilitarian measure.

The utilitarian male backpack description was rated significantly less utilitarian than the less-utilitarian description and significantly more symbolic than the less-utilitarian description. The symbolic Hoover description was rated significantly less symbolic than the utilitarian description. The utilitarian female and male bike descriptions were not significantly different to the less-utilitarian descriptions. Furthermore, the utilitarian female and male alarm clock descriptions were not significantly different to the less-utilitarian descriptions.

The test products chosen for the consumer task were, pen, lamp, coat, headphones, holdall, phone case, sports shorts/bra, wallet/purse, and the fillers were suitcase, camera, Hoover, and alarm clock. For Study 2b the more utilitarian descriptions will be paired with the more symbolic looking image for the filler products. These products are an improvement from those used in Study 2a because they are mostly public products (i.e., 6 out of 8 products) which is partly due to having gender specific products such as clothing. Furthermore, there is a reduced number of products in total that participants had to look at, which reduces the chance of a fatigue effect.

Table 7.6

Difference Tests 2 for Products in Pilot Study 2

Product	Difference in utilitarian ratings between utilitarian and less-util description				Difference in symbolic ratings between symbolic and utilitarian description			
	Utilitarian	Symbolic			Symbolic	Utilitarian		
	M (SD)	M (SD)	t (df)	p	M (SD)	M (SD)	t (df)	p
B. Laptop	6.64 (1.19)	5.15 (1.31)	6.85 (64)	< .001	6.24 (1.55)	4.56 (1.54)	5.75 (64)	< .001
B. Fan	6.49 (1.01)	5.50 (1.25)	5.89 (64)	< .001	6.14 (1.43)	5.47 (1.48)	2.60 (64)	.006
B. Coffee Maker	6.38 (1.15)	5.14 (1.47)	5.54 (62)	< .001	4.94 (1.73)	5.33 (1.49)	-1.33 (62)	.095
B. Pen	6.68 (1.09)	5.75 (1.40)	5.93 (64)	< .001	6.25 (1.52)	4.72 (1.63)	5.28 (64)	< .001
B. Speakers	6.53 (1.07)	5.25 (1.26)	8.28 (64)	< .001	5.66 (1.70)	5.50 (1.33)	0.63 (64)	.267
B. Sunglasses	6.80 (1.00)	5.10 (1.19)	10.56 (64)	< .001	5.91 (1.39)	5.04 (1.45)	3.31 (64)	< .001
B. Headphones	6.23 (0.93)	5.27 (1.26)	8.83 (65)	< .001	5.30 (1.21)	5.45 (1.43)	-0.70 (65)	.243
B. Lamp	6.46 (1.30)	4.53 (1.66)	7.25 (63)	< .001	5.92 (1.56)	4.59 (1.59)	4.70 (63)	< .001
F. Holdall	6.92 (1.19)	5.15 (1.07)	8.05 (43)	< .001	6.07 (1.40)	4.36 (1.56)	5.38 (43)	< .001
M. Holdall	6.14 (1.67)	4.70 (1.65)	3.68 (21)	< .001	5.57 (1.65)	4.16 (1.57)	3.41 (21)	< .001
F. Backpack	7.15 (0.77)	4.91 (1.28)	9.52 (41)	< .001	6.14 (1.28)	4.76 (1.64)	4.35 (41)	< .001
M. Backpack	4.59 (1.20)	6.27 (1.32)	-4.91 (21)	< .001	4.11 (1.48)	5.70 (1.25)	-3.70 (21)	< .001
F. Phone Case	7.08 (0.84)	4.81 (1.21)	11.34 (42)	< .001	6.30 (1.31)	4.50 (1.52)	5.57 (42)	< .001
M. Phone Case	6.84 (0.97)	5.41 (1.08)	5.43 (21)	< .001	6.05 (1.40)	3.91 (1.54)	3.94 (21)	< .001
F. Sports Bra	6.93 (0.81)	4.41 (1.56)	9.28 (42)	< .001	6.83 (1.15)	4.38 (1.47)	7.87 (42)	< .001
M. Sports Shorts	6.66 (1.06)	3.91 (1.56)	6.09 (21)	< .001	6.25 (1.40)	4.32 (1.24)	4.22 (21)	< .001
F. Coat	6.98 (1.21)	4.86 (1.21)	8.37 (42)	< .001	6.16 (1.17)	4.58 (1.46)	5.26 (42)	< .001
M. Coat	6.52 (1.03)	4.70 (1.35)	4.78 (21)	< .001	5.75 (0.96)	4.18 (1.58)	3.63 (21)	< .001
F. Purse	7.07 (1.16)	4.56 (1.33)	8.56 (41)	< .001	6.32 (1.51)	4.61 (1.64)	4.71 (41)	< .001
M. Wallet	6.50 (1.26)	4.93 (1.58)	4.88 (21)	< .001	6.27 (1.00)	4.11 (1.45)	5.54 (21)	< .001
B. Suitcase*	6.47 (1.11)	5.40 (1.40)	4.99 (65)	< .001	5.86 (1.14)	4.67 (1.411)	5.53 (65)	< .001
B. Hoover*	6.24 (1.21)	5.62 (1.25)	3.07 (64)	.002	4.15 (1.47)	4.85 (1.62)	-3.54 (64)	< .001

