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Research Article

## Materialistic Tendency and Conspicuous Consumption Behavior: The Mediating Role of Social Media Usage

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### ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the materialistic tendencies and conspicuous consumption behaviors of consumers, especially in today's social media age. The research's goal is to determine the effect of materialistic tendencies on conspicuous consumption behavior and to investigate the role of social media usage in mediating this effect. The data were collected in this context using a prepared survey form, and 596 consumers participated in the survey during the data collection process. SPSS and AMOS programs were used to analyze the collected data. As a result of the analyses, it was discovered that the materialistic tendency had a positive and significant effect on both conspicuous consumption behavior and social media usage; it was also discovered that social media usage had a positive and significant effect on conspicuous consumption behavior. Furthermore, it was determined that social media usage has a partial mediation in the effect of materialistic tendency on conspicuous consumption behavior; in other words, a portion of the effect of materialistic tendency on conspicuous consumption behavior is realized through social media usage. Suggestions for both theory and practice were made in light of these findings.

**Keywords:** Materialistic Tendency, Conspicuous Consumption Behavior, Social Media Usage, Mediating Effect, Structural Equation Model

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## 1. Introduction

Consumption behaviors are undertaken by consumers to satisfy their desires, wants, and needs. While some of these needs are physiological, such as eating, drinking, and breathing, others are psychological, such as belonging, feeling valued, and being liked. In meeting both needs, financial considerations take precedence. While consumers act rationally in some cases, they do not act rationally in others. While consumers act rationally by considering their income and the price of the products they intend to purchase, they may also engage in irrational purchasing behavior to appear to be high-status and wealthy. Recent social, economic, and technological developments, as well as an increase in the use of mass media and the fact that brands guide consumers with their promotional activities, pave the way for irrational consumption behaviors.

Consumers who want to flaunt their financial resources will buy expensive goods and services and parade them around. This is known as conspicuous consumption, which Veblen (1899) first described in his book "The Theory of the Leisure Class." Psychological factors such as gaining prestige, belonging, making oneself admired, and proving oneself to others are at the heart of conspicuous consumption behavior (Hız, 2011). It is well known that these people have materialistic tendencies in their consumption behaviors and that these materialistic tendencies benefit them psychologically. Materialistic consumers place a higher value on material elements and prefer products with a visible display in their purchasing behavior. In other words, it is widely assumed in the literature (Podoshen, Lu Li, & Zhang, 2011; Öztek & Çengel, 2020) that the fact that consumers have materialistic tendencies helps them engage in conspicuous consumption. People with a high materialistic tendency also have a high consumption tendency, and they consume special and ostentatious products. These individuals intend to demonstrate their products to others. Social media is one of the channels that people use to show off their products. People have begun to use more social media platforms as the field of social media has advanced, increasing their visibility even further. People can use social media to share their thoughts, consumption habits, clothing and lifestyles, and so on. The motivation for using social media varies from person to person; while some people do not actively operate social media, others use it to share their photos, interact with other social media users, and differentiate themselves from others (Hazar, 2011). On these platforms, most users make show-oriented posts; similarly, it is stated that most brands and luxury products are shared to influence other users. It has been determined that active social media users are more willing to show off and generally act with motivations of imitation, display, and uniqueness (Bayuk & Öz, 2018). It is also claimed that consumers with materialistic tendencies, such as conspicuous consumption, are more likely to share on social media (Ward, Bridges, & Chitty, 2005). As a result, while studies (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011; Barzoki, Tavakol, & Vahidnia, 2014; Thoumrungroje, 2014) on conspicuous consumption, materialistic tendencies, and social media can be found separately in the literature, studies examining three variables together cannot be found. Therefore, the current study fills a gap in the literature and contributes significantly to the international literature.

