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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION ON COMPULSIVE BUYING

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Preface

This thesis is the conclusion of RSM's MSc in Marketing Management at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Throughout the creation of this report I have gained valuable, in-depth knowledge of the research topic at hand. It was a long and hard process wherein I experienced a lot of academic and personal struggles, but I feel I have grown from it and learned a great deal about myself.

I gratefully acknowledge the support of my thesis coach Nicole Mead for her mentorship and guidance throughout the creation of this thesis. I am especially thankful for her patience and understanding. I would like to thank my co-reader Guido Berens for his inspiring feedback. Lastly, my thanks go out to my family and friends for their irreplaceable support and patience. The comfort of my friends and the love of my family during these times have given me the much needed motivation to finish this master program with good results.

Rotterdam, 11 March 2014

Dagmar Verheij

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Abstract

In modern society loneliness is ever increasing, because people entertain fewer stable relationships. When the threat of social exclusion is prevalent it thwarts the human need for social connection and this has severe behavioral, physical and emotional consequences. Little empirical attention has been devoted to understanding how exclusion affects consumer behavior. Consumption is a part of everyday life and for some people it even consumes their life; compulsive buyers. Social exclusion and compulsive buyers share many commonalities; for example they both correlate with social anxiety and self-esteem. Given that social exclusion produces some of the traits that are reliable predictors of compulsive buying, I tested whether social exclusion can trigger compulsive buying. The main hypothesis that social exclusion elicits compulsive buying is tested through quantitative research and statistical analyses on two levels: acute social exclusion and chronic social exclusion.

I found that acute social exclusion increases ongoing feelings of loneliness. My findings also suggest that relative to non-excluded participants, chronically excluded participants are more likely characterized by low self-esteem. In addition, self-esteem was found to be mediator of the relationship between chronic exclusion and social anxiety; low self-esteem causes high social anxiety. Acute social exclusion does not elicit lower trait self-esteem and higher trait social anxiety. Relative to non-compulsive buyers, compulsive buyers are more likely to be characterized by low self-esteem and high social anxiety. The overall results suggest that chronic social exclusion affects compulsive buying; however these results could not be replicated for acute social exclusion. The results show that self-esteem and social anxiety do not influence the relationship between social exclusion and compulsive buying. The overall outcomes partially support the main hypothesis that social exclusion elicits compulsive buying.

Keywords: social exclusion, loneliness, compulsive buying, social anxiety, self-esteem, consumer behavior.

Chapter 1: Introduction

It is ironic that for many people compulsive buying seems to be strongly tied to their need for affection and support from others, but it often results in distancing important others (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). Alienating other people could lead to a life in social exclusion. Social exclusion is a common experience encountered by most people. May it be getting dumped by your beloved, ignored by the staff of a store, or being the only one out of your group of friends who did not have the money to purchase a ticket to the Beyoncé concert, social exclusion and its consequences for people's psychological and physiological functioning are prevalent. For example, social exclusion impairs the immune function and boosts inflammation, which can lead to arthritis and type II diabetes (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2010). Social exclusion is a highly researched phenomenon in social sciences, but fairly new in consumer research. Mead et al. (2011) were the first to examine the consequences of social exclusion for consumer behavior. They found an increased willingness to spend on products promoting social acceptance among socially excluded subjects. Seeking to extend extant work examining how social motivations guide consumption decisions, the present paper examines the effects of acute social exclusion and chronic social exclusion on another consumer behavior: compulsive buying.

Socially excluded consumers and compulsive consumers have similar psychological profiles. Numerous factors that differentiate compulsive from non-compulsive buyers also differentiate socially excluded individuals from socially included individuals. For example, low self-esteem is a characteristic that is more likely to be found among compulsive buyers than non-compulsive buyers (Faber et al., 1987). Similar to compulsive buyers, socially excluded individuals are also characterized by low self-esteem (Leary et al., 1995). Next to that, recent research indicates that feeling socially excluded fosters financial risk-taking (Duclos et al., 2013). Compulsive buyers are gigantic financial risk-takers; the consequences related to their overspending include extreme financial debt, marital and family disruption, and personal distress (Workman and Paper, 2000). Human beings are fundamentally and pervasively motivated by a strong desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Compulsive buyers temporarily escape negative feelings through fantasies of social acceptance while engaging in the act of compulsive buying (Jacobs, 1986). These fantasies of social acceptance come from the desire to form and maintain these enduring interpersonal attachments. However, this compulsive buying has the

opposite effect; instead of the desired social acceptance they get social exclusion, e.g. by pushing their partner in marriage away with extreme financial debt (Dittmar, 2005). The objective of this study is to test the proposition: “Social exclusion affects compulsive buying behavior: social exclusion differentiates non-compulsive shoppers from compulsive shoppers”. To test this proposition the following problem definition was formulated:

‘What is the impact of social exclusion on compulsive buying?’

Studying the phenomenon of social exclusion is highly relevant in today’s contemporary society, in which loneliness is ever increasing (Duclos et al., 2013). People maintain fewer stable relationships and consequently, feel less connected to others (Twenge et al., 2002). This is proven in statistics; globally, the number of one-person households has risen by eighty percent over the last fifteen years (Euromonitor, 2012). This trend is having a worldwide impact on consumer spending patterns. This is of academic relevance for contribution to the consumer behavior field. It is also relevant for managers to have more knowledge about the subject in order to take advantage of this trend. Next to this, it has academic relevance for the social sciences. A growing body of longitudinal research indicates that chronic loneliness and acute social exclusion are predictors of increased morbidity (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010) and mortality (Shiovitz-Ezra & Ayalon, 2010). Therefore it is in the interest of society to study this subject and one criterion of measuring the usefulness of research is its contribution to society and its welfare (Peter 1991, p. 543).

Consumer buying motivation also exhibits a high managerial relevance as buying motivation is often used as a basis for market segmentation and the development of retail marketing strategies (Westbrook and Black, 1985). A deviant form of consumer buying is compulsive buying. Studying this abnormal consumer buying behavior is important for various reasons. Firstly, aberrant consumption behaviors can have severe consequences on both the affected individual and others, including marketers (O’Guinn and Faber, 1989; Hassay and Smith, 1996). Therefore it is, just like social exclusion, in the interest of society to study this subject. Secondly, exploring abnormal consumer behavior will enrich the understanding of consumer behavior and the further development of consumer research (Faber & O’Guinn, 1988; Moschis, 1987; Moschis & Cox, 1989; O’Guinn & Faber, 1989). Thus studying compulsive buying motives does not only have managerial relevance, it also has academic relevance.

In the following chapters of this thesis, the above research question will be answered. In chapter 2 the theories developed about social exclusion and compulsive shopping will be elaborated on. Based on these theories certain relationships are assumed to exist. In chapter 3, the methods used to investigate these hypotheses will be described. In chapter 4 the results will be reported and chapter 5 will discuss these findings and draw conclusions.

Chapter 2: Theory

2.1 Social Exclusion

Human beings are from origin social animals. Social exclusion thwarts one of the most fundamental human needs: the desire for social relationships (Baumeister and Leary 1995). The desire for social relationships or need to belong is only satisfied through acceptance by and connection with others. Social exclusion is defined as denoting all phenomena in which one person is put into a condition of being alone or is denied social contact (Blackhart et al. 2009). Human beings feel a social pain that is similar to physical pain, alerting us when we have hurt our social relations and as a next step allowing us an incentive to take restorative actions (Eisenberger et al. 2003). For example, it makes individuals willing to change their behavior and appearance with the purpose of safeguarding their inclusionary status (e.g. Maner et al., 2007).

