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Impact of Social Media Advertisement And Influencers on Compulsive Buying Mediated By Materialism: The Moderating Role of Narcissism

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to: (1) examine the effect of social media advertisement and influencers on Compulsive buying, (2) investigate the role of materialism as a mediator and narcissism as a moderator on the relationship between social media advertisement and influencers on Compulsive Buying.

Design/methodology/approach – The study is based on 300 responses. Data of the responses was used for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. The study uses Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test all hypotheses.

Findings – The study revealed insignificant relationships between social media advertisements and influencers, and compulsive buying. The findings provided evidence that materialism mediates the relationship between social media advertisements and compulsive buying. In contrast, materialism does not mediate the relationship between social media influencers and compulsive buying. The study failed to reveal a moderating role of narcissism on the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying.

Research implications – Recommendations for marketing managers, scholars, and policymakers have been given adopting the marketing orientation that puts the consumers' satisfaction of needs and wants first, based on the researchers' faith that compulsive buying is not a virtue for consumers by all means.

Originality/value – This paper investigates one of the most pressing issues regarding consumer behaviour in social media, consumer traits, and compulsive buying.

Keywords: Social Media, Influencers, Compulsive Buying, Materialism, Narcissism

1. Introduction

Factors that affect compulsive buying have been receiving attractions of marketing managers, scholars, policymakers who are really interested in consumer behaviour. Compulsive buying is defined as a chronic aberrant type of shopping and spending depicted by an excessive, uncontrolled, and persistent need to buy regardless of the consequences (Lee et al., 2016). Extant studies found that consumer materialism, social media influencers and advertisement, and consumer's narcissism are important factors that could motivate consumers to buy compulsively (Jameel et al., 2024; Sontawinpongsai et al., 2022).

In the digitalization era, social media influencers and advertisements impact people's self-actualization and could experience less satisfied or unpleasant consumers. Unlike traditional marketing, social media marketing attracts various market segments such as age, gender, and culture to satisfy their wants and desires via various platforms. Social media users spent on average 151 minutes per day in 2023 (Statista, 2024). Besides, Zote (2019) indicates that 88 percent of marketing managers use social media advertisements to persuade consumers with the firms' products and services, which may have a significant impact on consumers' behaviours, and may lead to compulsive buying.

Materialism has a diverse consequence on human's attitudes and may have an impact on compulsive shopping. Therefore, materialistic consumers experience higher consumption based on their social status. The higher people perceive their social class, the more they want status and material success (Wang et al., 2020). Narcissism as another factor that may play a role in compulsive buying is defined as a personality trait characterized by self-centred, dominant and manipulative behaviour (Foster and Campbell 2007). However, few studies examined the effect of materialism and narcissism on the association between social media and compulsive buying, and there is less studies on the role of social media, materialism, and narcissism on compulsive buying in Saudi Arabia, despite a significant research on these factors among youngsters in industrialized countries.



Saudi Arabia has unique characteristics among developing countries; the proportions of youth and children below the age of 34 represented 67 percent of total population in 2020 (General Authority for Statistics, 2020), with middle-class income and high consumers. These characteristics may derive citizens to purchase more products and services. Thus, Saudi Arabia provides a good environment to motivate scholars to examine the impact of consumer narcissism and materialism on the relationships between social media advertisement and influencers and consumers' compulsive buying behaviour.

The current study contributes to previous studies in five ways: First, examining the impact of social media influencers on compulsive buying. Second, testing the mediating role of materialism on the relationship between social media influencers and compulsive buying. Third, investigating the impact of social media advertisements on compulsive buying. Fourth, measuring the mediating role of materialism on the relationship between social media advertisements and compulsive buying. Fifth, exploring the moderating effect of narcissism on the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying. The study is an extension of previous research on the factors that influence compulsive buying but in different market (Saudi Arabia). The findings and recommendations may help policymakers and businesses in Saudi Arabia in developing the right trade and marketing strategies, considering both trade regulations and businesses code of conduct.

