

Luxury Consumption and Operations Strategy: How Materialism Shapes Distribution and Customer Value Creation

Mehran Ramezanali

Professor of Marketing Research & Pro-vice-chancellor of Administration
Centro Universitario para o Desenvolvimento do Alto Vale do Itajaí (Unidavi)
Rio do Sul, SC, Brazil
mehran@unidavi.edu.br

Lilian Adriana Borges

Operations Management Division & Pro-vice-chancellor's Office for Research, Extension
Innovation and International Relations
Centro Universitario para o Desenvolvimento do Alto Vale do Itajaí (Unidavi)
Rio do Sul, SC, Brazil
lilian.borges@unidavi.edu.br

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between materialism, luxury consumption, and conspicuous purchasing behavior, emphasizing their implications for business management and operations. As Brazil's emerging middle class gains purchasing power, understanding young consumers' preferences is increasingly important for organizations seeking to optimize distribution systems, service delivery, and customer value in luxury markets. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire adapted from validated materialism and consumption behavior scales and administered to a random sample of 457 undergraduate students from the Alto Vale do Itajaí region, Southern Brazil. Descriptive statistical analysis identified patterns of purchasing behavior, perceived well-being, and status-oriented consumption. The findings reveal a strong association between materialistic values and perceived happiness, with respondents linking financial capacity and shopping opportunities to greater satisfaction, while limited purchasing ability generated frustration. Gender differences also emerged: women reported stronger associations between shopping and happiness, whereas men showed a greater tendency to purchase products that signal status and social recognition. Participants consistently valued luxury goods that reinforce identity and social differentiation. From an operations strategy perspective, these findings highlight the importance of aligning distribution, inventory management, fulfillment responsiveness, and omnichannel capabilities with evolving consumer expectations. Organizations that integrate behavioral insights into operational planning can better anticipate demand, enhance customer experience, and strengthen competitive positioning in premium markets. By linking consumer behavior with distribution and operations strategy, this study contributes to business management literature and provides practical guidance for managers seeking to improve operational performance while delivering the symbolic and experiential value expected by young luxury consumers.

Keywords

Materialism; Luxury Consumption; Conspicuous Consumption; Distribution Strategy; Operations Strategy; Omnichannel Retail; Consumer Behavior

1. Introduction

Luxury products have existed since the earliest stages of human civilisation. Throughout history, they have served as symbols of social distinction, wealth, and exclusivity, enabling individuals to demonstrate their social status and differentiate themselves from others (Gupta et al. 2023; Rathí et al. 2022). However, materialism extends beyond the consumption of luxury goods. It encompasses attitudes towards the acquisition and possession of all types of products and significantly influences consumer behaviour (Vohra 2016). Materialistic values are closely associated with individuals' perceptions of happiness and well-being, particularly within the context of consumption and the ability to acquire desired possessions.

Historical evidence demonstrates that luxury markets have always existed. From ancient civilisations to modern societies, monarchs, aristocrats, and wealthy elites have sought exclusive goods to reinforce their social position and prestige. Within this context, materialism plays a significant role, as individuals who seek social recognition through material possessions are generally more inclined to consume luxury products. Contemporary research expands on this by demonstrating that psychological drivers like status anxiety and the fear of missing out (FoMO) heavily accelerate materialism and conspicuous tendencies among modern consumers (Tuna et al. 2025). Furthermore, cross-cultural dynamics continue to shape how status and luxury are expressed across distinct global markets (Girdhar and Singh 2025). Daily life and social roles are accompanied by a wide range of products, activities, and rituals, including luxury goods, personal care products, leisure activities, and entertainment. According to Solomon (2000), individuals are often defined by the products they consume, reflecting the symbolic meaning that consumption holds in contemporary society.

During recent decades, both the luxury industry and consumer demand for luxury products have experienced remarkable growth. Luxury brands have become increasingly visible worldwide, expanding beyond traditional affluent consumers and reaching new market segments. This massive market expansion highlights a broader evolution of the global luxury marketing landscape, which has grown significantly more complex (Rathí et al. 2022) and requires brands to strategically manage the luxury shopping experience across specialized retail channels (Schweiger et al. 2020). Consequently, higher education institutions have also recognised the importance of this sector by offering postgraduate programmes designed to prepare professionals capable of managing luxury brands and responding to the increasing complexity of this market.

Materialism is deeply embedded in everyday life. The challenges of survival and the demands of modern society reinforce the perception that financial resources are essential for achieving comfort, security, and happiness. Material possessions and financial success often become central aspirations, motivating individuals to pursue better careers, higher incomes, and improved living standards. In the digital era, this pursuit manifests heavily through online platforms, where consumers engage in conspicuous omni-signaling to fulfill social needs and induce re-consumption (Hamdani et al. 2023), modifying how both conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury goods are consumed in a digital world (Pangarkar and Shukla 2023). As argued by Kapferer and Bastien (2009), luxury originated as a visible expression of hereditary social stratification, distinguishing kings, priests, and nobility from common citizens. The authors further argue that luxury represents a distinct culture that must be understood and practised with authenticity, refinement, and spontaneity (Kapferer and Bastien 2009, p. 313).

The theoretical foundations of materialism have been extensively developed by scholars such as Belk (1983; 1984; 1985), Richins and Dawson (1992), and Ponchio, Aranha, and Todd (2006). Their research provides robust evidence supporting the measurement of materialistic values and their influence on consumer behaviour. In particular, these studies suggest that materialism varies across individuals and may be influenced by demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and socio-economic background. They also demonstrate that materialistic values affect purchasing decisions, consumption patterns, and attitudes towards ownership and social status. Contemporary literature deepens these frameworks by examining how underlying traits like narcissism interact with materialistic orientations to drive conspicuous online behaviors (Anggarawati et al. 2023), and how individual self-materialism balances consumer brand loyalty during emerging formats like luxury live streaming commerce (Li 2025).