Social exclusion has striking negative physical, emotional and behavioral consequences for individuals (Buckley et al., 2004; DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; Twenge et al., 2001; Williams, 2001). For example, social exclusion leads to feelings of jealousy towards other people, guilt, depression and anxiety (Leary, 1990). Another example is that socially excluded people literally feel colder (Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008). A more severe consequence experienced through social exclusion is harm to the body that can eventually lead to a heart disease (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010); social exclusion is breaking our hearts not only metaphorically. Other work has shown negative changes in the behavior of the socially excluded individual. Social exclusion decreases pro social behavior (Twenge et al. 2007). For example, research has shown that social rejection by one person can foster aggression towards a whole group (Gaetner et al. 2008; Twenge et al. 2001). It also leads to risky behaviors such as financial risk taking (Duclos et al., 2013) and binge drinking (Cacioppo & William, 2008).

Extant work in the field of social exclusion has used two main approaches to studying this phenomenon. One of these research approaches has centered on experimentally administered social rejection (e.g., Maner et al., 2007). The other approach has used individual differences in chronic loneliness; mostly relying on self-ratings and self-reports (e.g. Cacioppo et al., 2006). Loneliness and exclusion are terms often used interchangeably in existing studies (e.g. Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008). Loneliness is synonymous with perceived chronic social isolation, not with objective social isolation (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2010). Research has found the feelings evoked by acute social exclusion and ongoing feelings of loneliness are similarly distressing (Stillman et al., 2009). The overlap between acute social exclusion and chronic loneliness has been demonstrated empirically by research showing that social rejection often results in feelings of loneliness (Boivin et al., 1995; Cacioppo et al., 2003; De Jong-Gierveld, 1987). The present study uses both approaches to study social exclusion, because the assessment of both provides a more complete understanding of the phenomenon.

H1: *Acute social exclusion increases perceived feelings of chronic social exclusion.*

2.2 Compulsive Buying

Compulsions are "repetitive and seemingly purposeful behaviors that are performed according to certain rules or in a stereotyped fashion" (American Psychiatric Association 1985, p. 234). Compulsive buying is like any other addictive or excessive behavior, such as alcohol abuse, kleptomania and compulsive gambling, a compulsive consumption. Compulsive consumption is defined by O'Guinn and Faber (1989) as a "response to an uncontrollable drive or desire to obtain, use, or experience a feeling, substance, or activity that leads an individual to repetitively engage in a behavior that will ultimately cause harm to the individual and/or to others". Nataraajan and Goff (1991) developed the following definition of compulsive buying: "Compulsive buying has an addictive propensity and/or compulsive trait, and arises from persistently assailing, repetitive motive(s) to buy (or perform the ritual of buying) which may or may not be irresistible and may or may not be pleasurable or relieving but that which is fundamentally disruptive to normal functioning." (p. 321).

Impulsive buying and compulsive buying are often confused. These different types of buying behaviors differ in the triggering stimulus for the behavior (Edwards, 1992 & 1994). Impulsive buying occurs when an external trigger stimulates the individual to make a

purchase, whereas compulsive buying is motivated by an internal trigger from which shopping and spending is an escape. For example, an impulse buy can be motivated by seeing a product on the shelf, while a compulsive buy can be motivated by anxiety. Impulsive and compulsive buying differ in the underlying motivations for excessive shopping and spending, in the negative consequences of excessive spending (e.g. overextending oneself financially), and in the addictive behavior of compulsive buyers who overspend to alleviate stress and anxiety (DeSarbo & Edwards, 1996).

2.3 Social Exclusion and Compulsive Buying

Consumers use the symbolic nature of consumption as a way to communicate information about themselves to others (Belk et al., 1982). These communication attempts are predominately used to facilitate social interaction by making a good impression on others (White & Dahl, 2006). For example, it has been argued that the motivation to make a good impression causes consumption with the motive of differentiating themselves from others, by signaling uniqueness (Ariely & Levav, 2000). Others have reasoned that consumers motivated by facilitating social interaction are driven to consume so as to fit in with the immediate social environment (Mead et al., 2011). Compulsive buyers are motivated by both contradicting ways of facilitating social interaction; expressing what is unique about them and trying to blend in, to indulge in the buying of goods (Dittmar et al, 1995). In this regard, compulsive buyers can easily be connected to socially excluded individuals who are willing to adapt their appearance with the purpose of safeguarding social interaction (Maner et al., 2007); as both compulsive buyers and socially excluded individuals are motivated to consume in order to gain and safeguard an inclusionary status.

People who feel socially excluded demonstrate increases in self-defeating behaviors such as foolish risk taking and selecting unhealthy food options (Twenge et al., 2002). A specific self-destructive activity related to compulsive buying is financial risk taking. Financial risk taking has recently been found resulting from social exclusion (Duclos et al., 2013). Compulsive buying is very much a self-destructive behavior; a strong focus on material goods strains social relationships (Kasser 2002). Long-term compulsive consumption has harmful consequences for most individuals comprising excessive financial debt, marital and family disruption, legal difficulties, and personal sorrows as low self-esteem and guilt associated with these problems (Dittmar, 2005; McElroy et al., 1991; O'Guinn & Faber, 1992).

Deducting from theory, it would be a logical assumption that social exclusion could lead to the self-defeating behavior of compulsive buying. In line with this reasoning, a connection can be found between social exclusion and compulsive buying through loss of self-control. It was found that exclusion impairs self-control (Baumeister et al. 2005) and it is obvious that compulsive buyers lack self-control. Therefore, one could assume social exclusion and compulsive buying are connected.

Compulsive buyers dream about social acceptance: an individual engaging in compulsive behavior temporarily escapes negative feelings through fantasies of social acceptance (Jacobs, 1986). This could be an explanation why compulsive buyers frequently buy clothes, cosmetics shoes and gifts for significant others (Christenson et al., 1994; McElroy et al., 1995; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Schlosser et al., 1994). Because compulsive buyers are highly interested in their physical appearance and attractiveness (Christenson et al., 1994), they may buy products to match their subjective perceptions of themselves with a socially desirable or required appearance as a self-defining goal (Elliott, 1994). Apparel-products are used to communicate an ideal self-image or increase self-esteem (Yurchisin and Johnson, 2004). I imagine compulsive buyers shopping for these types of products hoping to gain social acceptance through the products. Compulsive buyers also often buy gifts for significant others with the belief that these gifts would make their recipients happy, which would result in being liked (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989). The motivation to please by buying gifts is explained by the desire to be socially accepted.

Conclusively, social acceptance plays an apparent part in the choices the average compulsive buyer makes when buying products. Similar results have been found for consumers who have been socially excluded. Specifically, it was found that social excluded people spend and consume strategically in the service of affiliation (Mead et al., 2011), e.g. to gain acceptance. It is in the nature of people to be continually focused on their level of social inclusion, because human beings in a primitive state need to maintain social relationships to survive and reproduce (Leary et al., 1995). They use social opportunities to increase this level of social inclusion when it is below a desirable level (DeWall et al., 2009). People who feel socially excluded are always below this desirable level and consequently will use these social opportunities. Spending in the service of affiliation (Mead et al., 2011) is such an opportunity used by those socially excluded.

