Conspicuous consumption in Christmas gifts’ shopping

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Why should we study conspicuous consumption?

The study of consumption has gained broader and wider outlines within social science research since the 80’s (Assimos et al., 2019).

That said, it is essential to understand conspicuous consumption, which is associated with the symbolic and visible purchase, possession and use of products and services with the motivation to communicate a distinct self-image to others (Chaudhury, Mazumdar and Ghoshal, 2011). This construct implies exhibition and ostentation, requiring the presence of others (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004). Although consumption patterns have changed, the behavior of showing possession of products to impress those around us has remained the same for centuries, and those who value this approach are sometimes rewarded with status and honor (Chaudhury, Mazumdar and Ghoshal, 2011).

Aim

The study aims to investigate, through social psychology, the influencing factors of conspicuous buying at Christmas, in particular purchases made with the aim of acquiring goods to offer to others. As specific objectives, we have:

⇒ Identify factors that may influence conspicuous behaviors in the portuguese population
⇒ Analyze the relation between materialism and conspicuous consumption in Portugal.

Methodology

This is a descriptive and correlational study, using a quantitative approach. The data was collected through the application of an online questionnaire composed by two scales: Materialism (Ponchio, Aranha and Todd, 2007) and Conspicuous consumption orientation (Chaudhury, Mazumdar and Ghoshal, 2011) - this adapted for Christmas gifts’ shopping. All items were answered in a 7 points’ scale. In the end, some sociodemographic issues (such as age, sex, residence, marital status, scolarity or occupation) were included.

Participants

It was possible to count with 282 portuguese (Females = 60.64% and Males = 39.01%) participants, aged between 18 and 78 years (M = 40.80; SD = 13.97). The majority of the sample is married or in a stable relationship (50.18%), with a bachelor's or graduate degree (34.04%), works for others (60.99%) and considers belonging to the middle class (56.74%).

Preliminary results

In the present sample, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were acceptable (Materialism = .89 and Conspicuous consumption orientation = .86).

Initially, in order to analyze the psychometric characteristics of the conspicuous consumption scale previously adapted to the analyzed context, we applied a factor analysis in main components, with varimax rotation on the collected data. We eliminated item CC1 (When I buy an expensive gift, it says something to the people around me / Quando compre uma prenda cara, algo é revelado para as pessoas ao meu redor) and item CC9 (When I buy a gift, I show to others that I am sophisticated / Ao comprar uma prenda, mostro aos outros que sou sofisticado(a) for presenting double saturation. Therefore, the final factorial structure of this scale is presented below.

Looking for uniqueness

| CC3. I buy an interesting and un-common version of a gift to show others that I have an original taste. | CC3. Compro uma versão interessante e incomum de uma prenda para mostrar aos outros que tenho um gosto original. |
| CC4. When buying a gift, others wish they could match my eyes for beauty and taste. | CC4. Compro uma prenda, os outros gostariam de possuir a minha percepção para a beleza e bom gosto. |
| CC5. I often prefer to buy more interesting versions of ordinary gifts because I want to show others that I enjoy being original. | CC5. Compro uma versão único, mostro aos meus amigos que sou diferente. |
| CC6. I prefer to buy top-of-the-line gifts. | CC6. Prefiro comprar versões mais interessantes de prenblas que tenho dinheiro. |
| CC7. I buy expensive gifts to create my own style that everyone admires. | CC7. Compro prenblas caras para criar um estilo próprio que todos admiram. |

Looking for status

| CC2. I buy some gifts because I want to show others that I am wealthy. | CC2. Compro algumas prenblas porque eu quero mostrar aos outros que tenho dinheiro. |
| CC6. I prefer to buy top-of-the-line gifts. | CC6. Prefiro comprar versões mais interessantes de prenblas que tenho dinheiro. |
| CC7. I buy expensive gifts to create my own style that everyone admires. | CC7. Compro prenblas caras para criar um estilo próprio que todos admiram. |

Table 1—Dimensions of the conspicuous consumption scale for Christmas gifts

The data will be analyzed using the SPSS 25 statistical software. It is considered that the results will be pertinent and relevant for a better understanding of the topic.

Bibliographic references