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A Reflection on Mediating Role of Bandwagon Effect and Status Consumption in the Effect of Consumer Materialism on Purchase Intention

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the mediating role of emulation and status-oriented consumption in the effect of consumer materialism on the intention to purchase Apple products. The research method is applicable in terms of its purpose, quantitative in terms of its implementation method, and descriptive-correlational in terms of its nature and method. The statistical population of the study was all consumers over 18 years of age of the Apple brand in Yazd. The statistical sample was selected from the aforementioned individuals using the convenience sampling method. A standard questionnaire based on the 5-point Likert scale was used to collect research data. The content validity of the tool was confirmed by experts and Cronbach's alpha method and composite reliability were used to measure the reliability of the tool. By distributing the questionnaire, the validity of the tool was measured with three methods: construct validity (external model), convergent validity (AVE), and divergent validity. The AVE value for all variables should be greater than 0.5. SPSS and PLS software were used to analyze the data. The research findings show that consumer materialism does not have a direct positive and significant effect on Apple brand consumers' purchase intention. However, the mediating role of status-oriented consumption and emulation in the relationship between materialism and purchase intention was confirmed.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Consumer materialism is one of the key variables in consumer behavior research. Consumer materialism is defined as a system of deep beliefs and values on the importance of having and obtaining material goods; such that materialistic consumers place ownership and collection of goods at the center of their lives and see it as a way to achieve personal satisfaction, happiness, and social identity (Shammout et al., 2022). Consumer materialism can be described as a value-based orientation in which material goods and the consequences of owning them are the main criteria for measuring one's success, happiness, and status in society; such consumers tend to exhibit more impulsive buying behaviors, dependence on goods, and status competition (Štefko et al., 2025). Studies show that the motivation to purchase luxury brands has increased significantly for Asian consumers. Cultural values have been shown to influence consumer behavior in many studies. Establishing the relationship between cultural values and the motivation to consume luxury goods is useful for luxury goods marketers. Materialism seems to be one of the important factors affecting the intention to purchase luxury goods (Shammout et al., 2022.) Status-oriented consumption, the tendency to wear expensive and flashy clothes, the tendency to consume expensive goods, the display of honors, and the desire to show off one's lineage are among the characteristics of the affluent class of societies (Safari, 2024). Other behavioral characteristics of this class include: avoiding productive and physical work, pretending to be comfortable, tendency towards conservatism to make oneself appear respectable, tendency to show off one's lineage, longevity, and a competitive and predatory nature. Along with competitive methods, this class is always busy with consumption, extravagance, and ostentatious self-display to show off their honors in order to vanquish others in the battlefield. Another type of consumption considered in this study is the display or show-off consumption, the main purpose of which is to attract the attention of others and differentiate themselves from others, which is done with the emulation (Yang et al., 2025). In Iran, consumer behavior patterns have undergone significant changes in recent years and have tended towards consumerism, which reveals the need for investigation and behaviorism more than ever. In describing the new wave of consumerism in the last few years, we can point to issues such as oil revenues (and as a result, the uncontrolled import of final consumer goods), the targeting of subsidies (the emergence of new consumer classes and the creation of a fixed monthly income for a part of society), the rejuvenation of society, etc. In light of the above explanations, the main issue of this research is the effect of consumer materialism on purchase intention with regard to the mediating role of the variables of emulation and status-oriented consumption among Apple brand consumers in Yazd.

Theoretical foundations

Consumer materialism

Consumer materialism is a personal goal that leads individuals to have a greater commitment to buying and owning material goods. On the other hand, materialism is an individual's attachment to material things and worldly possessions to achieve their desires. Materialists consider the acquisition of goods as their personal goal, which affects their lifestyle (farhodi et al., 2025).

Status-oriented consumption

Status-oriented consumption refers to a pattern of consumer behavior in which individuals choose goods and brands to display their social status, success, and distinction from others. Contemporary research considers status-oriented consumption beyond mere display consumption and analyzes it as a multidimensional construct related to social identity, self-

concept, and symbolic brand values (Han et al., 2022). In today's markets, premium technology brands such as Apple have provided a suitable platform for the emergence of status-oriented consumption due to their global reputation, high price, and distinctive design. Prestige-seeking motives are even stronger predictors of purchase intention for prestige brands compared to functional factors such as perceived quality (Han et al., 2022).