Because compulsive buying is elicited by an internal motivation, it is not expected that acute social exclusion influences compulsive buying on a trait level. However, it is expected that it influences buying motivations on state level. Based upon the above, the following hypotheses are offered:

H2a: *Acute social exclusion increases compulsive buying motivations (state); however it does not increase compulsive buying (trait).*

H2b: *Chronic social exclusion is positively associated with compulsive buying.*

2.4 Alternative explanation: Social exclusion and Impulse buying

Self-control is a key process in determining whether people give in to their spending desires (Vohs and Faber, 2007) and existing work indicates that social exclusion impairs self-control (Baumeister et al. 2005). Therefore, it could be that social exclusion leads to increased impulse spending. However, the results of Mead et al. (2011) suggest that social exclusion does not increase impulse spending for both self-reported and objective behavioral measures. Impulse buys are not motivated by an internal trigger to spend; therefore an impulse buy cannot be driven by a motivation to overcome social exclusion. Based upon the above, the following hypotheses are offered:

H3: *Social exclusion does not have an effect on impulsive buying behavior.*

H3a: *Acute social exclusion does not have an effect on impulsive buying behavior.*

H3b: *Chronic social exclusion is not associated with impulsive buying.*

2.5 Trait self-esteem

2.5.1 Social exclusion

Research has long demonstrated that perceived social approval and acceptance are fundamental, powerful foundations for self-esteem (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Coopersmith, 1967; Mead, 1934). Therefore, it is no surprise that it also has been found that social exclusion interferes with one's self-esteem in a negative way (Leary et al., 1995). It has been argued that trait self-esteem is a compilation of the individual's history of experienced inclusion and exclusion (Leary, 1990). If an individual is continually or chronically rejected by others, or

perceives this rejection by others, he or she reports significantly lower trait self-esteem than non-rejected individuals (Blackhart et al. 2009). This is supported by research that shows lonely subjects are more likely to have lower self-esteem than non-lonely subjects (Ouellet and Joshi, 1986). Although acute social exclusion and loneliness are similarly distressing (Stillman et al., 2009), I imagine that acute social exclusion does not decrease trait self-esteem; a trait variable is not easily changed. Based upon the above, the following hypotheses are offered:

H4a: *Acute social exclusion does not elicit low trait self-esteem.*

H4b: *Chronic social exclusion is negatively associated with trait self-esteem.*

2.5.2 Compulsive buying

The presence of low self-esteem among individuals exhibiting compulsive consumptions is one of the most consistent findings in literature (Marlatt et al. 1988; Jacobs, 1986; Krueger, 1988). Research indicates poor self-esteem as one of the most important predictors of drug-use initiation and drug abuse (Marlatt et al., 1988), alcoholism (Nathan, 1988) and problematic phone use (Bianchi and Phillips, 2005). Next to that, a relationship was found between poor self-esteem and Internet addiction (Armstrong et al., 2000; Ko et al., 2007), and between poor self-esteem and binge eating (de Zwaan and Mitchell, 1992).

Likewise, research shows that compulsive buyers have significantly lower self-esteem scores than buyers who do not show this compulsive behavior (d'Astous & Tremblay, 1989; DeSarbo & Edwards, 1996; Faber et al., 1987; Hanley & Wilhelm, 1992; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Scherhorn et al., 1990). This has not only found to be true for adults, but also for adolescents (d'Astous et al., 1990) and for compulsive buying tendencies (d'Austous, 1990). O'Guinn and Faber (1989) argue that shopping for clothes, cosmetics, and gifts creates an interaction with the sales person, which provide the compulsive buyer with higher self-esteem. The gratifications received from compulsive buying are very frequently linked to generated positive self-esteem (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989). Based upon the above, the following hypothesis is offered:

H5: *Trait self-esteem is negatively associated with compulsive buying.*

2.6 Trait social anxiety

2.6.1 Social exclusion

Anxiety neuroses are often explicitly based on fears of social exclusion (Beck et al 1974). Solely the anticipation of future exclusion may be enough to threaten the individual and invoke anxiety (Kerr & Levine, 2008); merely thinking about a situation in which an individual incurred social exclusion increases anxiety (Craighead et al. 1979). Being socially excluded by others induces anxiety (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Beck et al. 1974). A specific anxiety that is evoked by social exclusion is social anxiety (Leary, 1990; Siegel et al., 2009). Social anxiety is defined as a “chronic fear of social situations that put one in the position of evaluation by others” (Barlow, 2002; Craske, 1999); fear of negative evaluation is the defining characteristic of social anxiety (Weeks et al., 2010). Leary & Kowalski (1995) argue that social anxiety evolved as a mechanism for fostering social inclusion and minimizing the possibility of rejection and exclusion. Just like trait self-esteem, trait social anxiety is a trait variable that is not easily changed. Therefore, although acute social exclusion and loneliness are similarly distressing (Stillman et al., 2009), I do not expect acute social exclusion to influence trait social anxiety. In order to investigate this line of reasoning the following hypotheses are formulated:

H6a: *Acute social exclusion does not elicit high trait social anxiety.*

H6b: *Chronic social exclusion is positively associated with social anxiety.*

2.6.2 Compulsive buying

The primary motivation for compulsive buying is alleviation of anxiety rather than the desire for material acquisition (O’Guinn and Faber, 1989). Almost 200 years ago Esquirol (1838) already framed compulsions in terms of efforts to reduce anxiety (Carr 1974). Compulsions are behaviors whereby consumers escape from anxiety (Edwards, 1993; Ergin, 2010; O’Guinn & Faber, 1989). High levels of anxiety can increase the occurrence of different kinds of compulsive behaviors (Miller 1980; Zuckerman 1979). For instance, in the area of drug addiction and alcoholism, adolescents often exhibit anxiety connected with these addictions (Mendelson & Mello, 1986). Also anxiety is linked to smoking addiction (Audrain et al.,

1998) and problem gambling (Coman et al. 1997). Most importantly, anxiety has been related to compulsive buying in previous research (DeSarbo & Edwards, 1996; Edwards, 1992 & 1994; Faber et al. 1987; Faber et al., 1995; Faber & O'Guinn, 1988; O'Guinn & Faber, 1989; Valence et al. 1988). A specific anxiety related with compulsive buying is social anxiety; social anxiety is directly related to a fear of social rejection (Zadro et al., 2006). Recently, fear of negative evaluation (i.e. social anxiety) is found to be positively associated with compulsive buying (Roberts et al., 2014). This theory is conceptualized in the following hypothesis:

H7: *Trait social anxiety is positively associated with compulsive buying.*

2.7 Relationship

Conclusively, self-esteem is negatively associated both with social exclusion (e.g. Blackhart et al. 2009) and compulsive buying (e.g. d'Astous & Tremblay, 1989), and social anxiety is positively associated both with social exclusion (e.g. Siegel et al., 2009) and compulsive buying (e.g. Roberts et al., 2014). Next to that, individuals with lower trait self-esteem reported increased social pain after the social exclusion manipulation relative to individuals with higher trait self-esteem (Onoda et al., 2010). Likewise social anxiety is related to perceptions of social pain (Zadro et al., 2006). This increased social pain could indicate that the social exclusion manipulation would be more powerful for these individuals with low trait self-esteem and high trait social anxiety. This line of reasoning is conceptualized in the last hypotheses formulated:

H8: *Social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with low trait self-esteem than with high trait self-esteem.*

H8a: *Acute social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with low trait self-esteem than with high trait self-esteem.*

H8b: *Chronic social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with low trait self-esteem than with high trait self-esteem.*

H9: *Social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with high trait social anxiety than with low trait social anxiety.*

H9a: *Acute social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with high trait social anxiety than with low trait social anxiety.*

H9b: *Chronic social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with high trait social anxiety than with low trait social anxiety.*

2.8 Demographic variables

It is important to check for socio-demographic characteristics to be able to draw accurate conclusions from my research.

In most studies women are highly vulnerable to compulsive buying, although gender differences may be less pronounced in young samples (e.g. Dittmar, 2005). However, there is also research that could not find differences between men and women in this regard (Koral et al., 2006). These contradicting results make it difficult to fully understand the phenomenon of compulsive buying. Findings relative to age and compulsive buying have been inconclusive. Some research found it not to be a significant factor (Scherhorn et al., 1990). Other researchers found that compulsive buyers tend to be younger (Dittmar et al. 2005). Education is not a variable often accounted for in the compulsive buying literature. But it did not have an influence on compulsive buying in the few studies that did account for it (Black et al., 1998; Dittmar, 2005). Findings regarding income have also been mixed. Early research suggested that the problem might be confined to the middle or lower income individuals who had a high desire for things and little willpower to resist urges (Faber et al., 1987). This might be because their research is largely based on financial problems, which are more equivalent among compulsive buyers with a lower income. In later work, it was demonstrated that compulsive buyers appear to come from all income groups (Christenson et al., 1992; Dittmar, 2005; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Scherhorn et al., 1990).