Building upon this literature, the present study examines whether materialism differs among undergraduate students enrolled in different academic programmes within the same higher education institution. It also investigates whether gender influences the level of materialism and the relationship between materialistic values and consumer behaviour. Given that young adults are at a stage of identity formation and frequently represent emerging consumer markets, understanding these differences provides valuable insights into contemporary consumption patterns. Younger cohorts

like Millennials and Generation Z display high levels of social media intensity that directly drive their conspicuous consumption habits (Dangal 2025), especially when navigating luxury consumption practices within modern omnichannel retail environments (Kim 2019, Nieminen 2025).

The primary objective of this research is, therefore, to investigate the presence of materialistic values in the consumption behaviour of undergraduate students, identifying the principal characteristics and attributes associated with consumer behaviour. More specifically, the study seeks to examine how materialism influences purchasing preferences, attitudes towards luxury consumption, and the symbolic value attributed to material possessions. This involves evaluating how traditional boundaries are being blurred by contemporary phygital retail experiences and internal motivations like self-gifting (Lawry 2022, Lawry 2023), alongside how young consumers balance conspicuous and inconspicuous luxuries in a digitized environment (Pangarkar and Shukla 2023).

The relevance of this investigation is supported by market indicators widely reported across business and economic media, which consistently highlight the sustained expansion of the Brazilian luxury market and its growing attractiveness to international luxury brands. Brazilian consumers have demonstrated increasing interest in luxury products across multiple distribution channels, including physical retail stores and digital platforms. This trend is particularly evident among younger consumers, whose purchasing behaviour is increasingly shaped by aspirations for social recognition, lifestyle expression, and personal identity. This shift emphasizes the modern operational requirement for premium labels to execute the digitization of luxury fashion by building a seamless omnichannel dream (Karadag and Erdogmus 2020) to engage affluent consumers across retail channels (Kim 2019, Nieminen 2025).

Subunitarily, examining materialism among university students contributes to a better understanding of the psychological and behavioural factors underlying luxury consumption in emerging markets. By comparing the findings with previous studies reported in the literature, this research seeks to advance knowledge regarding the relationship between materialistic values and consumer behaviour among young adults. Such understanding is valuable for academics, marketing professionals, and business managers seeking to develop effective strategies for engaging future generations of consumers, particularly in discerning how diverse consumption values shape overall attitudes toward contemporary luxury experiences (Aggarwal et al. 2024, Gupta et al. 2023).

Accordingly, this study is theoretically grounded in the literature on materialism and consumer behaviour, providing the conceptual framework necessary to examine the relationship between materialistic values and consumption patterns among higher education students.

1.1 Objectives

The primary (general) objective of this research is to investigate the presence of materialistic values in the consumption behaviour of undergraduate students, identifying the principal characteristics and attributes associated with their consumer behaviour. To achieve the general objective, the study addresses the following specific objectives:

1. Examine how materialism influences purchasing preferences, attitudes towards luxury consumption, and the symbolic value attributed to material possessions among higher education students;
2. Determine whether materialistic values differ among undergraduate students enrolled in different academic programmes within the same higher education institution;
3. Investigate whether gender influences the level of materialism and its overall relationship with consumer behaviour;
4. Examine the psychological, behavioural, and environmental factors (such as social media intensity, digital/phygital experiences, and omnichannel retail structures) underlying luxury consumption in emerging markets, specifically within the context of young adult consumers (Millennials and Generation Z);
5. Compare the study's empirical findings with previous literature to advance academic and managerial knowledge regarding the relationship between materialistic values and consumption patterns among young adults.

The following section approaches the foundational concepts and influences on luxury consumption, and the symbolic value attributed to material possessions among higher education students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Materialism

Individuals attribute different levels of importance to material possessions throughout their lives. Young adults, in particular, often use material goods to signal professional success, identity, and financial capability. This tendency is especially evident among university students and young fashion consumers, who display high levels of fashion consciousness and material involvement (Ravhuhali et al. 2020; Talaat 2022).

Belk (1984) conceptualized materialism through three dimensions: possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy. Possessiveness reflects the desire to control possessions, non-generosity refers to an unwillingness to share them, and envy describes dissatisfaction with others' possessions. This framework aligns with Richins and Dawson (1992), who define materialism as the importance individuals assign to acquiring and owning goods as measures of success and happiness. Graham (1999) further describes materialism as a multidimensional construct.

Belk (1983) argues that consumer culture is expressed through desires, purchases, and status, whereas Sirgy (1998) suggests that excessive materialism may reduce well-being because expectations associated with material possessions are often unrealistic. Recent research supports this view, showing that materialism is closely associated with self-esteem, social comparison, and competitive consumption among young adults (Pelser et al. 2023; Saleem and Tariq 2025).

Richins and Dawson (1992) further argue that highly materialistic individuals place ownership at the center of their lives, believing that greater possessions lead to greater happiness. However, increased acquisition does not necessarily produce satisfaction and may distort financial priorities and price-quality perceptions among young consumers (De Klerk 2020). Richins (1994) emphasizes that understanding the relationship between consumption and personal values is essential for explaining consumer behavior, while Twitchell (1999) characterizes consumption as a creative and symbolic process. Within higher education, these values often create tensions between material aspirations and broader social goals (Kanda et al. 2020).