The goal of this study is to discover whether consumers with materialistic tendencies engage in conspicuous consumption behavior and whether social media usage plays a mediating role between these two variables. The purpose of this study, which also provides an overview of the concept of conspicuous consumption, is to contribute to the literature by investigating the effect of materialistic tendencies on conspicuous consumption behavior and the importance of social media usage in this effect. The findings offer both a theoretical contribution to the field for researchers studying consumer behavior and practical suggestions for marketing applications.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 Conspicuous Consumption Behavior

Consumption is defined as the activity of materially and spiritually satisfying people's physiological, sociological, and psychological needs (Torlak, 2000). While low-income people engage in consumption to meet their basic physiological needs, middle- and high-income people engage in consumption for psychological reasons (Becan & Eaghanioskoui, 2019). One of the concepts that emerged at the point of satisfying psychological needs is conspicuous consumption, which has existed since ancient times and continues to be popular today. This concept, also known as status consumption, refers to people's shopping habits and the display of their prestige and status in their surroundings. Conspicuous consumption behavior has been studied in the both national and international literature (İlhan & Uğurhan, 2019; Avci, 2022; Kumar, Bagozzi, Manrai, & Manrai, 2022; Foo-Nin Ho & Jared Wong, 2023). Conspicuous consumption, according to Velov, Gojkovic, and Duric (2014), is the purchase of expensive goods and services to demonstrate one's purchasing power. This concept, first introduced to the literature by Veblen (1899), was mentioned in the book "The Theory of the Leisure Class", where it was stated that people engaged in consumption activities to show off, and thus the lower class attempted to resemble the upper class (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). Consumers have begun to show off by considering the images and symbols they provide rather than the products and services they buy, in line with changes and developments in the field of consumption. Consumers meet both their physiological and psychological needs with the products and services they purchase, and in some cases, psychological needs outnumber physiological needs. As a result, conspicuous consumption is a consumption behavior that provides psychological satisfaction to consumers. Based on conspicuous consumption behavior, psychological factors such as making oneself liked by others, proving oneself with consumption behavior, gaining prestige, and respect are effective (Hız, 2011). Conspicuous consumption occurs when a person wishes to satisfy his/her psychological needs while also influencing others. According to Arnold and Reynolds (2002), the products and services consumed give the person identity, help the person show himself/herself to others, and determine the person's social class. In terms of consumer psychology, this consumption tendency includes concepts such as brand, status, symbol, and luxury (Phillips & Back, 2011). It is well understood that there is a link between psychological factors, such as personality, values and beliefs, upbringing, and conspicuous consumption. Many studies in the field of psychology (Saad, 2007; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011) have found a link between conspicuous consumption and achieving and maintaining social status. By providing a psychological advantage to the individual in the consumption process, conspicuous consumption represents its prestigious position in the community. Conspicuous consumption activities performed for the purposes of belonging, self-realization, security, and self-respect also create a sense of achievement by sending a message of wealth (Shukla, 2018). As a result, it is possible to argue that conspicuous consumption is an essential component for consumers in today's materialistic environment.

### 2.2. Materialistic Tendency

Ward & Wackman (1971) defined materialism as people viewing money and material possessions as a means of happiness and social advancement. Belk (1987) approached this concept from a marketing standpoint, defining it as people's beliefs that the products and services they own are the sources of their happiness or unhappiness. Materialism is a sociological and psychological concept, and studies on materialism have revealed that the concepts of owning, achieving happi-

ness, and demonstrating success are at the heart of materialism. Materialistic consumers focus on the psychological benefits they will derive from the products and services they purchase, they ignore psychological benefits such as the happiness they will experience after the purchase, and they pursue more happiness and thus seek more (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Consumers with a high materialistic tendency have a higher consumption tendency and are more likely to purchase flashy and unique products (Lynn & Haris, 1997). This situation demonstrates the existence of a link between materialistic tendencies and conspicuous consumption. There are studies in the literature that investigate the relationship between materialistic tendencies and conspicuous consumption (Öztek & Çengel, 2020; Lee, Bae, & Koo, 2021). In his study, Wong (1997) emphasized that people's desire to show off their possessions is at the heart of both materialistic tendencies and conspicuous consumption behaviors. According to Velov et al. (2014), there is a positive relationship between materialism and conspicuous consumption; they stated that the material elements possessed define materialism and that people are in the habit of showing the material elements they have. Similarly, Zakaria, Wan-Ismail, and Abdul-Talib (2021) concluded that materialism and conspicuous consumption have a positive relationship. Koroğlu and Demir (2022), who investigated the effects of social status, materialism, and spending tendencies on conspicuous consumption, discovered that all three variables had positive and significant effects on conspicuous consumption.