2.9 Conceptual framework

The main insights of the literature review are presented in the conceptual model of this study:

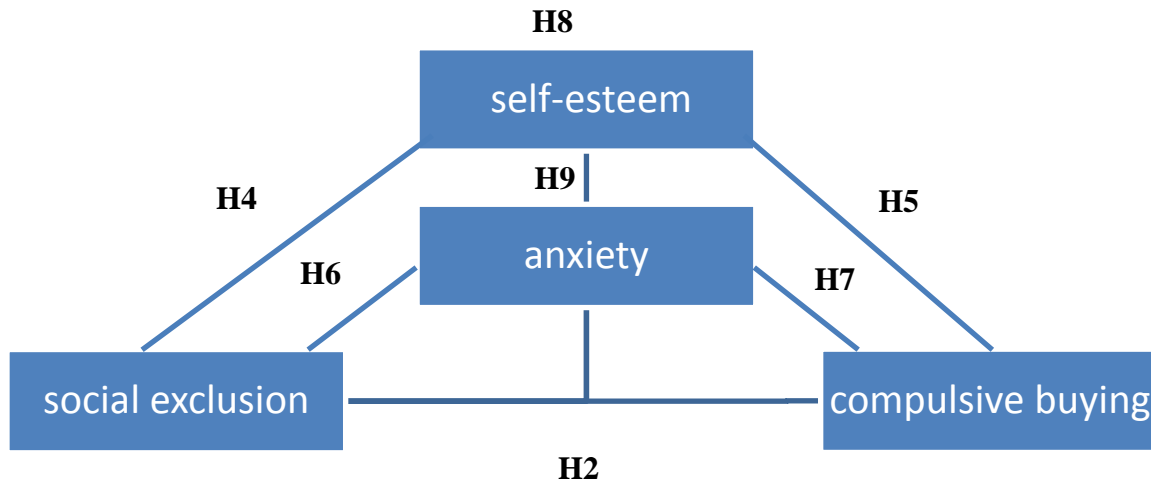


Figure 1: Conceptual model

Chapter 3: Data and methods

In this chapter the methodology adopted in order to investigate the previously proposed hypotheses, as shown in the conceptual model, will be presented. By making use of quantitative research the study will address how social exclusion affects compulsive buying.

3.1 Sample and data collection

For this study I conducted survey research in which respondents were randomly assigned to one out of the two conditions; social acceptance and social exclusion. I used a questionnaire that includes closed-end questions, represented by rating scales to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed by means of a paper version and a digital version. The online version was posted on my Facebook page, as well as the pages of some of my friends, and several student communities. Next to that, I contacted Debbie Roes, a former compulsive buyer with a personal blog about the topic of compulsive buying; <http://www.recoveringshopaholic.com>. She posted the questionnaire on her blog and on her social media platforms. Lastly, it was posted on Amazon Turk with a \$0.50 earning for each worker. The paper version was distributed on the campus of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

A total of 188 individuals participated and submitted the questionnaire. Unfortunately not every submitted questionnaire was acceptable for research purposes due to inability and unwillingness error (Malhotra et al., 2012); e.g. few respondents completed the whole questionnaire in almost a straight line or did not answer the manipulation question. To reduce these response errors these respondents were deleted from the dataset. After data cleaning, a dataset of 156 respondents was used. The population included 63 males and 93 females between the age of 16 and 76 ($M = 31.21$).

3.2 Research design

The questionnaire consisted of questions about desire and intent to shop, demographic items, general questions about buying behavior and previously developed and standardized measurement scales. All of these scales are Likert-type scales in which participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) with specific written statements. Items from each of the scales are randomly ordered on the questionnaire.

3.2.1 Social exclusion manipulation

After the introduction of the questionnaire participants were randomly assigned to one out of the two experimental conditions, namely social exclusion or social acceptance. Participants were asked to recall and write about an experience of intense social acceptance or exclusion, a method by Maner et al. (2007). Participants were required to write at least a one hundred characters when answering these manipulation questions. Out of the 156 respondents, 83 respondents were assigned to the social exclusion manipulation and 73 respondents were assigned to the social acceptance manipulation.

3.2.2 Desire and intent to shop

After the social exclusion manipulation, the respondents were asked about their desire and intent to shop online and offline. The respondents needed to answer four questions on a seven point Likert-scale about how much they would like to go shopping online and offline and how likely they were to shop online and offline after the experiment. Contrary to compulsive shoppers, for a compulsive buyer it should not matter whether they shop online or offline,

because it is about the buying of the product as a motivation, not the shopping experience. An intention to perform an action generally follows a volitional desire which represents the motivational state of mind wherein appraisals and reasons to act are transformed into a personal motivation to do so (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). Therefore, it is expected that in general intention to shop is lower than desire to shop. This resulted in the four variables: *DesireShopping* (M = 4.43, SD = 1.89), *IntentShopping* (M = 2.91, SD = 1.77), *DesireOnline* (M = 4.42, SD = 1.81), *IntentOnline* (M = 3.25, SD = 1.71). The reliability analysis resulted in an alpha value of $\alpha = 0.611$ for the complete scale. The test variable is named: *Temptation* (M = 3.75, SD = 1.22). This variable is inspired by Mead et al. (2011) who uses temptation to spend as a self-reported measure for impulsive buying.

3.2.3 Behavioral intent

Hereafter respondents answered to the behavioral intention scale (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975), where they had to rate the probability that they would purchase a certain product. There were nine products shown to the respondents, based on research by Dittmar et al. (1995, 1996). These products represent a real shopping situation with products often and less often bought by impulse. Items more often bought by impulse are consumer goods which appear to have potential for self-presentation, self-expression, mood adjustment, diversion and entertainment; functional products are less likely to be bought by impulse (Dittmar et al, 1995). A study of compulsive buyers by Schernhorn et al. (1990) suggests that clothes, jewelry, and cosmetics were bought more by women, and high-tech, electronic and sports equipment more by men. The nine products that were shown to the respondents were: body care items (M = 3.91, SD = 1.96), sports equipment (M = 3.04, SD = 1.91), kitchen equipment (M = 2.59, SD = 1.69), clothes (M = 5.25, SD = 1.61), music (M = 2.94, SD = 1.95), jewelry (M = 3.06, SD = 2.03), books (M = 3.81, SD = 1.91), electronic leisure items (M = 3.44, SD = 2.06), and footwear (M = 4.42, SD = 1.89). These items represent an average shopping experience for a consumer. The reliability analysis resulted in an alpha value of $\alpha = 0.630$. The test variable is named: *ImpulseBuying* (M = 3.61, SD = 0.95), inspired by the objective behavioral measure by Mead et al. (2011).

3.2.4 Motivation to shop

After the behavioral intention scale the motivation to shop was asked to the respondents. This scale measures buying considerations at state level. It is a six item scale that results in two motivations to shop; functional ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.04$) and psychological motivation ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.27$). Psychological motivation consists of mood ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.61$) and self-image motivation ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.34$). The mean of psychological motivation is subtracted from the mean of functional motivation to get the variable *Buying_Considerations* ($M = 1.18$, $SD = 1.67$). The reliability analysis resulted in an alpha value of $\alpha = 0.643$ for the complete scale. This scale was used by Dittmar et al. (1996); they found that individuals with a low compulsive shopping tendency use functional buying considerations more strongly than psychological ones, while this difference is significantly smaller for people with a high compulsive shopping tendency. Impulsive and compulsive buying differ in the underlying motivations for excessive shopping and spending (DeSarbo & Edwards, 1996). A purchase with a psychological motivation is considered a compulsive buy; a purchase with a functional motivation is considered an impulsive buy.