B. Camera*	6.46 (1.24)	5.12 (1.31)	7.40 (640)	< .001	6.15 (1.17)	5.07 (1.43)	4.73 (64)	< .001
F. Bike	6.36 (1.04)	6.13 (1.20)	1.01 (41)	.160	5.65 (1.58)	5.07 (1.27)	2.16 (41)	.018
M. Bike	5.41 (1.38)	5.56 (1.42)	-0.42 (21)	.340	4.98 (1.22)	5.14 (1.42)	-0.40 (21)	.348
F. Alarm Clock*	6.55 (1.08)	5.77 (1.30)	3.32 (41)	< .001	4.73 (1.45)	6.11 (1.27)	-5.12 (41)	< .001
M. Alarm Clock*	6.23 (1.28)	5.82 (0.95)	1.39 (21)	.090	5.07 (1.64)	5.50 (1.39)	-0.95 (21)	.176

Figure 7.1

An Example of The Products for the Consumer Decision Tasks

Product A



- Wireless headphones with Bluetooth connection.
- 26 hours of battery life.
- Hands-free calls.
- Sleek sophisticated design.
- Variety of unique colours that blends into your style.

Product B



- Wireless headphones with Bluetooth connection.
- 30 hours of battery life.
- Clear hands-free calls in windy or noisy environments.
- Sturdy adjustable anti-slip headband.
- Comfortable, padded ear cushions.

Appendix C

C.1 Prize Draw in Study 3

FPrizedraw

Which **one** of the following **products** would you like to be entered into the **prize draw to win**?



- Product 1
- Product 2
- Product 3
- Product 4
- Product 5

Appendix D

D.1 Pilot Study for Meaning threat Manipulation

Meaning Threat and the Subsequent Relation between Subclinical Narcissism and Materialism

The aim of this study is to understand how threatening meaning in life (MIL) can influence participants' levels of materialism. It also the aim to know if this relationship will be moderated by the level of narcissism of the participants. The final aim is to assess the validity of this current study's method of threatening meaning. A manipulation check measure (i.e., scale of MIL) will assess whether threatening meaning (i.e., in comparison to a control condition) decreases scores on a measure of presence of meaning in life and increases scores on a measure of search of meaning in life.

H1.1 - Materialism as a state will be higher for participants who were exposed to the meaning in life threat condition as opposed to no threat condition.

H1.2 - This effect will be significantly more pronounced for participants who score higher on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI).

H2 - At the same time, after the meaning in life threat (i.e., the meaning-threat essay), participants will score lower on the subscale measuring 'presence' of meaningfulness and higher in the subscale measuring 'search' of meaningfulness.

Method

Participants

Participants were 180 undergraduate students from the University of Southampton who took part in the study as part of a course requirement. They received no payment or compensation for participating.

Apparatus, Procedure and Measures

Participants completed this online study using either a computer/laptop or their mobile devices during one of the module's (Research Methods and Data Analyses II) workshops. All participants first read an informed consent form.

Narcissism. Participants then completed the 40-item, Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) questionnaire to assess self-reported subclinical narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988). This is the most common, global assessment of narcissism (Miller & Campbell, 2011). Participants were asked to make a choice between numerous pairs of statements, with one indicating high narcissism ("I like to be centre of attention") and the other low narcissism ("I prefer to blend in with the crowd"). These items were randomised and the number narcissistic choices was summed. This scale was reliable ($\alpha = .85$; $M = 10.49$, $SD = 6.35$).

Manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental condition (i.e., where they were exposed to a meaning in life threat) or the control condition (i.e., no threat condition). Participants were instructed to read an extract from an essay written by the philosopher Dr James Park of Oxford University. The meaning-threat essay made the argument that life has no real meaning, whereas the no-threat essay (i.e., control condition) concerns the limitations of computers. The inclusion of the doctorate and highly regarded British university is intended to project a degree of credibility, although Dr Park is not actually from the Oxford University. This 'meaning threat' manipulation has been used in previous research in Meaning in Life (Routledge et al., 2011).