### **2.3. Social Media Usage**

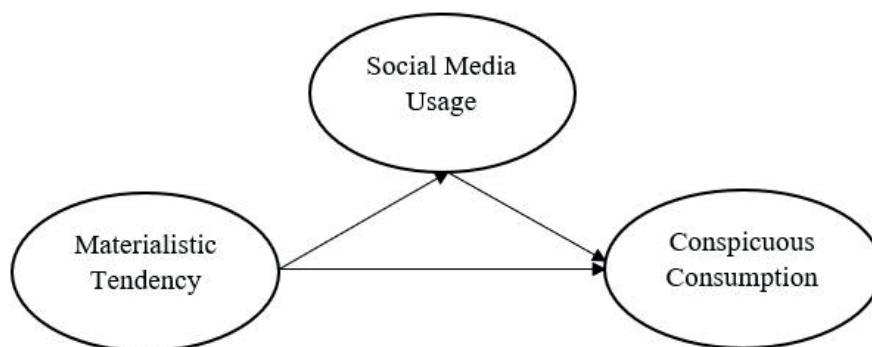
Social media platforms are web-based platforms that assist consumers in meeting their social needs, connecting with others, and creating and sharing content such as photos, messages, audio, and video (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Although there are numerous social media platforms available today, the most well-known ones in terms of content and functionality are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Consumers now want to appear and show more on social media, and Descartes' "I think therefore I am" phrase has been replaced by "I am seen, therefore I am" (Toprak et al., cited in Bayuk & Öz, 2018). According to studies, consumers on social media share positive things about themselves, and their social media usage increases their conspicuous consumption behavior (Thoumrungroje, 2014). As a result, consumers engage in conspicuous consumption to be seen more on social media, or they engage in conspicuous consumption through social media platforms. İlhan and Uğurhan (2019) developed a three-factor scale, namely consumption interest, personal image representation, and sharing satisfaction, to determine consumers' conspicuous consumption behaviors on social media. Bayuk and Öz (2018) found that people who use social media extensively are more likely to engage in show-oriented sharing and generally act with the motives of imitation, display, and uniqueness. Thoumrungroje (2014) discovered that there is a positive direct effect between social media usage and conspicuous consumption and that people who use social media engage in conspicuous consumption behavior for prestige. Taylor and Strutton (2016), on the other hand, stated that as people's social media usage grows, so does their conspicuous consumption. After researching the relationship between social media usage, self-esteem, and conspicuous consumption, Widjajanta, Senen, Masharyono, Lisnawati, and Anggraeni (2018) discovered that social media usage has a significant effect on conspicuous consumption behavior. Koçak and Uğurhan (2022) determined that young people's social media usage rates are high, and they do not directly engage in conspicuous consumption, implying that the consumers most affected by conspicuous consumption are young consumers.

There is also a link between social media usage and materialism. It has been stated that social media usage has recently increased, that social media provides consumers with the benefit of eliminating time and space boundaries, and that people view social media channels as a showcase to show themselves. As a result, it is argued that using social media will influence materialistic tendencies (Akçalı & Hacıoğlu, 2022). In their study on young people, Balıkçıoğlu and Volkan (2016) argued that social media and television communication are effective on the level of materialism. Burroughs, James, Shrum, and Aric Rindfleisch (2002) discovered that materialism and luxury consumption occur frequently in TV series, that watching these series attracts young people to products and lives, and that there is a positive relationship between the duration of watching TV series and materialistic tendency. It is also believed that there is a link between social media usage and materialistic tendencies. According to Kamal, Chu, and Pedram (2013), there is a link between consumers' social media usage and their materialistic behaviors; Chang and Zhang (2008), on the other hand, discovered that materialism influences consumers' attitudes toward social media advertisements. While Ward et al. (2005) contend that people with high materialistic tendencies are more willing to share on social media, Ismail, Nguyen, and Melewar (2018) contend that the more the social media use, the greater the tendency towards conspicuous consumption and materialism. According to these studies, there are links between materialism, conspicuous consumption, and social media.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research Model and Hypotheses

As a result of the literature review of the subject, the following research model and research hypotheses have been developed within the model's scope.