3.2.5 Compulsive buying

After the motivation scale the respondents were asked to which extent they agreed or disagreed with the 13 item scale of Edwards (1993) to measure their compulsive buying behavior on a trait level. The reason I chose the Edwards Compulsive Buying Scale (Edwards, 1993) instead of the more frequently used Compulsive Buying Scale (Faber and O'Guinn, 1992) is because researches argue for the superiority of the Edwards Compulsive Buying Scale over the Compulsive Buying Scale (e.g. Manolis & Roberts, 2007; Roberts et al., 2003), for example because the EBCS treats compulsive buying not as dichotomous behavior, but as occurring on a continuum (Edwards, 1993). The Compulsive Buying Scale has gained a lot of criticism (e.g. Koran et al, 2006; Manolis & Roberts, 2008). Another reason I chose not to use this scale is because more than half of the items involves money related problems, while I believe that compulsive buyers can also be rich. Additionally, credit cards are not relevant in most European countries. Edwards's compulsive buying scale represents five components of compulsive buying. These components are: the tendency to spend, the compulsion or drive to spend, feelings about shopping and spending, dysfunctional spending, and post-purchase guilt. The reliability analysis resulted in an alpha value of $\alpha = 0.925$ for the complete scale. The test variable is named: *Compulsive_Buying* ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.33$).

3.2.6 Self-esteem

After the Edwards Compulsive Buying Scale the respondents were asked to which extent they agreed or disagreed with the ten-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) to measure self-esteem. The reliability analysis resulted in a reliable alpha value of $\alpha = 0.911$ for the complete scale. The test variable is named: *Self_Esteem* (M = 5.15, SD = 1.10).

3.2.7 Social Anxiety

The twelve items of the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983) measure the social anxiety of the respondents. They were asked to the respondent hereafter. The reliability analysis of this scale resulted in an alpha value of $\alpha = 0.943$. The final variable is named: *Social_Anxiety* (M = 4.16, SD = 1.30).

3.2.8 Chronic Social Exclusion; i.e. Loneliness

After the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale the respondents were asked to answer the eleven questions of The Loneliness Scale by de Jong Gierveld & van Tilburg (1999). The scale turned out to be reliable by the reliability analysis with an alpha value of $\alpha = 0.733$ for the complete scale. The test variable is named: *Loneliness* (M = 3.40, SD = 0.92).

3.2.9 General buying behavior

After the loneliness scale, the respondents were asked about their general buying behavior. The respondents needed to answer two questions on a seven point Likert-scale about how much they shop on average and what they spend.

3.2.10 Demographic variables

For the demographic variables straightforward measuring and existing marketing scales were used to measure the concept. These questions were:

- What is your age?

- What is your gender?
- What is your yearly household income?
- What is your highest completed education?
- What is your nationality?

Participants then ended the questionnaire and were thanked. The results of the questionnaire will be analyzed and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

I performed several analyses. Before answering the hypotheses I performed descriptive analyses and reliability analyses. To answer the previously formulated hypotheses I used associative analyses and differences analyses. The associative analyses consisted of Pearson and Spearman correlations. For the differences analyses, independent samples t-tests, and regression analyses were executed. Every test was run against a significance level of 5%, i.e. $\alpha = 0.05$. This chapter describes the results of the empirical research.

4.1 Demographic and Control Variables

Before looking at the main independent variables from my conceptual model, I analyzed the gathered demographic data of the respondents to get a better insight into the sample and outcomes of this study. Next to correlation analyses, I performed a regression analysis in which I tested whether the demographic variables predicted compulsive buying. The overall model fit was $R^2 = 0.195$.

4.1.1 Gender

A total of 63 males and 93 females participated in this study. The sample is not evenly distributed; the hypothesis that it is evenly distributed is rejected ($t(155) = 2.44$, $p < 0.05$). This can be explained by self-selection of doing the questionnaire. Women tend to be more interested in shopping and therefore are more likely to participate in this study. In the exclusion manipulation 39.8% was male and in the acceptance manipulation 41.1% was male. By means of a bivariate correlation analysis, I found that females are more likely to be

compulsive buyers than males. The mean of the compulsive buying scale differs as function of gender ($M_{\text{female}} = 3.88$ vs. $M_{\text{male}} = 3.02$; $r(156) = 0.308$, $p = 0.000$; regression analysis: $\beta = 0.231$, $p = 0.003$). This result is compatible with most extant work on compulsive buying (e.g. Dittmar, 2005).

4.1.2 Age

The age of the respondents ranged from 16 and 76 with an average of 31.21 ($M_{\text{exclusion}} = 31.59$ vs. $M_{\text{acceptance}} = 30.78$). The median of this sample is the age of 25 and the mode is 22. The average age of my friends and students of the university, who were the main participants, can explain this median. In order to test whether there is a relationship between age and compulsive buying, I performed a Pearson correlation analysis ($r(156) = 0.200$, $p = 0.012$). According to this analysis age has a positive influence on compulsive buying; however, when controlling for other demographic variables, age is not a predicting factor of compulsive buying (regression analysis: $\beta = 0.056$, $p = 0.449$). There is no relationship between age and compulsive buying.

4.1.3 Education

As can be seen in figure 2, most participants completed a bachelor degree ($M_{\text{exclusion}} = 3.35$ vs. $M_{\text{acceptance}} = 3.30$). Just like age, this can be explained by my sample consisting mainly of my friends and students of the university. Although education is not a variable often accounted for in the compulsive buying literature, Dittmar (2005) and Black et al. (1998) did not find a relationship between education and compulsive buying. In the present study a significant correlation was found by means of a bivariate correlation analysis between education and compulsive ($r(156) = 0.289$, $p = 0.000$; regression analysis: $\beta = 0.244$, $p = 0.002$). Concluding from this sample people with a higher education will have more chance of being a compulsive buyer. This can also be seen in figure 3.

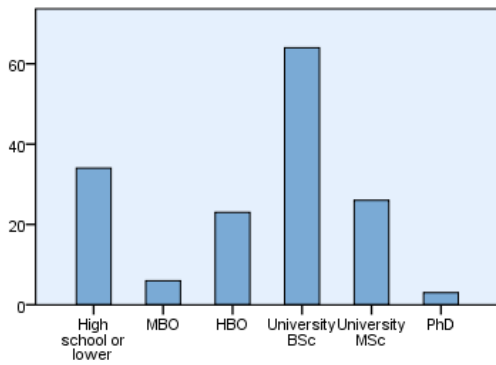


Figure 2: Education distribution

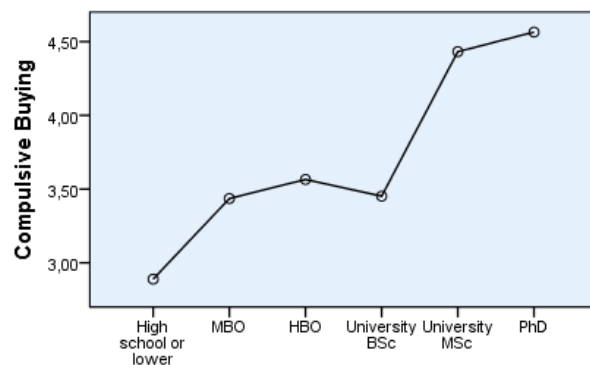


Figure 3: Education and Compulsive Buying

4.1.4 Income

As can be seen in figure 4, a large part of the participant sample has a minimal income ($M_{\text{exclusion}} = 2.57$ vs. $M_{\text{acceptance}} = 2.59$). Just like with education, this can also be explained by the sample consisting mainly of students, who either have a part time job, no job or looking for a job. Through a bivariate correlation analysis I found that there is a significant positive correlation between income and compulsive buying ($r(156) = 0.229$, $p = 0.004$); however this relationship was insignificant in the regression analysis ($\beta = 0.122$, $p = 0.154$). The relationship between compulsive buying and income can be observed in figure 5.