Emulation

Emulation refers to a situation where an individual desires to have similar expensive objects or goods or to do relatively similar tasks and activities that his friends or those around him do; because the individual is worried about being considered less important than others in social terms. **Emulation** has caused consumers to focus on social and emotional needs in addition to functional needs, and emulation-based shopping is often an irrational purchase and is made to define the identity of the users by the product (Sojoodi, 2024). Štefko et al. (2025) examined the "Relationship between materialism, consumer ethnocentrism and compulsive shopping in the Slovak market". The results showed that higher levels of materialism are directly related to higher levels of compulsive shopping; but the mediating role of ethnocentrism between materialism and compulsive shopping was not confirmed. Barbieri et al. (2025) investigated the "Relationship between consumer materialism and impulse buying". The study included a systematic review and meta-analysis, and scientific literature was reviewed until March 2024. In total, 55 studies were selected according to the inclusion criteria. The results showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between impulse buying and all dimensions of materialism. Age and gender did not play a significant role in moderating the relationship. Şen Doğan (2025) investigated the "Effect of materialism on impulse buying through the Diderot effect among 416 adult consumers in Turkey in digital environments". The results showed that materialism increases the Diderot effect. The Diderot effect strengthens impulse buying. Materialism affects impulse buying both directly and indirectly through the Diderot effect.

Research Methodology

This study is applicable in terms of purpose, and descriptive-correlational in terms of method. The statistical population of the study is all consumers of the Apple brand over 18 years of age in Yazd. To collect data, a researcher-made questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale was used. The findings from the Cronbach's alpha test and composite reliability to measure the reliability of the research tool are reported in Table 2. To examine the validity of the tool, content validity (expert opinion survey) was used and its validity was confirmed. Then, by distributing the questionnaire, the validity of the tool was measured with three methods: construct validity (external model), convergent validity (AVE), and divergent validity. The AVE value for all research variables must be greater than 0.5. In order to test the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling was used in the context of smart pls2 statistical software.

Findings

The variables of status-oriented consumption and emulative behavior play a full mediating role in the effect of consumer materialism on purchase intention, and the findings also showed that consumer materialism affects the purchase intention of Apple brand consumers in Yazd through the variables of status-oriented consumption and emulative behavior.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results showed that the direct effect of consumer materialism on purchase intention is not significant. This is consistent with the findings of Shammout et al. (2022) which concluded

that the direct relationship between materialism and the intention to purchase luxury goods of Jordanian consumers is not significant. In other words, they found that Jordanian consumers purchase luxury goods more to maintain their social status and to follow the current trends in their social groups. Another result indicated that consumer materialism has a significant and direct effect on status-oriented consumption. This finding is consistent with the findings of Dinh & Lee (2024) who found that exposure to social media content and influencers activates social comparison processes and strengthens materialistic tendencies and ultimately the tendency to status-oriented consumption (Dinh & Lee, 2024). The results showed that consumer materialism has a significant effect on consumers' purchase intention through the mediation of status-oriented consumption. The result of this study is consistent with Balabanis & Stathopoulou (2021) who found that materialistic consumers are more inclined to make status-oriented purchases. This indicates that consumers with high materialistic values are more inclined to consume for prestige and status and are likely to be driven to purchase under the influence of the need for uniqueness (Balabanis & Stathopoulou, 2021). Materialists tend to buy symbolic goods to restore or enhance their social image, and this status-oriented behavior can lead to purchase intention (especially for luxury or symbolic goods) (Dinh & Lee, 2024). The results showed that consumer materialism has a significant effect on consumers' purchase intention through the mediation of mediatory and emulation. The result of this study was consistent with the study of Shammout et al, (2022). It showed that materialism in societies with higher percentages of social attitudes can be described as traditions and norms within a cultural environment where interpersonal influences are strong and people tend to conform to others until materialism becomes their social norm (Shammout et al., 2022).

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial, personal, professional, or institutional conflicts of interest relevant to this work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Statement

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, writing, or editing of this manuscript.

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Ethics Approval

All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.