Participants then answered some questions about the essay they were randomly allocated to read: 'How convincing this essay is?', 'To what extent do you agree with it?', 'How well written it is?', 'How interesting it is?', 'How much can you relate to it?', 'To what extent you believe this essay to be true?', 'Is the essay is convincing in conveying it's point?' and 'Does the author makes a strong case?'. These questions were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (Not Very Much) to 8 (Very Much). These nine questions were used to create a scale that assessed how credible the source was. This scale had very good reliability and met the required parametric assumptions ($\alpha = .91$; $M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.41$; Kline, 2011).

Meaning in Life. Participants were then asked to complete the state version of the meaning in life scale (Steger, Frazier, Kaler, M. & Oishi, 2006). This scale is most widely used across the literature of MIL and has significant improvements over the other MIL scales (i.e., Purpose in Life test, Life Regard Index and Sense of Coherence Scale). To assess how meaningful participants felt their life was in the moment, the wording of the instruction for this questionnaire was changed from '*Please take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you*', which assess dispositional MIL, to, '*Please take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you right now, in this very moment*' which assessed state MIL.

This is a 10-item scale, where five items measured the presence of meaning in life and the rest measure search for meaning in life. A typical item measuring presence is "*I understand my life's meaning*", whereas an example of a typical item measuring search is "*I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant*". Each item was measured on an 8-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale overall was reliable and met the required parametric assumptions. The presence sub-scale was reliable ($\alpha = .90$; $M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.57$) as was the search sub-scale ($\alpha = .90$; $M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.59$).

Materialism. Finally, participants completed an 18-item measure of materialism (Richins & Dawson, 1992; adapted to measure materialism as a state). A typical item measuring levels of materialism is "*I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes*". Seven of the items measured low levels of materialism; "*I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things*". These seven items were reverse scored, so high scores on all items would indicate high levels of materialism. Each item was measured on an 8-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale overall was reliable and met the required parametric assumptions ($\alpha = .88$; $M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.05$). The survey is expected to take approximately 20 minutes.

A quantitative approach is being used to assess how participant's scores on the materialism questionnaire differ between those within the experimental and those within the

control condition and depending on their score on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI).

Results

Exclusions

There were originally 180 students, however 15 were removed because those participants either did not consent for their data to be used or they had a large amount of data missing.

Correlations

All analyses were conducted using SPSS software. Narcissism (NPI) and Materialism were positively correlated. Those who scored higher on the NPI also had higher levels of materialism.

Materialism was also positively correlated with the search sub-scale of meaning in life. This means that the higher participants scored on the search for meaning in life, the higher their scores were on the scale of materialism. This could perhaps indicate that those who value materialism have lower levels of meaning in life. This notion is supported by the finding that materialism was negatively correlated with the presence of meaning in life.

Narcissism was not correlated with search for meaning in life, nor was it correlated with the presence of meaning in life).

Main Analyses

H1.1 - Materialism as a state will be higher for participants who were exposed to the meaning in life threat condition as opposed to no threat condition.

H1.2 - This effect will be significantly more pronounced for participants who score higher on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI).

A moderation analysis was conducted using Model 1 of Process (Hayes, 2013) to assess the first part of this hypothesis; whether there was a main effect of the condition that participants were placed in (threat vs no threat) on self-reported levels of materialism. The main effect of the personality trait of narcissism (i.e., measured via the NPI) on

materialism was also assessed, as well as the interaction between any effect of the condition and narcissism on materialism. This addressed the second part of the hypothesis (H1.2).

This test revealed that there was no main effect of condition on materialism, $b = 0.39$, $SE = 0.30$, $t = 1.32$, $p = .189$. This test also revealed that there was no main effect of narcissism on materialism, $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 1.56$, $p = .121$. There was no significant Condition X Narcissism interaction on materialism, $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = -0.45$, $p = .650$.

H2 - At the same time, after the meaning in life threat (i.e., the meaning-threat essay), participants will score lower on the subscale measuring 'presence' of meaningfulness and higher in the subscale measuring 'search' of meaningfulness. (Manipulation Check)

Is this condition a good way at manipulating MIL presence and search scales?

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare **MIL presence** scores between those who were in the threat condition compared to the no threat condition. This test revealed that there was no significant difference in MIL presence scores between threat conditions. Those in the threat condition did not score significantly lower in MIL presence ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.64$) than those in the no threat condition ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.46$), $t(177) = -1.95$, $p = .052$.

A t-test was computed to compare **MIL search** scores between those who were in the threat condition compared to the no threat condition. This test revealed that there was no significant difference in MIL search scores between threat conditions. Those in the threat condition did not score significantly higher in MIL search ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.67$) than those in the no threat condition ($M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.50$), $t(177) = -1.01$, $p = .315$.