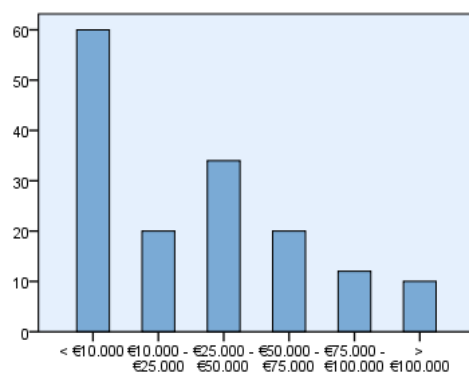


Figure 4: Income Distribution

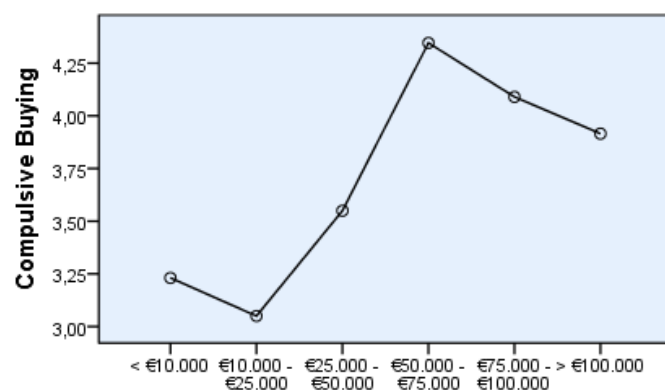


Figure 5: Income and Compulsive Buying

4.1.5 General buying behavior

The respondents also answered questions about their general buying behavior. It is probable that compulsive buyers shop more often and spend more. Firstly, it was assessed how much on average the respondents go hedonic shopping per week. More than half (84 out of 156) of the respondents go hedonic shopping on average less than once a week. The mean of this variable is 1.78, where one is less than once a week and two is once a week. A bivariate correlation analysis revealed a significant correlation between shopping frequency and compulsive buying ($r(156) = 0.551, p = 0.000$; regression analysis $\beta = 0.308, p = 0.000$). In figure 6 this relationship is shown. Secondly, it was measured how much the participants spend per month. More than 100 out of the 156 respondents do not spend more than 100 euros per month on hedonic items. The mean is 2.24 where two is less than a hundred euros and three is between hundred and two hundred euros. A bivariate correlation analysis revealed a significant correlation between amount spent and compulsive buying ($r(156) = 0.449, p = 0.000$; regression analysis $\beta = 0.323, p = 0.000$). This relationship is illustrated in figure 7. Conclusively, as was expected in this sample, compulsive buyers go shopping more often and spend more.

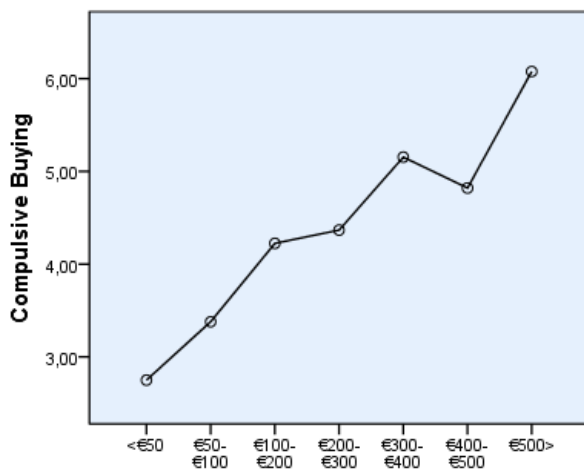


Figure 6: Amount Spent

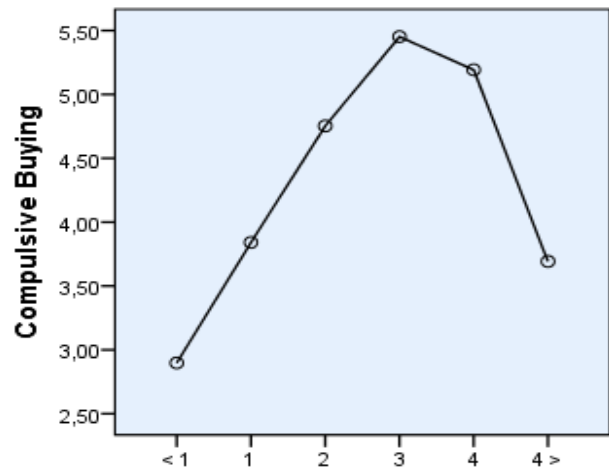


Figure 7: Frequency Shopping

4.2 Social Exclusion

It was theorized that acute social exclusion increases feelings of chronic social exclusion.

4.2.1 Hypothesis 1 – acute social exclusion and loneliness

The expectation that acute social exclusion increases chronic feelings of social exclusion is confirmed by an independent samples t-test and by a regression analysis controlling for demographic variables ($M_{\text{excluded}} = 3.54$ vs. $M_{\text{nonexcluded}} = 3.24$; $t(154) = 2.050$, $p = 0.042$; regression analysis: $\beta = -0.150$, $p = 0.038$). It can be concluded that acute social exclusion increases chronic feelings of loneliness.

4.3 Social Exclusion and Compulsive Buying

It was hypothesized that social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies. This was tested at acute and chronic level.

4.3.1 Hypothesis 2a – acute social exclusion

The first expectation is that acute social exclusion increases compulsive buying motivations. In order to test the assumption, the primary motivation to shop needs to be identified. Individuals with a low compulsive shopping tendency use functional buying considerations more strongly than psychological ones, while this difference is significantly smaller for people with a high compulsive shopping tendency. To check this in my sample, a correlation analysis between primary shopping motivation and the compulsive buying scale is completed. The higher the participants rate on the compulsive buying scale, the more likely they are to have psychological motivation to buy; the lower participants rate on the compulsive buying scale, the more likely they are to have functional motivation to buy ($r(156) = -0.548$, $p = 0.000$). An independent samples t-test was performed to test for acute social exclusion and buying considerations ($M_{\text{excluded}} = 1.04$ vs. $M_{\text{nonexcluded}} = 1.34$; $t(154) = -1.119$, $p = 0.265$). A regression analysis, which controlled for demographic variables, revealed conceptually the same results ($\beta = 0.092$, $p = 0.237$). Although, in the sample participants who were assigned to the exclusion manipulation were less likely to be functional shoppers, this relationship was not significant. Another independent samples t-test was performed to test for acute exclusion and the compulsive buying trait scale ($M_{\text{excluded}} = 3.70$ vs. $M_{\text{nonexcluded}} = 3.34$; $t(154) = 1.684$, $p = 0.094$; regression analysis: $\beta = -0.127$, $p = 0.083$). Again, participants assigned to the exclusion manipulation rated higher on the compulsive buying scale, however this relationship was not significant; it cannot be concluded that acute social exclusion increases compulsive buying.

4.3.2 Hypothesis 2b – chronic social exclusion

Next to acute social exclusion it was also expected that chronic social exclusion is positively associated with compulsive buying. In order to test whether there is a relationship between chronic social exclusion and compulsive buying, a bivariate correlation analysis was performed. A significant relationship between chronic social exclusion and compulsive buying was found ($r(156) = 0.432, p = 0.000$; regression analysis: $\beta = 0.211, p = 0.010$). The lonelier the participants are, the higher they rate on the compulsive buying scale.

4.4 Social exclusion and Impulsive buying

It was theorized that social exclusion does not have an effect on impulsive buying behavior. This was yet again tested at acute and chronic level.

4.4.1 Hypothesis 3a – acute social exclusion

An alternative explanation for the increased spending from social exclusion could be impulsive buying. The behavioral measure of impulsive spending – the mean of the behavioral intent to buy all the impulse products – did not differ as function of the social exclusion condition ($M_{\text{excluded}} = 3.50$ vs. $M_{\text{nonexcluded}} = 3.73$; $t(154) = -1.519, p = 0.131$; regression analysis: $\beta = 0.123, p = 0.120$). Temptation to shop was also not affected by the rejection manipulation ($M_{\text{excluded}} = 3.77$ vs. $M_{\text{nonexcluded}} = 3.73$; $t(154) = 0.227, p = 0.820$; regression analysis: $\beta = -0.015, p = 0.845$). Thus, both self-report and objective behavioral measures confirm that acute social exclusion does not increase impulse spending.