2. Literature Review and Development of Hypotheses

2.1 Social media advertisements and compulsive buying

Users of social media would be more accessible to obtain information to compare the products' prices, features, and characteristics with other alternatives (Verduyn et al., 2020). Firms spend more on advertisements to attract customers toward their products and services (Nuangjamnong, 2022). They largely rely on advertisements through social media platforms that aid customers to gather new information about products and services (Jameel et al, 2024). Mehta (2000) showed a positive relationship between social media advertisements and buying intention. Consumers respond positively to actions by firms' reply to negative social media postings where the replies are addressed individually rather than generic postings, protecting brand reputation and trust (Lappeman et al., 2018)

Yüksel & Eroğlu (2015) tested how reviews on social media will impact on compulsive buying attributes; findings confirm that compulsive buying declines due to unfavourable opinions, beliefs, and expressions. Moreover, Corcoran & Stephane (2009) indicated that social media enhance buyers to purchase more and more of luxury products. Similarly, He et al. (2018) found that consumers who rely on using internet in buying their products and services have tendency to purchase more from online marketing rather than retail stores. Jameel et al. (2024) revealed that young Saudi Arabian individuals who use social media sites more obsessively have more compulsive buying urges. This relationship could be attributed to the "impulse-inducing" features of social media sites, such as the continual exposure to online marketing and the ease of online purchases. Thus, consumers would be more likely to buy products or services if they were certain that the commercials provide them with accurate information they need to make purchase decisions (Lee and Kim, 2020; Kshatriya & Shaavvh, 2023). Therefore, the first hypothesis is presented as follows:

H1: Social media advertisements have a statistically significant positive relationship with compulsive buying.

2.2 Social media influencers and compulsive buying

Influencer marketing has grown in popularity over the last few years (Chan, 2022). A social media influencer (SMI) is a regular internet user with a sizable number of followers on social media whose opinions, knowledge and reputation are respected by their audiences, and who has the ability, above the average individuals, to inform, entertain, and influence attitudes and behaviors (De Veirman et al., 2017). Social media influencers affect customers' emotions and feelings which raise compulsive buying behaviour (Liu et al., 2023). Pemberton (2016) has found that 84% of millennials admitted that their purchasing decisions being influenced by user-generated content from strangers or marketing mavens (i.e. SMIs).

Hanaysha (2022) found that social media influencers contain a beneficial influence on compulsive buying behaviours. Therefore, social media reach more consumers and increase their shopping potentials (Kim and Ko, 2012; Zhang et al., 2017). Masuda et al. (2022) go beyond general impacts of compulsive buying behaviours to analyse the features of purchasing intention and revealed that personality traits have a great influence on buying behaviours. Saima and Khan (2020) documented that the credibility of social media influencers affects consumer behaviours. Lee and Kim (2020) recognized the impact of reputation and credibility of the influencer on the consumer behaviour. Furthermore, Reeves et al. (2012) found that high credible information celebrity worship lead consumers to compulsive buying. Therefore, the second hypothesis is presented as follows:

H2: Social media influencers have a statistically significant positive relationship with compulsive buying.



2.3 Social media advertisements, materialism, and compulsive buying

Social media could impact materialism (Ozimek et al., 2024). Moreover, Masood (2016) found that a higher materialism was achieved between adults via social media. He et al. (2018) documented that social media platforms may affect negatively on compulsive buyers by accessing all products and services easily. However, Xu and Tan (2012) stated that excessive use of social media will lead to more stress, loneliness, or depression for existing customers. In this regard, Israelashvili et al. (2011) found that Young adult who use social media sites experience identity confusion due to exposure to several identities. They may then turn to material consumerism and obsessive shopping to deal with their divided identities (Dittmar et al., 2014). In other words, consumers have high preferences toward luxury products to indicate their economic condition, income, and abilities (Davidson et al., 2019). At the same time, materialism is one of the causes on compulsive buying (Reeves et al., 2012). Jameel et al. (2024) argued that television advertisements and the use of social media sites positively related to compulsive shopping behaviour among university students, and materialism mediated the relationship between television advertisements and social media sites. Therefore, the third hypothesis is presented as follows:

H3: Materialism mediates the relationship between social media advertisements and compulsive buying.