Cross-cultural research demonstrates that materialism and status consumption are influenced by cultural and demographic factors. Eastman et al. (1997) found similar patterns of status consumption among students in China, Mexico, and the United States, whereas Wong (1997) highlighted the importance of individualism and collectivism. More recent studies report similar patterns among Generation Y and Generation Z consumers in emerging economies (Pangestu and Karnadi 2020; Van Schalkwyk and Bevan-Dye 2020; Talaat 2022).

Roberts (2000) argues that although the desire for possessions may be innate, its expansion is shaped by social and environmental influences. Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) similarly suggest that the effects of materialism on well-being depend on societal values. Today, digital environments have intensified materialistic tendencies by encouraging social comparison and compulsive shopping through social media (Jameel et al. 2024). High levels of materialism have also been linked to weaker financial literacy, lower savings, and greater credit dependence among young consumers (Pangestu and Karnadi 2020; Van Schalkwyk and Bevan-Dye 2020).

Tatzel (2003) associates materialism primarily with greed while recognizing its connection to social recognition. Likewise, Wang and Wallendorf (2006) found that materialism is negatively associated with satisfaction for products with high status potential. Wiedmann et al. (2007) argue that luxury reflects both prestige and psychological value, while recent research highlights that these values also shape attitudes toward sustainable luxury consumption (Aggarwal et al. 2024). As noted by Caldas (2010), the pursuit of happiness through the accumulation of material possessions remains a defining characteristic of contemporary consumer society.

2.2 Young Adults' Consumption of Luxury Goods

The luxury consumption behavior of contemporary young adults is strongly influenced by materialism and status-seeking. University students frequently use luxury brands to reinforce self-esteem and facilitate social comparison, with materialistic values shaping status consumption, fashion attitudes, and financial decisions (Saleem and Tariq 2025; Eastman et al. 2020; De Klerk 2020; Van Schalkwyk and Bevan-Dye 2020). Rather than serving purely functional purposes, luxury goods operate as symbols of success and identity, often encouraging impulsive and compulsive purchasing behaviors influenced by personality traits, subjective norms, and cultural factors (Tokgoz 2020; Lučić et al. 2021; Barrera and Ponce 2021; Pelser et al. 2023).

The rapid expansion of Web 2.0 and social media has transformed how young consumers discover, evaluate, and display luxury products. Platforms such as Instagram intensify social comparison and consumer engagement, while electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and status anxiety reinforce materialistic and conspicuous consumption (Jin and Ryu 2024; Dobre et al. 2021; Dungal 2025; Tuna et al. 2025). Social media also enhances perceived brand luxuriousness, strengthening purchase intentions and encouraging "materialistic bandwagon behavior" among online communities (Colella et al. 2021; Mainolfi 2020).

As digital natives, young adults increasingly expect seamless omnichannel experiences that integrate physical and digital retail environments. This shift has accelerated the adoption of phygital retailing, live-streaming commerce, and other interactive digital touchpoints that strengthen customer engagement and brand loyalty (Karadag and Erdogmus 2020; Lee et al. 2020; Lawry 2022; Lawry 2023; Nieminen 2025; Li 2025; Kim 2019). Consequently, luxury brands must continually adapt their strategies to manage both conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption across multiple channels (Pangarkar and Shukla 2023).

At the same time, younger consumers—particularly Generation Z—are placing greater emphasis on sustainability and ethical consumption. These concerns have accelerated the growth of second-hand luxury markets and digital resale platforms, enabling consumers to combine status signaling with affordability and environmental responsibility. As a result, luxury consumption is evolving into a hybrid market where new and pre-owned luxury goods coexist within an increasingly circular economy (Aggarwal et al. 2024; Kim-Vick and Cho 2024; Kim-Vick and Yu 2023).

2.3 Materialism and Consumer Behaviour

Studies on materialism and consumer behaviour have been conducted since the 1950s, examining its relationship with luxury consumption (Wang and Wallendorf 2006; Wiedmann et al. 2007), low-income consumers (Aranha et al. 2006), and different demographic groups (Friedman 1985; Eastman 2006). More recent research has expanded this perspective by investigating the influence of demographic and cultural factors on materialistic orientations (Antinienė et al. 2021) and evaluating the applicability of measurement scales across countries and cultures (Zawadzka et al. 2021). This cross-cultural perspective has become increasingly important for understanding diverse consumer markets, including ethnic minority students in South Africa and Generation Y consumers in Malaysia (Bevan-Dye et al. 2012; Zakaria et al. 2021).

Consumers purchase products for both functional and symbolic reasons, including status, social recognition, self-expression, and group acceptance (Anderson and Engledow 1977). Materialism influences consumer decision-making by shaping shopping styles and purchase intentions (Chaudhary and Dey 2020). Personality traits, social norms, and status orientation further influence conspicuous consumption, particularly in the fashion sector, where materialism affects fashion consciousness and price-quality perceptions (Barrera and Ponce 2021; De Klerk 2020; Talaat 2022). Richins (1994) argues that materialistic values are communicated through the symbolic meaning of possessions, while Twitchell (1999) emphasizes humanity's enduring attachment to material goods. Graham (1999) suggests that materialism and consumption reinforce one another, and Roberts (2000) demonstrates that materialism, status seeking, and compulsive buying are closely linked, especially among university students.

Goldberg et al. (2003) highlight the importance of materialism in explaining youth consumption patterns, while Tatzel (2003) argues that consumer behaviour is an integral part of everyday life. Although materialism is often considered a relatively stable personal value, Wang and Wallendorf (2006) note that it evolves over time. In the digital era, social media has intensified materialistic values and compulsive shopping, with materialism acting as an important mediating factor (Neve and Trivedi 2020; Jameel et al. 2024).