Appendix E

E.1 MIL Manipulation in Study 4

▼ MIL Cond

Threat

Please recall a time in your personal or professional life when you behaved in a way that made you feel **meaningless**.

This should be a situation in which you felt **like you had no purpose** and **insignificant**.

Please describe the details about this situation that made you feel **meaningless**. What was it like to be in this situation? What thoughts and feelings did you experience?

Affirm

Please recall a time in your personal or professional life when you behaved in a way that made you feel **meaningful**.

This should be a situation in which you felt **purposeful** and **significant**.

Please describe the details about this situation that made you feel **meaningful**.

What was it like to be in this situation? What thoughts and feelings did you experience?

Control

People find it very difficult to explain to others **how to tie their shoelaces**. As difficult as it is please try your best to **describe all the steps** involved to somebody who does not tie their shoelaces and does not have any visual aids to help them. Please remember there is **no right or wrong way** to explain this.

Appendix F

F.1 Motivations for Buying in Study 5

Type		Item	Where it's from
Stand out (Snob Effect)	1.	It says a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	Created for this study.
	2.	It is a symbol of success.	Created for this study.
	3.	Its high price says something about me.	Created for this study.
	4.	It helps me get respect from others.	Created for this study.
	5.	It helps me show others that I am sophisticated.	The 11-item Conspicuous Consumption Orientation Scale; Chaudhuri et al., 2011
	6.	It shows others that I am wealthy.	The 11-item Conspicuous Consumption Orientation Scale; Chaudhuri et al., 2011
	7.	It shows others I am prestigious.	Created for this study.
	8.	It's worth wearing for others to see it.	Created for this study.
	9.	It's one of a kind.	Created for this study.
	10.	It shows that I am different	The 11-item Conspicuous Consumption Orientation Scale; Chaudhuri et al., 2011
	11.	It makes me stand out.	Created for this study.
	12.	It makes me look original.	The 11-item Conspicuous Consumption Orientation Scale; Chaudhuri et al., 2011
	13.	It makes me admirable to others.	Created for this study.
	14.	It helps me impress others.	Created for this study.

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	15.	It makes me attractive to a romantic partner.	Created for this study.
	16.	It makes me the centre of attention.	Created for this study.
	17.	It makes me envied by others.	Created for this study.
	18.	It enhances my self-image.	Created for this study.
	19.	It is limited edition.	Created for this study.
	20.	It is rare.	Created for this study.
	21.	It was difficult to get.	Created for this study.
	22.	It is unique.	Created for this study.
<u>Fit in (Bandwagon Effect)</u>	23.	It is fashionable.	Created for this study.
	24.	It is trendy.	Created for this study.
	25.	It helps me to gain social approval.	Created for this study.
	26.	It helps me to gain recognition.	Created for this study.
	27.	It was nearly sold out.	Created for this study.
<u>Hedonism</u>	28.	I thought it would be a good way to pass the time.	Created for this study.
	29.	I was bored.	Created for this study.
	30.	I wanted to feel excited.	Created for this study.
	31.	I liked how it made me feel.	Created for this study.
	32.	I wanted to boost my mood.	Created for this study.
	33.	I wanted to feel happy.	Created for this study.
	34.	I looked forward to wearing it.	Created for this study.
	35.	I wanted to feel good about myself.	Created for this study.
	36.	I wanted to relieve some stress.	Created for this study.
	37.	I fancied wearing something new.	Created for this study.
	38.	I wanted to reward myself.	Created for this study.
<u>Congruity with Internal Self</u>	39.	It brings me closer to my ideal self.	Created for this study.
	40.	It makes me feel like my true self.	Created for this study.
	41.	It reflects who I really am.	Created for this study.

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	42.	It makes me feel confident in myself.	Created for this study.
	43.	It boosts my self-confidence.	Created for this study.
	44.	It increases my self-esteem.	Created for this study.
<u>Practicality & Functionality</u>	45.	It is of superior quality.	Created for this study.
	46.	It was good value for money.	Created for this study.
	47.	It was on sale.	Created for this study.
	48.	It was affordable.	Created for this study.
	49.	It will last me a while.	Created for this study.
	50.	It is comfortable to wear.	Created for this study.
	51.	I like how this product feels on my skin.	Created for this study.
	52.	It was a necessary item to have.	Created for this study.
	53.	It fulfils my basic needs.	Created for this study.
	54.	It is easy to wear.	Created for this study.
	55.	It can be worn with most things.	Created for this study.
	56.	It is very practical.	Created for this study.