**Figure 1: Research Model**

H1: Materialistic tendency has a positive effect on conspicuous consumption behavior.

H2: Social media usage has a positive effect on conspicuous consumption behavior.

H3: Materialistic tendency has a positive effect on social media usage.

H4: Social media usage has a mediating effect on the effect of materialistic tendency on conspicuous consumption behavior.

### 3.2. Sample

The universe of this research consists of all consumers living in Samsun. The convenience sampling method, in which all consumers can participate in the research, was chosen as the sampling method. Table 1 contains descriptive information about the participants based on the frequency analysis.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

		f	%			f	%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	379	63.6	<b>Age</b>	17 and below	53	8.9
	Male	217	36.4		18-28	342	57.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100</b>		29-39	91	15.3
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	226	37.9		40-50	95	15.9
	Single	370	62.1		51-61	15	2.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Status</b>	Primary	37	6.2	<b>Job</b>	State	103	17.3
	Secondary	211	35.4		Private	100	16.8
	Bachelor	226	54.7		Self-Employment	44	7.4
	Postgraduate	22	3.7		Retired	13	2.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100</b>		Housewife	69	11.6
					Student	170	28.5
<b>Income Status</b>	4,000 TL and below	171	28.7		Unemployed	94	15.8
	4,001 TL-8,000 TL	264	44.3		Other	3	0.5
	8,001 TL-12,000 TL	109	18.3		<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100</b>
	12,001 TL-16,000 TL	28	4.7				
	16,001 TL and above	24	4				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100</b>				

Note: f: Frequency, %: Percent, TL: Turkish Lira

The survey included 596 consumers, 63.6% of whom were female and 36.4% of whom were male. 62.1% of the participants were single, 37.9% were married, and more than half (54.7%) had undergraduate degrees. In terms of profession, 17.3% worked in the public sector, 16.8% in the private sector, and 28.5% were students. The majority of participants (88.6%) are between the ages of 18 and 50, with nearly half (44.3%) earning between 4,001 and 8,000 TL. Considering the demographic information as well as the information about the social media habits of the participants, it was discovered that the majority of them (68.6%) use Instagram and that 55.9% of them spend an average of 1-3 hours per day on social media platforms.

### 3.3. Data Collection

The questionnaire technique was used to collect data for the study. Following approval from the Gümüşhane University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee, a questionnaire form was distributed to consumers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Items in the questionnaire were related to personal information and research scales (Materialistic tendency, Conspicuous consumption, and Social media usage). All scales used in the study were of

the 5-point Likert type (1 = I strongly disagree, 5 = I strongly agree). When the scale scores were compared, it was discovered that the score for each scale was very high.

**Personal Information Form:** This section asked consumers participating in the study for information about their age, gender, income level, and so on. The researcher used a personal information form with descriptive questions to determine participants' characteristics and social media usage behaviors.

**Materialistic Tendency Scale:** The study employed the Richins and Dawson (1992) materialistic tendency scale, which consists of 18 items and three dimensions. Tokmak (2019) used the relevant scale as 7 items in her study, and the current study was based on her study, with the materialistic tendency of consumers measured using these 7 items. To determine whether the data were normally distributed, a normality analysis was performed. Skewness and kurtosis values are used in normality analysis, and if these values are between +2 and -2, the data has a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The materialistic tendency scale has a skewness value of 0.000 and a kurtosis value of -0.673 and according to these results, the data has normally distributed. As a result of the factor and reliability analyses for the related scale, the materialist tendency scale was determined to be a single factor, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.844. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, the goodness-of-fit values reached [ $\chi^2$  (N = 596) = 52.736, p > .05;  $\chi^2$  /sd = 4.79, RMSEA = .08, CFI = .97, NFI = .96] were found to be in the good and acceptable goodness-of-fit ranges recommended in the literature.