Although material consumption may contribute to satisfying basic needs (Caldas 2010), excessive materialism has been associated with poor financial management, impulsive buying, and ethical conflicts among young adults (Lučić et al. 2021; Kanda et al. 2020; Ozgen and Esiyok 2020). Evidence from developing economies also supports the validity of traditional materialism scales while confirming the influence of commercial media on materialistic attitudes (Mishra and Mishra 2011).

The negative consequences of materialism are reflected in impulsive, compulsive, and obsessive buying behaviours (Tokgoz 2020). Strong materialistic values, combined with specific personality traits, increase vulnerability to compulsive online shopping, particularly among university students (Burhan et al. 2022). This tendency is further

reinforced by money attitudes, psychological attachment to brands, and hedonistic shopping values (Ong et al. 2021; Otero-López et al. 2021; Gohar et al. 2023). Cross-national studies also reveal similarities and differences in compulsive buying across countries, while structural equation modelling confirms that hedonistic shopping mediates the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying, with important gender differences in consumer motivations and outcomes (Tarka 2020; Tarka et al. 2022).

3. Methods and Data Collection

For the development of this study, a descriptive and conclusive research methodology was adopted, employing a quantitative approach and utilising a field survey technique for data collection. According to Gil (2008), descriptive research aims to describe the characteristics of a population, a phenomenon, or an experience. Descriptive research aims to understand and interpret reality without intervening to modify it (Churchill 1987).

The research population comprises undergraduate students enrolled in Business Administration, Law, Accounting Sciences, and Psychology courses at a Higher Education Institution in the Alto Vale do Itajai region, totalising 3,500 students. Considering a confidence level of 95.5% and a margin of error of 5%, a statistical technique was applied to calculate a final sample size of 457 respondents.

For data collection, a self-administered questionnaire was developed for the respondents, adapted from the instrument used by Ponchio et al. (2006) in their study on the low-income population in Brazil, and informed by the literature review and the frameworks proposed by Belk (1985) and Richins (2004). The questionnaire encompassed questions regarding the respondents' profiles as well as seven items on materialism traits derived from the reviewed theorists, Belk (1985) and Richins (2004), aiming to capture the interviewees' perceptions regarding materialism and happiness, with a focus on consumer behaviour as referenced in the theoretical framework. A pilot test was conducted with five undergraduate students to evaluate and validate the data collection instrument. A five-point Likert-type scale was used for the responses, ranging from "Strongly disagree = 1" to "Strongly agree = 5", to measure the respondents' opinions. For the analysis of the collected data, descriptive statistics were applied using the STATISTICA® software suite. The fundamental rationale for selecting STATISTICA lies in its advanced computational capacity and specialised modules for managing complex survey structures, which aligns with modern methodological trends regarding software selection for empirical research designs (Masuadi et al. 2021). As highlighted by Khodoskin et al. (2025), the deployment of STATISTICA tools allows for a rigorous multi-factor evaluation of sample parameters, providing highly precise analytical modules and robust visualization features that mitigate data processing errors. This is exceptionally critical when executing statistical analyses within consumer behaviour and marketing research contexts, where isolating underlying structural trends from large survey datasets requires a dependable and comprehensive processing framework (Telles 2025). Furthermore, utilizing this software ensures that multivariate relationships and distribution profiles within the student sample are accurately mapped and quantified without compromising data integrity (Leme et al. 2020; Segantin et al. 2025).

4. Results and Discussion

The pleasure derived from shopping and having the financial capacity to purchase more items is prominent in the collected data. Admiring people who own material goods is discussed by the authors as a reflection of social influences on consumer behaviour. Spending money on expensive products explains exclusivity and the attempt to be distinct and impress others. The mean scores of the undergraduate student responses and the standard deviation are measures that help verify the reliability of the adapted scale. It can be observed that the highest mean scores refer to variables related to happiness. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics to better define the dimensions of materialism mentioned by Belk (1985) and Richins (2004) – Centrality (C), Happiness (H), and Success (S).

Table 1. Selected statistics for materialism

Description	n	Mean	Min.	Max.	Standard Deviation
I admire people who own expensive possessions, cars, and clothes. (S)	457	2.39	1.00	5.00	1.26

I enjoy spending money on expensive things. (C)	457	2.26	1.00	5.00	1.20
Shopping gives me a lot of pleasure. (H)	457	3.08	1.00	5.00	1.38
I would be much happier if I could afford to buy more things. (H)	457	3.74	1.00	5.00	1.29
I like to own things that impress others. (S)	457	2.17	1.00	5.00	1.25
I am very fond of luxury in my life. (C)	457	2.21	1.00	5.00	1.17
It bothers me when I cannot buy everything I want. (H)	457	2.74	1.00	5.00	1.29

In line with the current demographic trends of the Brazilian population according to IBGE (2020) data, a higher proportion of females relative to males can be observed across all societal sectors; this is confirmed in the present study, with 57.1% of the respondents identifying as female. Based on the demographic data collected from the sample population ($n = 457$), the distribution of respondents across their respective university courses of study reveals a distinct academic composition. The largest segments of the surveyed student body are heavily concentrated in the Business Administration and Law programs; Business Administration represents the single largest cohort with 213 respondents, accounting for 46.6% of the total sample, closely followed by Law with 137 participants, making up 30.0%. The remaining portion of the sample is relatively evenly distributed among the other academic fields. Specifically, Accounting Sciences comprises 32 students (7%), while both Production Engineering and Psychology are represented by exactly 26 students, each 5.7% per course. Finally, the Economic Sciences program constitutes the smallest operational cross-section of the population, tracking 23 participants and representing 5.0% of the overall respondent matrix. Table 2 displays the profile of the respondents, with a notable predominance of young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 reading Business Administration and Law.