4.4.2 Hypothesis 3b – chronic social exclusion

With a bivariate correlation analysis it was verified that chronic social exclusion does not have a significant correlation with amount spent ($r(156) = 0.079, p = 0.328$; regression analysis: $\beta = 0.013, p = 0.880$). Secondly, the behavioral measure of impulsive spending did not have a significant correlation with chronic social exclusion ($r(156) = 0.096, p = 0.234$; regression analysis: $\beta = 0.079, p = 0.374$). Conclusively, there is no significant relationship between impulsive buying and chronic social exclusion.

4.5 Self-esteem

Both types of social exclusion, acute and chronic, and compulsive buying have been related with trait self-esteem in existing studies. It is expected that this study will find the same.

4.5.1 Hypothesis 4 – social exclusion

It is assumed that chronic social exclusion is negatively associated with trait self-esteem. This hypothesis was tested by means of a Pearson correlation ($r(156) = -0.437, p = 0.000$). Based on this data, I can conclude that there is a significant relationship between trait self-esteem and chronic social exclusion. The lonelier participants feel, the lower their trait self-esteem is. A regression analysis, which controlled for demographic variables and social anxiety, revealed conceptually the same results: loneliness decreases trait self-esteem ($\beta = -0.318, p = 0.000$). An independent samples t-test was performed to measure whether acute social exclusion has an effect on trait self-esteem. A significant relationship between trait self-esteem and acute social exclusion was found ($M_{\text{excluded}} = 4.98$ vs. $M_{\text{nonexcluded}} = 5.34$; $t(154) = -2.031, p = 0.044$); however when controlling for other variables with regression analysis this relationship was not significant ($\beta = 0.115, p = 0.090$). Conclusively, the hypotheses are confirmed; chronic social exclusion decreases trait self-esteem, while acute social exclusion does not.

4.5.2 Hypothesis 5 – compulsive buying

Then, the hypothesis that trait self-esteem is negatively associated with compulsive buying was verified. A bivariate correlation analysis was performed in order to test for a correlation between these variables. It may be assumed that there is a significant correlation between trait self-esteem and compulsive buying ($r(156) = 0.433, p = 0.000$; regression analysis: $\beta = -0.235, p = 0.006$). The lower the trait self-esteem of the participants, the higher they rate on the compulsive buying scale.

4.6 Social anxiety

Just like self-esteem, social anxiety has been related to both social exclusion and compulsive buying in current theories. It is expected that the present study will replicate these results.

4.6.1 Hypothesis 6 – social exclusion

Next, the hypothesis that chronic social exclusion is positively associated with social anxiety was tested. By means of correlation analysis, I verified whether there is in fact a positive relationship between these two variables ($r(156) = 0.264, p = 0.001$). From these results it can be concluded that for this sample there is a significant positive correlation between chronic social exclusion and social anxiety; i.e. the lonelier the subjects are, the higher they will rate of the social anxiety scale. However, when controlling for trait self-esteem and other variables this relationship was not significant ($\beta = 0.001, p = 0.993$). Self-esteem acts as a strong predictor of social anxiety in this analysis ($r(156) = -0.560, p = 0.000$; regression analysis: $\beta = -0.538, p = 0.000$). These results suggest that the main influence of loneliness on social anxiety is through its mediating relationship with self-esteem. This result is illustrated in figure 8.



Figure 8: Mediation self-esteem

To measure whether acute social exclusion has an effect on trait social anxiety, an independent samples t-test was performed. A non-significant relationship was found between trait social anxiety and acute social exclusion ($M_{\text{excluded}} = 4.26$ vs. $M_{\text{nonexcluded}} = 4.04$; $t(154) = 1.036, p = 0.302$; regression analysis: $\beta = 0.002, p = 0.971$). Participants assigned to the exclusion manipulation rated higher on the social anxiety scale, however this relationship was not significant; it cannot be concluded that acute social exclusion increase trait social anxiety.

4.6.2 Hypothesis 7 – compulsive buying

The following tested assumption was whether trait social anxiety is positively associated with compulsive buying. Again, a bivariate correlation analysis was executed. The result of this analysis indicated a significant correlation between social anxiety and compulsive buying ($r(156) = 0.452, p = 0.000$; regression analysis: $\beta = 0.244, p = 0.003$). The higher the trait social anxiety of the participants, the higher they rate on the compulsive buying scale.

4.7 Relationship with trait self-esteem

It was hypothesized that social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with low trait self-esteem than with high trait self-esteem. This was tested at acute and chronic level.

4.7.1 Hypothesis 8a – acute social exclusion

In order to validate the assumption that acute social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with low trait self-esteem than with high trait self-esteem a multiple regression analysis was performed. There was no significant interaction effect found between trait self-esteem and acute social exclusion for compulsive buying ($\beta = -0.121, p = 0.165$). There was also no significant interaction effect found between trait self-esteem and acute social exclusion for buying considerations ($\beta = 0.032, p = 0.749$). Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the impact of social exclusion on buying considerations and compulsive buying depends on the level of self-esteem.

4.7.2 Hypothesis 8b – chronic social exclusion

In order to test the theory that chronic social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with low trait self-esteem than with high trait self-esteem, a regression analysis was done. The compulsive buying scale was used as the dependent variable. There was no significant interaction effect found between trait self-esteem and chronic social exclusion for the compulsive buying ($\beta = -0.049, p = 0.483$). It cannot be concluded that the effect of chronic social exclusion is stronger among individuals with lower self-esteem than those with higher self-esteem.

4.8 Relationship with trait social anxiety

It was theorized that social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with high trait social anxiety than with low trait social anxiety. This was yet again tested at acute and chronic level.

4.8.1 Hypothesis 9a – acute social exclusion

In order to validate the assumption that acute social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with high trait social anxiety than with low trait social anxiety, two regression analyses were performed. There was no significant interaction effect found between trait social anxiety and acute social exclusion for the compulsive buying scale ($\beta = 0.062$, $p = 0.489$) and for the buying considerations scale ($\beta = 0.034$, $p = 0.740$). Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the impact of social exclusion on compulsive buying depends on the level of social anxiety.

4.8.2 Hypothesis 9b – chronic social exclusion

In order to test the theory that chronic social exclusion increases compulsive buying tendencies more among individuals with high trait social anxiety than with low trait social anxiety a regression analysis was performed. There was no significant interaction effect found between trait social anxiety and chronic social exclusion for the compulsive buying scale ($\beta = 0.051$, $p = 0.449$). It cannot be concluded that the effect of chronic social exclusion is stronger among individuals with higher social anxiety than those with lower social anxiety.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 General Discussion

The present research adds to a flourishing area of research that investigates how fundamental social motives guide and influence consumption patterns. Specifically, it examined the impact of social exclusion on compulsive buying.

Consistent with existing research on exclusion, it was found that acute social exclusion increases perceived feelings of chronic social exclusion. My findings suggest that, when people feel chronically excluded from social groups, they are at higher risk of becoming a compulsive buyer. This finding is consistent with extant work suggesting that feeling socially

excluded nurtures financial risk-taking (Duclos et al., 2013); however acute social exclusion does not elicit compulsive buying on a trait level. Consistent with research from Dittmar (2005), I found that compulsive buyers, unlike non-compulsive buyers, are more often motivated by psychological buying considerations, than by functional motivations. These psychological motivations are often centered on the idea of fitting in. This finding dovetails nicely with extant work suggesting that socially excluded people consume in order to gain social acceptance (Mead et al., 2011). Although the directionality of the hypothesis that acute exclusion elicits compulsive buying tendencies was clearly visible, the test was not statistically significant; I cannot confirm this theory. The alternative account impulse spending was not supported by the results.