**Conspicuous Consumption Behavior Scale:** The study employed Othman's (1989) conspicuous consumption behavior scale, which consists of 10 items. Tokmak (2019) used the relevant scale as 7 items in her study, and the current study was based on her study, with the conspicuous consumption behavior measured using these 7 items. The conspicuous consumption behavior scale has a skewness value of 0.156 and a kurtosis value of -0.691 and according to these results, the data has been normally distributed. As a result of the factor and reliability analyses for the related scale, the conspicuous consumption scale was determined to be a single factor, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.757. When the two items (CCB5, CCB6) were removed from the analysis during the reliability analysis, the relevant items were removed from the scale because the reliability increased even more. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, the goodness-of-fit values reached [ $\chi^2$  (N = 596) = 1.083, p > .05;  $\chi^2$  /sd = 0.54, RMSEA = .01, CFI = .99, NFI = .98] were found to be in the good and acceptable goodness-of-fit ranges recommended in the literature.

**Social Media Usage Scale:** Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, and Johnson (2013) developed a social media usage scale with 10 items, which was used in the study. The current study was based on their study, with the social media usage of consumers was measured using these 7 items. The social media usage scale has a skewness value of 0.282 and a kurtosis value of -0.695, and according to these results, the data are normally distributed. The factor and reliability analyses for the related scale revealed that the social media usage scale was a single factor, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.852. When the three items (SMU7, SMU8, SMU9) were removed from the analysis during the reliability analysis, the relevant items were removed from the scale because the reliability increased even more. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, the goodness of fit values reached [ $\chi^2$  (N = 596) = 53.793, p > .05;  $\chi^2$  /sd = 4.13, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .97, NFI = .96] were found to be in the good and acceptable goodness-of-fit ranges recommended in the literature.

Table 2 shows the research scales' reliability and validity results. The construct validity of the scales is determined using Composite Reliability (CR) and Convergent Validity (Average Vari-

ance Extracted (AVE) values. The CR value must be greater than 0.70 and the AVE value must be greater than 0.50 for the scale to be considered valid (Hair et al., 2010).

**Table 2: Reliability and Validity Results**

Variables	Items	Standardized Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
<b>Materialistic Tendency</b>	MT5	0.787	0.844	0.882	0.518
	MT2	0.748			
	MT6	0.739			
	MT4	0.735			
	MT3	0.704			
	MT1	0.691			
	MT7	0.623			
	CCB4	0.779			
	CCB7	0.740			
<b>Conspicuous Consumption Behavior</b>	CCB2	0.734	0.757	0.838	0.510
	CCB3	0.674			
	CCB1	0.635			
	SMU3	0.814			
	SMU4	0.805			
	SMU6	0.739			
<b>Social Media Usage</b>	SMU5	0.710	0.852	0.888	0.532
	SMU2	0.686			
	SMU1	0.683			
	SMU10	0.654			

### 3.4. Data Analysis

The SPSS 21 and AMOS 24 package programs were used to analyze the data collected for this study. The reliability levels of the scales used in the study were determined using Cronbach's Alpha, and the validity levels were determined using confirmatory factor analysis. The AMOS program was used to run the Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis to test the research hypotheses. The research's mediator variable structural model was tested using SEM, and the goodness-of-fit values were used to determine whether the model was compatible. To ensure that the goodness-of-fit values obtained from SEM were within the desired range, covariance connections were established by the model modifications, and the model was run again. The research hypotheses were evaluated by the model that provided the good fit values obtained after re-running the model. Because there are hypotheses about mediation relations among the research hypotheses, bootstrap values, as well as direct and indirect effects, were considered in the evaluation of mediation relations. Because it was argued that the mediation tests proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) were insufficient in traditional mediation analyses, the bootstrap technique, which produces more reliable results, was chosen.