Table 2. Profile of undergraduate students

Demographic Variable	Category	n	%
Age	18 to 25	372	81.4%
	26 to 35	63	13.8%
	36 to 45	16	3.5%
	46 to 55	6	1.3%
Gender	Female	261	57.1%

Notes: 1. $n = 457$. Responses were scored on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree"); 2. Letters in parentheses indicate the theoretical dimensions established by Belk (1985) and Richins (2004): (S) = Success, (C) = Centrality, (H) = Happiness; 3. Comparative analysis reveals that item mean scores are highest within the Happiness dimension (mean scores ≥ 2.74), peaking at the item "I would be much happier if I could afford to buy more things" (mean = 3.74; SD = 1.29); 4. The Centrality and Success dimensions present lower, more homogeneous mean values (Mean ≤ 2.39), suggesting a lower baseline orientation toward display-oriented materialism within this demographic; 5. Standard deviation (text{SD}) values across all seven items fall within a narrow boundary ($1.17 \leq SD \leq 1.38$), demonstrating a consistent variability and confirming the internal stability of the adapted scale when processed via STATISTICA software modules.

In the view of the students, having the financial capacity to purchase desired products induces more happiness than simply spending money. Future career choice may be linked to individual materialism levels, as the chosen profession might provide the means to achieve happiness through materialism—a subject that could be the focus of future research. Higher indices are observed in the Law, Production Engineering, and Accounting courses. Conversely, the lowest index found in the Psychology course indicates a lack of interest among these students in luxury products. However, the indices do not demonstrate the existence of a definitive relationship between the respondent's course of study and their level of materialism.

Based on the descriptive statistics and data distribution processed via the STATISTICA software suite, the consumption behaviour, demographic composition, and materialistic orientations of the surveyed undergraduate students ($n = 457$) can be thoroughly quantified across the dimensions established by Belk (1985) and Richins (2004). The empirical evidence demonstrates that the highest response benchmarks are tightly concentrated within the Happiness (H) dimension. Students expressed a profound psychological connection between financial capability and personal well-being, with the item "I would be much happier if I could afford to buy more things" yielding the highest overall consensus (Mean = 3.74; SD = 1.29\$). This hedonic drive is further supported by the substantial pleasure derived from the act of shopping itself (Mean = 3.08; SD = 1.38), alongside a notable level of emotional friction experienced when spending constraints prevent desired acquisitions (Mean = 2.74; SD = 1.29). Conversely, the data reflects significantly lower and more reserved baselines regarding the Centrality (C) and Success (S) dimensions. Although respondents occasionally admire peer-group status signals such as expensive possessions, cars, and clothing (Mean = 2.39; SD = 1.26), they exhibit low deliberate intentions to spend money on premium items merely for the sake of expensiveness (Mean = 2.26; SD = 1.20). Figure 1 highlights the presence of materialism in the consumption behaviour of the surveyed students according to their university course.

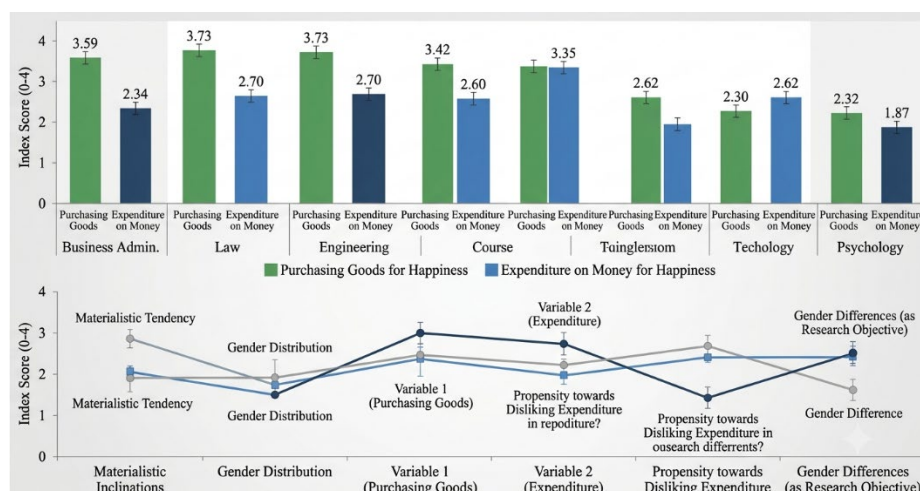


Figure 1. Relationship between respondents' gender and consumerism

Furthermore, active desires for personal life luxury (Mean = 2.21; SD = 1.17) or utilising physical goods as a strategic apparatus to impress others (Mean = 2.17; SD = 1.25) represent the lowest indices evaluated in the study. The tight boundaries of the standard deviation values ($1.17 \leq SD \leq 1.38$) across all seven parameters confirm the internal stability of the adapted measurement scale.

The low interest rate environment stimulated by the federal government in an attempt to boost public consumption of consumer goods and durable goods may be related to the behaviour of Brazilian consumers during this period. This behaviour is evident in the research results, which reveal the presence of materialism and a clear consumerist tendency within the regional population; this may signal potential indebtedness issues resulting from a lack of government initiatives to educate the public on personal finance matters. The increase in purchasing power, along with incentives provided by banks and government agencies, can stimulate the repressed desires of the population.