Some of my hypotheses were already tested in past research. Therefore, this research should be interpreted as an extending part of the already existing literature on this topic. Building on extant work (Blackhart et al., 2009; Leary et al., 1995; Ouellet and Joshi, 1986), the results of this study indicate a strong relationship between trait self-esteem and chronic social exclusion. It suggests that people who feel chronically socially excluded generally have a lower self-esteem, than people who do not experience this feeling. However, this finding could not be replicated for acute social exclusion. Contrary to research by Leary (1990) and Siegel et al. (2009), who propose that chronic social exclusion is associated with high social anxiety, whereas non-chronic social exclusion is associated with low social anxiety, I did not find this relationship; I found that self-esteem almost fully mediates the relationship between chronic social exclusion and social anxiety. This result could not be replicated for acute social exclusion.

Next to social exclusion, compulsive buying was also found to be associated with both social anxiety and self-esteem. People who have low self-esteem are more likely to be a compulsive buyer; a result complying with extant work about compulsive buying (d'Astous & Tremblay, 1989; DeSarbo & Edwards, 1996; Faber et al., 1987; Hanley & Wilhelm, 1992; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Scherhorn et al., 1990). Likewise, people with high social anxiety are more likely to be a compulsive buyer, as was prior found by Zadro et al. (2006) and Roberts et al. (2014).

Further investigating the relationship between social exclusion and compulsive buying, the outcomes suggest that social exclusion does not increase compulsive buying tendencies more

among individuals with low trait self-esteem than with high trait self-esteem; i.e. the effect of chronic and acute social exclusion on compulsive buying is not stronger for people with low self-esteem than people with high self-esteem. Likewise, no significant interaction effect could be found for acute and chronic social exclusion and social anxiety on compulsive buying tendencies.

5.2 Limitations

There are several limitations that warrant mention and consideration. Some of the hypotheses turned out to be insignificant; although the directionality of all propositions is clearly visible. A reason for this insignificance could be that, in the context of my research, it was difficult to control how long participants were exposed to the social manipulation. In the original manipulation participants write five minutes about their experience (Maner et al., 2007); I could not control this timeframe. Had this research been done in a laboratory, it could have been controlled and the manipulation might have been more effective. The second reason for this insignificance could be that the measurement for state compulsive buying (i.e. buying considerations by Dittmar et al. (1996)) is the only measurement to date measuring compulsive buying and it has not been used often. In this study the reliability analysis of this scale turned out to be weak with an alpha of 0.643. It could be that there is room for improvement to measure compulsive buying as a state, not a trait. Results that are close to being significant probably lack statistical power (Cashen & Geiger, 2004). Statistical power increases when a larger sample is used; therefore a limitation of the present study is the sample size of 156 respondents.

5.3 Future Directions

Limitations of this study provide opportunity for future research. For example, the study could be replicated with a larger sample. Another option is to do the research in a controlled environment, like a behavioral laboratory; this allows controlling the social exclusion manipulation. Also a point of improvement would be to include a manipulation check.

This work focusses on acute social exclusion and chronic social exclusion; however acute exclusion can be divided in rejection and being ignored. Lee and Shrum (2012) found that being ignored increases conspicuous consumption, while being rejected does not. They also found that being rejected increases donation behavior, but being ignored does not. These

results suggest there might be a difference between being ignored and being rejected. It is worth researching whether the effects of the two different kinds of acute social exclusion make a difference in compulsive buying.

A research problem that could be addressed next is whether social exclusion increases other compulsive behaviors. For example, does social exclusion lead to increased internet use? Addictive internet use and compulsive buying share the notion that people will use it as a means to get closer to another person, but instead it pushes others away. One would go on the internet to chat with other people on social media, but increased internet use means less face to face interaction. Because of this similarity, addictive internet use and compulsive buying could entail the same results.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

Increasingly, researchers are concentrating on understanding how one of the most fundamental human motives, a strong desire to form and maintain social relationships, guide consumption decisions. The current work adds to this growing body of literature by focusing on how people compensate for deficiencies in these interpersonal relationships with increased spending and consumption. My results add to extant literature examining the relationship between loneliness and consumption. Both loneliness and debt are on the rise; in the United States of America household debt jumped from \$241 billion to \$11.5 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2013, the biggest increase since the third quarter of 2007 (Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 2014) and the number of one-person households has risen globally by eighty percent over the last fifteen years (Euromonitor, 2012). If people's increased spending habits are driven by social exclusion, then there is hope for changing the recent trends of loneliness and debt by changing the social norm of spending.

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Appendix: Survey

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This study is for my master thesis Marketing Management at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Your responses will help me graduate. It will take approximately 10 minutes to answer all questions. Please make sure to answer all questions truthfully. Your answers will be completely anonymous and will be discarded after the completion of my study.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me at dagmar.verheij3@gmail.com.

Dagmar Verheij

Please recall a previously experienced instance in which you felt intensely socially excluded or personally rejected.

Write about what happened and how it made you feel.

How much would you like to go to the city to shop for your pleasure right now?

Dislike extremely						Like extremely
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely are you to go to the city to shop for your pleasure after this experiment (as soon as possible)?

Dislike extremely						Like extremely
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much would you like to shop for your pleasure on-line at this moment?

Dislike extremely						Like extremely
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely are you to go to shop for your pleasure on-line after this experiment (as soon as possible)?

Dislike extremely						Like extremely
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you would have the opportunity to go shopping now with your own money (either on-line or off-line - whatever you prefer).

Rate the probability that you would purchase a product in this product category:

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
Body care items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sports equipment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kitchen items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clothes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jewelry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Books	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Electronic leisure items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Footwear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gifts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate the importance of these purchase reasons:

	Extremely Unimportant					Extremely Important	
Good value (money).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Useful and practical.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puts me in a better mood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Makes me feel more like the person I want to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expresses what is unique about me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improves my social standing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**The questions below ask about your attitudes toward shopping.
For each item indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree.**

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
I feel driven to shop and spend, even when I don't have the time or the money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get little or no pleasure from shopping.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I hate to go shopping.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go on buying binges.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel "high" when I go on a buying spree.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I buy things even when I don't need anything.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go on a buying binge when I'm upset, disappointed, depressed, or angry.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about my spending habits but still go out and shop and spend money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel anxious after I go on a buying binge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I buy things even though I cannot afford them..	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel guilty or ashamed after I go on a buying binge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I buy things I don't need or won't use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sometimes feel compelled to go shopping.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The questions below ask about your general feelings about yourself. For each item indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At times, I think I am no good at all.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I certainly feel useless at times.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each of the following statements carefully and indicate how characteristic it is of you.
For each item indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am unconcerned even if I know people are forming an unfavorable impression of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I rarely worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am afraid others will not approve of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am afraid that people will find fault with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other people's opinions of me do not bother me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I know someone is judging me, it has little effect on me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each of the following statements carefully and indicate how characteristic it is of you.
For each item indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
There is always someone I can talk to about my day-to-day problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I miss having a really close friend.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I experience a general sense of emptiness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are plenty of people I can lean on when I have problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I miss the pleasure of the company of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find my circle of friends and acquaintances too limited.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are many people I can trust completely.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are enough people I feel close to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I miss having people around me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often feel rejected.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can call on my friends whenever I need them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How many times a week do you go shopping for pleasure items (like clothing, movies, books) on average?

- ☐ less than 1
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ more than 4

What do you spend per month on shopping for pleasure items (like clothing, movies, books)?

- ☐ <€50
- ☐ €50-€100
- ☐ €100-€200
- ☐ €200-€300
- ☐ €300-€400
- ☐ €400-€500
- ☐ >€500

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

What is your age?

Indicate your highest completed education.

- ☐ High school or less
- ☐ Intermediate vocational education/MBO
- ☐ Higher education/HBO
- ☐ University BSc
- ☐ University MSc
- ☐ PhD

Indicate your household income.

- ☐ < €10.000
- ☐ €10.000 - €25.000
- ☐ €25.000 - €50.000
- ☐ €50.000 - €75.000
- ☐ €75.000 - €100.000
- ☐ > €100.000

What is your nationality?

Thank you for participating