### 4. Results

Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation, and correlation analysis results for the research variables. The mean of the participant's responses to the variables of materialistic tendency ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $S = .95$ ), conspicuous consumption behavior ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $S = .92$ ), and social media use ( $M = 2.56$ ,  $S = .92$ ) was 2.56 or higher. While the variable with the highest average is the materialistic tendency,

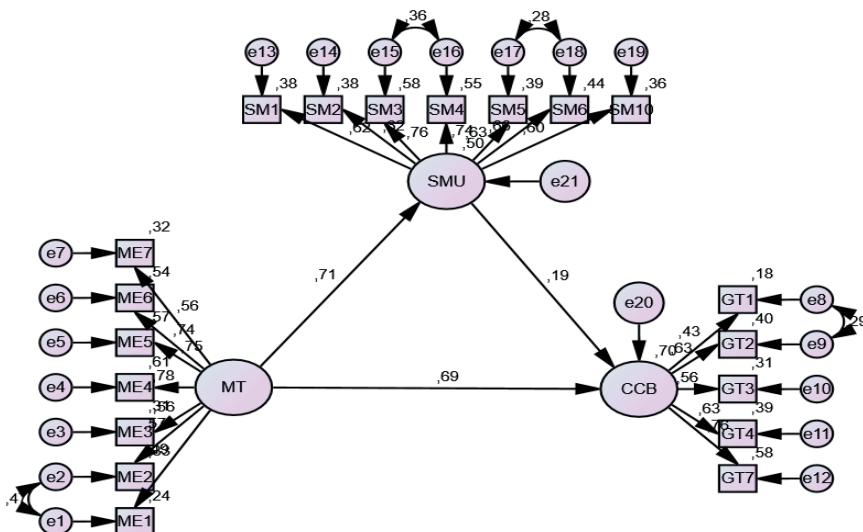
the variable with the lowest average is social media usage. When the correlation results are examined, there is a significant positive correlation between materialistic tendency and conspicuous consumption behavior variables ( $r = .67$ ,  $p < .01$ ). It was determined that there was a positive significant relationship between materialistic tendency and social media usage variables ( $r = .55$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and a positive significant relationship between conspicuous consumption behavior and social media usage variables ( $r = .55$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Materialistic tendencies and conspicuous consumption have the strongest relationship, while social media usage and conspicuous consumption behavior have the weakest. The presence of statistically significant relationships between the variables indicates that the necessary conditions for testing the research model on SEM have been met.

**Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Analysis Results of the Variables of the Study**

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Materialistic Tendency	Conspicuous Consumption Behavior	Social Media Usage
<b>Materialistic Tendency (MT)</b>	2.79	.95	1		
<b>Conspicuous Consumption Behavior (CCB)</b>	2.63	.92	.67**	1	
<b>Social Media Usage (SMU)</b>	2.56	.92	.55**	.51**	1

Note: \*\* $p < .01$

The phase of testing the research hypotheses began after the relationships between the variables were determined. Before testing the research hypotheses, the goodness-of-fit values of the research model to be tested were analyzed to determine whether the model had a good or acceptable fit. The analysis revealed that some of the model goodness-of-fit values were not among the good and acceptable fit values [ $\chi^2(41, N = 149) = 797.57$ ,  $p < .000$ , RMSEA = .08, GFI = .85, AGFI = .81, CFI = .85, NFI = .83, IFI = .86]. As a result, the proposed changes within the scope of the measurement model were examined. Covariance connections were established by the proposed modifications of the theoretical framework to bring the model goodness-of-fit values to a good and acceptable level. Modifications to the model should be made between the error terms of items belonging to the same factor, not between the observed variables of two different hidden variables. Covariance connections were established between the error terms e8-e9 of the conspicuous consumption behavior variable and the error terms e15-e16 and e17-e18 of the social media usage variable, among the error terms of the materialistic tendency variable, e1-e2 (See in Figure 2). After running the final model generated by the covariance connections, it was determined that the goodness-of-fit values obtained were within the range of good and acceptable fit values. [ $\chi^2(45, N = 145) = 526.14$ ,  $p < .000$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 3.62$ , RMSEA = .06, GFI = .90, AGFI = .88, CFI = .91, NFI = .90, IFI = .91] While the final structural model's standard path coefficients are shown in Figure 2, Table 2 shows the research hypothesis results obtained within the scope of the final model.