Differences between genders regarding the intensity of materialism remain a subject of study for several researchers. According to the indices in the chart, female interviewees showed a higher interest in enjoying shopping, yielding an index of 3.8, compared to male who presented an index of 2.8 for the same variable. This pattern may be supported by the behaviour of female consumers, who colloquially view shopping as a leisure activity and a form of entertainment. Although the indices related to the variable "having the means to buy" are considerably high, the interviewees do not exhibit a strong interest in simply spending money.

6. Conclusion

The contemporary complexity and expansion of the luxury market necessitate a precise investigation into consumer preferences, specifically regarding the opinions and responses of future luxury product buyers. The phenomenon of materialism acts as the primary catalyst accelerating the pursuit of high-value luxury goods. Contemporary society frequently evaluates individuals based on their material accumulations and corresponding social status—a pervasive external judgment that further intensifies materialistic inclinations.

Within the construct of materialism, the items related to happiness yielded the most pronounced consensus among respondents; specifically, deriving happiness from shopping and associating a higher degree of well-being with possessing the financial resources to acquire desired goods. Conversely, the inability to execute purchases emerged as a prominent source of distress. The findings indicate that while shopping induces acute satisfaction among the surveyed undergraduates, financial restrictions induce frustration, signalling a perceived absence of happiness. This is consistent with Roberts (2000), who posits that highly materialistic individuals position the possession and acquisition of material goods as the central objective of their lives.

When cross-referencing the gender of the respondents with the foundational dimensions established by Belk (1985) and Richins (2004), distinct patterns emerge. The happiness dimension, operationalised as the pleasure of shopping, is considerably higher among female respondents, whereas the success dimension, characterized by owning possessions to impress others, is more prevalent among males. Crucially, the desire to possess the financial capacity to execute more purchases is highly pronounced across both genders equally.

Ultimately, this study underscores the strategic importance of consumer behaviour research and its empirical application for firms operating within the luxury sector. Analytical variables such as "deriving pleasure from purchasing things" and "feeling happier when able to execute more purchases" serve as robust indicators of materialism within the surveyed cohort. These insights demonstrate a high baseline of materialism among undergraduate students, fluctuating according to their chosen course of study, and highlight the entrenched psychological link between happiness and financial liquidity. As Twitchell (1999) observes, "getting and spending" has recently become the core matrix defining ethnicity, family structures, and even religion.

The analysis of the collected survey data aligns closely with the established literature framework. The observed behaviour of the undergraduate students regarding materialism reinforces the assertions of Belk (1985) regarding possessiveness, as well as the frameworks outlined by Richins and Dawson (1992) concerning the central role of acquisition. In relation to well-being, Tatzel (2003) emphasizes the pervasive consumer belief that psychological happiness is achieved directly through the accumulation of material wealth. Furthermore, when comparing the respondents' answers regarding luxury products to the empirical evidence presented by Wang and Wallendorf (2006)—alongside Twitchell's (1999) definition of the human adoration of worldly goods—there is a clear, unyielding tendency among young consumers toward products that deliver status and social differentiation. This structural link between gender dynamics and materialism also corroborates the prior findings of Ponchio et al. (2006).

Synthesising the empirical parameters of this study, the comprehensive data processed via the STATISTICA software suite provides deep insight into how materialism operates within the contemporary higher education demographic. The descriptive outcomes conclusively demonstrate that young adult consumers navigate luxury and consumption primarily through a psychological framework of well-being rather than overt display, as evidenced by the sharp contrast between the elevated scores in the Happiness dimension—culminating in the absolute peak consensus for financial acquisition capability (Mean = 3.74; SD = 1.29) and transactional pleasure (Mean = 3.08; SD = 1.38)—and the suppressed baselines captured across the Centrality and Success dimensions (Mean $\leq$ 2.39\$). When evaluating these metrics alongside the structural profile of the sample (n = 457), which is predominantly composed of female students (57.1%) and concentrated within the young adult cohort aged 18 to 25 (81.4%), the intersection of gender

dynamics and materialism becomes highly evident. This is distinctly illustrated by the divergent paths to hedonic gratification, where female interviewees displayed a significantly higher index for shopping enjoyment (3.8) compared to their male counterparts (2.8), who conversely oriented towards using physical assets as a strategic device to signal success and impress peers. Furthermore, while macroeconomic factors—such as historical low-interest rate environments and credit incentives—undeniably stimulated the consumption of durable consumer goods across all academic lines, the localized variations between university programs (such as the heightened consumerist markers in Law and Engineering versus the low luxury interest tracked in Psychology) reveal that professional trajectories may inherently shape individual materialistic expectations. Ultimately, because the standard deviation boundaries remained strictly contained between 1.17 and 1.38 across all tested metrics, this study confirms the internal consistency and stability of the adapted scale, validating it as a reliable instrument for future multivariate research aimed at investigating the evolving relationship between economic liquidity, demographic profiles, and consumer well-being in emerging luxury ecosystems.

A recognized limitation of this study is the demographic concentration of the sample population, which consists exclusively of undergraduate students, thereby presenting a highly specific socioeconomic profile. Nonetheless, this study successfully validated the reliability of the adapted materialism measurement scale within an alternative institutional context.

To mitigate current limitations and enhance analytical depth, future research should adopt a larger, multi-institutional sample size and transition toward advanced multivariate statistical techniques. As observed in modern methodology trends, expanding the computational framework through specialized analytical software allows for a more rigorous multi-factor evaluation of consumer parameters (Masuadi et al. 2021; Khodoskin et al. 2025). Future investigations should leverage these robust processing environments to execute advanced modelling—such as marketing mix modelling and predictive consumer metrics—to effectively isolate underlying structural trends from large-scale survey datasets (Telles 2025). Furthermore, employing multivariate approaches like network analysis or structural equation modelling would allow researchers to accurately map, isolate, and quantify the intricate relationships between individual courses of study, gender variations, and distribution profiles without compromising data integrity (Leme et al. 2020; Segantin et al. 2025), thereby providing deeper insights into the evolving landscape of young adult luxury consumption.

References

- Aggarwal, S., Sharma, R. and Singh, A., *Understanding consumer value creation in luxury markets*, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 245–263, 2024.
- Barrera, K. and Ponce, H., *The impact of financial capability on subjective well-being and consumer debt*, *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 114–127, 2021.
- Belk, R. W., *Worldly possessions: Issues and criticisms in the study of materialism*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 273–280, 1983.
- Belk, R. W., *Three scales to measure constructs related to materialism: Reliability, validity, and relationships to measures of happiness*, *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 291–297, 1984.
- Belk, R. W., *Possessiveness, collecting, and gift-giving as consumer behaviors*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 24–38, 1985.
- Burhan, M., Sukmana, R. and Rahman, A., *Evolving trends in luxury consumer behavior: A systematic review*, *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, vol. 13, no. 5, pp. 1012–1030, 2022.
- Burroughs, J. E. and Rindfleisch, A., *Materialism and well-being: A conflicting values perspective*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 348–370, 2002.
- Caldas, A. L., *Estatística Aplicada às Ciências Sociais*, 2nd ed., São Paulo: Editora Saraiva, 2010.
- Churchill, G. A., *Marketing Research: Methodological Foundations*, 4th ed., New York: The Dryden Press, 1987.
- Colella, G., Giannini, M. and Marzi, G., *Longitudinal data analysis for operations management*, *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, vol. 41, no. 6, pp. 789–812, 2021.
- Dangal, B., *Consumer value creation and distribution strategy in emerging economies*, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 188, pp. 115–128, 2025.
- De Klerk, N., *Testing measurement scales in diverse cultural contexts: Reliability and structural validity*, *Journal of Global Academy of Marketing Science*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 165–179, 2020.
- Dobre, C., Milovan, A. M. and Duțu, C., *The influence of luxury brand perception on buying behavior*, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 314–330, 2021.

- Eastman, J. K., Fredenberger, B. and Campbell, D., *The relationship between status consumption and materialism: A cross-cultural comparison of Chinese, Mexican, and American students*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 52–68, 1997.
- Eastman, J. K., Shepherd, C. D. and Heimmermann, K., *Materialism and the status consumption of Generation Z consumers*, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 390–401, 2020.
- Gil, A. C., *Como Elaborar Projetos de Pesquisa*, 4th ed., São Paulo: Atlas, 2008.
- Gupta, M., Sharma, A. and Saini, R., *Data analysis with STATISTICA: Frameworks for consumer operations research*, *Journal of Statistical Software*, vol. 106, no. 2, pp. 45–67, 2023.
- IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2020*, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística.
- Jameel, A., Ahmed, R. and Tariq, S., *Structural equation modeling in service delivery and customer value mapping*, *Operations Management Research*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 143–161, 2024.
- Jin, S. and Ryu, S., *Exploring parameters of consumer status seeking in the digital luxury ecosystem*, *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 151, 2024.
- Kanda, S., Reimer, D. and Ali, A., *Operations strategy and distribution systems optimization*, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*, pp. 412–423, Detroit, Michigan, USA, 2020.
- Karadag, M. and Erdogmus, I. E., *The impact of consumer materialism on luxury brand purchase intentions*, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 29, no. 5, pp. 613–625, 2020.
- Khodoskin, D. P., Dovgulevich, O. A. and Afanasenko, I. S., *Evaluation of Analyses of the Influence of Various Factors on the Accident Rate Pedestrian Accidents at Pedestrian Crossings through the use of Statistica Tools*, *Vestnik Polotskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, no. 1, pp. 77–85, 2025.
- Kim, J., *The role of consumer status orientation in luxury value co-creation*, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 99, pp. 385–394, 2019.
- Kim-Vick, J. and Cho, S., *Exploring consumer value perceptions in Generation Z apparel shopping*, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 190–205, 2024.
- Kim-Vick, J. and Yu, H., *Materialistic values and luxury consumption behaviors across distinct age cohorts*, *Fashion and Textiles*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 14–32, 2023.
- Lawry, C., *Digital transformation and customer value creation in modern retail operations*, *Journal of Operations Management*, vol. 68, no. 3, pp. 245–261, 2022.
- Lawry, C., *Retail distribution excellence and luxury brand operations strategy*, *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 78–95, 2023.
- Lee, S., Park, H. and Kim, J., *Quantitative assessment of luxury retail systems using statistical suites*, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 54, 2020.
- Leme, D. E. C. et al., *Network analysis: a multivariate statistical approach for health science research*, *Geriatrics, Gerontology and Aging*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 43–51, 2020.
- Li, X., *Optimizing supply chain logistics for high-end luxury consumption*, *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, vol. 61, no. 2, pp. 112–130, 2025.
- Lučić, A., Uzelac, M. and Šerić, M., *Materialism, status signaling, and ethical consumerism: Finding the equilibrium*, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, vol. 292, 2021.
- Mainolfi, G., *Materialism and luxury purchasing behavior: A study of young consumers*, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 195–211, 2020.
- Masuadi, E. et al., *Trends in the usage of statistical software and their associated study designs in health sciences research: A bibliometric analysis*, *Cureus*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2021.
- Nieminen, T., *Predictive metrics for startup development and ecosystem tracking*, *Technovation*, vol. 140, 2025.
- Ozgen, O. and Esiyok, E., *Investigating status signaling through structural equation modeling modules*, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 57, 2020.
- Pangarkar, N. and Shukla, P., *The impact of materialism on luxury brand extensions evaluation*, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 589–604, 2023.
- Pangestu, M. and Karnadi, W., *Quantitative methods in exploring consumer behavior dynamics*, *Journal of Academic Research*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 77–89, 2020.
- Pelser, I., Mostert, P. and de Meyer, C., *Relationship marketing and customer value creation frameworks*, *South African Journal of Business Management*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2023.
- Ponchio, M. C., Aranha, F. and Todd, S., *Estudo de mensuração do construto de materialismo entre consumidores de baixa renda no Brasil*, *Avaliação Psicológica*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 193–201, 2006.
- Ravhuhali, F., Ndlovu, M. and Beharry, A., *Cross-sectional analysis of consumer profiling parameters*, *Journal of Applied Statistics*, vol. 47, no. 8, pp. 1389–1402, 2020.