**Figure 2: Final Structural Model****Table 4: Hypothesis Results**

Hypotheses	Direct Impact	Indirect Effect	Mediating Effect	Bootstrap Lower Bound	Bootstrap Upper Bound	P Value	Result
H1: MT→CCB	0.692					*	Accepted
H2: SMU→CCB	0.189					**	Accepted
H3: MT→SMU	0.707					*	Accepted
H4: MT→SMU→CCB	0.134	Partial		0.069	0.240	**	Accepted

Note: \*p &lt; 0,01, \*\*p &lt; 0,05, \*\*\*p &lt; 0,10

When the results of the research hypotheses are examined, the coefficient of the path from the variable of the materialistic tendency to the variable of conspicuous consumption behavior is significant ( $\beta = .69$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and H1 was supported by this result. The path coefficient from the social media usage variable to the conspicuous consumption behavior variable was significant ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and H2 was supported by this result. The path coefficient from the materialistic tendency variable to the social media usage variable was significant ( $\beta = .70$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and it was concluded that H3 was supported by this result. According to H4, which examined the mediating role of the social media usage variable, it was determined that the social media usage variable mediated the effect between materialistic tendency and conspicuous consumption behavior. When the social media usage variable is added as a mediating variable between the materialistic tendency and the conspicuous consumption behavior, full mediation can be noted if the effect of the materialistic tendency on the conspicuous consumption behavior deteriorates, and partial mediation can be noted if there is a decrease. Furthermore, to discuss the mediation relationship, the bootstrap lower and upper bound values must be checked. The values of the resulting Bootstrap confidence intervals must be greater than or less than 0 (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Therefore, it is seen that the effect of materialistic tendency on conspicuous consumption behavior ( $\beta = .70$ ,  $p <$

.01) decreases when the social media usage variable is added as a mediator variable (Indirect effect = .13, 95% CI [.069, .240]) and the social media usage variable seems to have a partial mediating role. Accordingly, the H4 hypothesis was also supported.

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of consumers' materialistic tendencies on their conspicuous consumption behavior in today's world, where material values are becoming increasingly important, and to reveal the mediating role of social media usage in the relationship between materialistic tendencies and conspicuous consumption behavior. First, the relationships between the research variables were investigated; it was discovered that there are positive and significant relationships between materialistic tendencies, conspicuous consumption behavior, and social media usage. As a result, as consumers' materialistic tendencies increase, so do their conspicuous consumption behaviors and their social media usage; as social media use increases, so do conspicuous consumption behaviors. The positive relationship discovered within the scope of the study between materialistic tendencies, conspicuous consumption behavior, and social media usage is consistent with the findings of previous studies on the same subjects.

In keeping with the study's main goal, significant results were obtained as a result of the SEM analysis, which was used to determine both the direct and mediating effects. The first hypothesis, which sought to determine whether consumers' materialistic tendencies have a positive effect on conspicuous consumption behaviors, was supported. As a result, consumers' materialistic tendencies have a positive effect on their pretentious behavior. In other words, consumers who have strong materialistic tendencies are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption. Consumers who place a high value on material possessions tend to display the prestige they obtain from these possessions to their surroundings. According to the literature, consumers value psychological as well as physical satisfaction, so they engage in the behavior of displaying what they have and engage in consumption activities to show off. Akin (2021) discovered that materialism, which has sub-dimensions of attaining happiness, possession, and success, positively affects the conspicuous consumption tendency as a result of his research conducted within the framework of materialism, self, and conspicuous consumption. Tokmak (2019), who conducted research on university students, came to the same conclusion, that materialism has a positive effect on conspicuous consumption. In their research on Malaysian Y-generation consumers, Zakaria et al. (2021) discovered that collectivism and materialism have positive relationships with conspicuous consumption. Similarly, many studies in the literature conclude that there is a positive relationship between materialism and conspicuous consumption behavior, and the current study's findings are consistent with previous findings (Barzoki et al., 2014; Velov et al., 2014; Öztek & Çengel, 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Körögülu & Demir, 2022).