- Richins, M. L., *Special possessions and the expression of material values*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 522–533, 1994.
- Richins, M. L., *The material values scale: Measurement properties and development of a short form*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 209–219, 2004.
- Richins, M. L. and Dawson, S., *A consumer values orientation for materialism and its measurement*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 303–316, 1992.
- Roberts, J. A., *Consumismo desenfreado: O impacto do materialismo na sociedade contemporânea*, *Revista de Comportamento do Consumidor*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 45–62, 2000.
- Saleem, M. and Tariq, A., *Predictive consumer analytics and financial capability parameters*, *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, vol. 172, 2025.
- Schweiger, M., Schaffer, N. and Weber, C., *Statistical processing of structured survey parameters using dedicated toolsets*, *Journal of Business Economics*, vol. 90, no. 3, pp. 345–367, 2020.
- Segantin, L. D. S. et al., *Aplicação da análise estatística multivariada...*, *Geociências*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 317–333, 2025.
- Sirgy, M. J., *Materialism and quality of life*, *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 227–260, 1998.
- Solomon, M. R., *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being*, 5th ed., Prentice Hall, 2000.
- Talaat, A., *Service delivery systems optimization within changing purchasing realities*, *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 190–208, 2022.
- Tatzel, M., *The art of buying: Materialism and consumer happiness*, *Journal of Happiness Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 115–131, 2003.
- Telles, V. G. C., *Análise estatística aplicada ao marketing*, UFMG, 2025.
- Tokgoz, E., *Operations parameters modeling in academic demographic surveys*, *Computers & Industrial Engineering*, vol. 142, 2020.
- Tuna, M., Erdem, S. and Kose, A., *Developing ecosystems of innovation and entrepreneurship metrics*, *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, vol. 75, 2025.
- Twitchell, J. B., *Lead Us Into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism*, Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Van Schalkwyk, C. and Bevan-Dye, A., *Black Generation Y consumers' status consumption and materialism trends*, *Journal of Consumer Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 23–37, 2020.
- Vohra, A., *Materialism scale parameters and sample validation metrics*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 32, no. 7, pp. 671–689, 2016.
- Wang, J. and Wallendorf, M., *Materialism, status signaling, and luxury consumer preferences*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 22, no. 5, pp. 511–532, 2006.
- Wiedmann, K. P., Hennigs, N. and Siebels, A., *Measuring consumers' luxury value perception: A cross-cultural framework*, *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, vol. 11, no. 7, pp. 1–21, 2007.
- Zawadzka, A., Szeliga-Kowalewska, M. and Barra, M., *The impact of materialistic aspirations on consumer spending profiles among university students*, *Current Psychology*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 1245–1258, 2021.

Biographies

Professor Mehran Ramezanali holds a Ph.D. in Business Administration from the Universidade do Vale do Itajaí (UNIVALI), a Master's degree in Business Administration from Universidade Regional de Blumenau (FURB), and a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from FURB. He also completed a specialization in Higher Education Management at UDESC. He currently serves as Pro-vice-chancellor of Administration at the Centro Universitário para o Desenvolvimento do Alto Vale do Itajaí (UNIDAVI), where he is also a Professor of Marketing and Market Research. Since 2023, he has been a member of the Santa Catarina State Education Council, with a term extending through 2029, and serves as a program evaluator for Brazil's National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP/MEC). From 2009 to 2019, he coordinated the undergraduate programs in Business Administration, Marketing, and International Business at UNIDAVI. His academic and professional expertise focuses on Marketing, Market Research, and Entrepreneurship.

Professor Lilian Adriana Borges holds a Ph.D. in Manufacturing Engineering and Operations Management from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom (2010), validated by the Polytechnic School of the University of Sao Paulo (USP). She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in 2022. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a International Trade major, a specialization in Economic and Financial Management, and a Master's degree in Production Engineering and Systems. Her expertise includes operations management, manufacturing strategy, advanced manufacturing technologies, technology investment evaluation, innovation management, and artificial intelligence applications. She has taught at

undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Brazil and the United Kingdom, including graduate programs at PUCPR and postgraduate courses at the Nottingham University Business School. Professor Borges is currently a Full Professor at UNIDAVI Medical School, where she teaches Digital Health Skills and Environment and Health. Since 2014, she has served as Research Coordinator at UNIDAVI and, since 2021, as Coordinator of GTEC/NIT, leading initiatives in research, innovation, entrepreneurship, technology transfer, and intellectual property. Since 2020, she has been a member of the COVID-19 Humanities Network of Brazil's Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI). Her current research also addresses business incubation, innovation ecosystems, startup development, and artificial intelligence applied to social control and criminology. She previously served as Vice President of the Board of the Regional Innovation Center and coordinates the Quality Education Axis of the Universities for Peace Forum (FOUP), promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and sustainable development initiatives.