Another finding from the analyses is that consumers' social media usage has a positive and significant effect on conspicuous consumption behavior. Consumers who actively use social media have more conspicuous consumption behavior, according to this finding. Because social media is a place where people express themselves and make their presence known, their products and services are displayed through these channels, resulting in conspicuous consumption behavior. In other words, high-impact products and services are purchased to share on social media platforms and gain more interaction, and these products and services are then shared on social media accounts. Bayuk and Öz (2018) discovered that people who use social media share more ostentatiously and act with motivations of imitation, display, and uniqueness when posting these shares. According to Wai and Osman (2019), who investigated conspicuous consumption behavior in

terms of social media usage, social media usage has a significant positive impact on conspicuous consumption. Similarly, numerous studies in the literature contend that there is a link between social media and conspicuous consumption (Thoumrungroje, 2014; Widjaja et al., 2018; Bayat & Yıldırım, 2021). The current study's findings also back up the literature.

Another significant finding of the study is that the materialistic tendency has a positive effect on social media usage. According to Ward et al. (2005), people with a high materialistic tendency were more willing to share on social media. In their study of Chinese and American users, Chu, Windels, and Kamal (2016) discovered a strong relationship between materialism and social media usage. Akçali and Hacıoğlu (2022) discovered a positive significant relationship between social media and materialism as a result of their studies on the mediating effect of materialism on the effects of consumers' frequency of social media use on compulsive purchase intention. As a result, people who place a higher value on their material possessions may choose to share them on social media. This finding backs up the literature. When the mediation hypothesis's findings are examined, it is discovered that social media usage plays a partial mediating role in the effect of materialistic tendencies on conspicuous consumption behavior. This finding suggests that some of the materialistic tendency's effect on conspicuous consumption behavior is realized through social media usage. People see social media channels as a showcase to show the material items they own and value, and they engage in pretentious consumption behavior through social media as social media usage grows. Today, it is well known that luxury brands and products, in particular, are shared on social media to encourage consumers; social media is seen as a way to demonstrate conspicuous consumption behaviors to others who follow the person. Pellegrino et al. (2022) discovered that social media density has a mediating effect on the relationship between materialism and conspicuous consumption behavior in their study of 400 Thai social media users. The result obtained with the mediation hypothesis shows parallelism with the literature.

When the research results are considered in aggregate, it can be stated that they make significant contributions to the field. First and foremost, when the literature is examined, it is seen that the variables of materialistic tendency, conspicuous consumption, and social media use are investigated separately or together with different variables, but not all three variables are investigated together. Although the literature concludes that there are relationships between the three variables, no study has examined social media usage as a mediating variable within the scope of a model. This study makes an important theoretical contribution to the international field by investigating the use of social media as a mediating variable between materialistic tendencies and conspicuous consumption behavior within the framework of a model and producing meaningful results. The study has some limitations as well as important findings. First and foremost, because the data were collected using a convenience sampling method, the results cannot be generalized and include all the survey participants due to time and cost constraints. The sample constraint is that the research was only conducted on consumers in Samsun, and it is expected that similar results would be obtained if the same research was conducted in other provinces. Suggestions are also made to researchers who may conduct research on this subject based on the study's findings and limitations. It can be suggested that researchers who focus on the concept of materialism should research the same subject in the future within the framework of post-materialism and add different variables (such as waste behavior) to the existing model. The same study can be differentiated in terms of the sample, and applied to consumers in different cities or countries, and the results compared in terms of different sample groups. Furthermore, conducting research using qualitative research methods, such as interviews of subjects, is recommended.

**Ethics Committee Approval:** The questionnaire technique was used to collect data for the study. Approval from the Gümüşhane University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

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