2.4 Social media influencers, materialism and compulsive buying

Previous studies focused on investigating the association between materialism and level of satisfaction during the purchasing process (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). Troizi & Tsourvakas (2020) documented that social media users respond on real-time for influencers' patterns as well as follow their purchase behaviour. Social media influencers have a great influence on both materialism and compulsive buying behaviour (Islam et al., 2018). For example, celebrities' endorsements include photographs of themselves wearing the clothing they promote. As a result, followers may be enticed to purchase the same clothing in an attempt to emulate the celebrity's endorsement's appearance (Ki & Kim, 2019).

A positive correlation between materialism and individuals' attraction to celebrities and athletes was found (Green et al., 2014). Additionally, a study conducted by Lou and Kim (2019) discovered that materialism encourages social comparisons among followers, which results in purchase intention. Dinh & Lee (2021) argued that through social media influencers, consumers usually compare their material possessions and significant items with others to identify whether these products are material or not.

As a result, customers purchase products not only for utilitarian purposes, but also as material symbols. Moreover, Zheng et al. (2018) figured out that users would prefer to purchase the products that celebrities have been bought regularly. Social media influenced the amount of materialistic wants possessed by consumers and the higher their levels of materialism, the more likely they are to make impulsive buying decisions (Patial et al., 2024). Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is presented as follows:

H4: Materialism mediates the relationship between social media influencers and compulsive buying.

2.5 Materialism and compulsive buying

Materialism is defined as "the interest in the ownership and acquisition of material objects in order to achieve a primary life goal or desired condition" Shammout et al. (2022). Extant studies found a positive link between materialism and compulsive buying (Pradhan et al., 2018; Ruvio et al., 2014; Khare 2014). Dittmar et al. (2014) argued that the significant linkage between materialism and compulsive buying is justified by the material objects that lead consumers to compulsive purchase.

Dittmar (2005) explained that consumers with high materialistic goal are more likely to be obsessive in buying products or services. Similarly, Browne & Kaldenberg (1997) outlined that buyers are really concerned to acquire material products to express more about their standard of livings. Thus, materialistic people are more willing to use money, for lavish items, and more likely to be compulsive buyers (Nga et al., 2011; Podoshen and Andrzejewski, 2012). Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is presented as follows:

H5: Materialism has a statistically significant positive relationship with compulsive buying.

2.6 Narcissism as a moderator

Narcissism has been found to predict real-world compulsive buying (Pilch, 2017). Narcissism is primarily characterized by egotistical self-perceptions and behaviour (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). There is an evidence that narcissism is linked to both compulsive and materialistic tendencies. For instance, scholars demonstrated a correlation between narcissism and economic aspirations (i.e., having a high standard of living), which supports the correlation between narcissism and materialism (Kasser & Ryan, 1996).



Current theories have found a relationship between narcissism and materialism. Materialism of people who are narcissists relatively stems from a focus on achieving and displaying their status (Campbell & Foster, 2007). For that reason, narcissists were found to have more Facebook friends and actively seek to expand them (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008) and are more likely to publish self-promoting content, notably self-focused photographs or "selfies" (Bergman et al., 2011). Narcissists are also more inclined to post about their accomplishments on social media (Marshallet et al., 2015).

Vazire and Funder (2006) have suggested that narcissism and compulsive buying are related. At the same time, Durose (2020) indicates that narcissism is one of the main factors engaged in materialism, which in turn leads to compulsive buying (Patial et al., 2024). Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is presented as follows:

H6: Narcissism moderates the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying.

3. Research Conceptual Model

Figure (1) displays the study's constructs their hypothesized relationships:

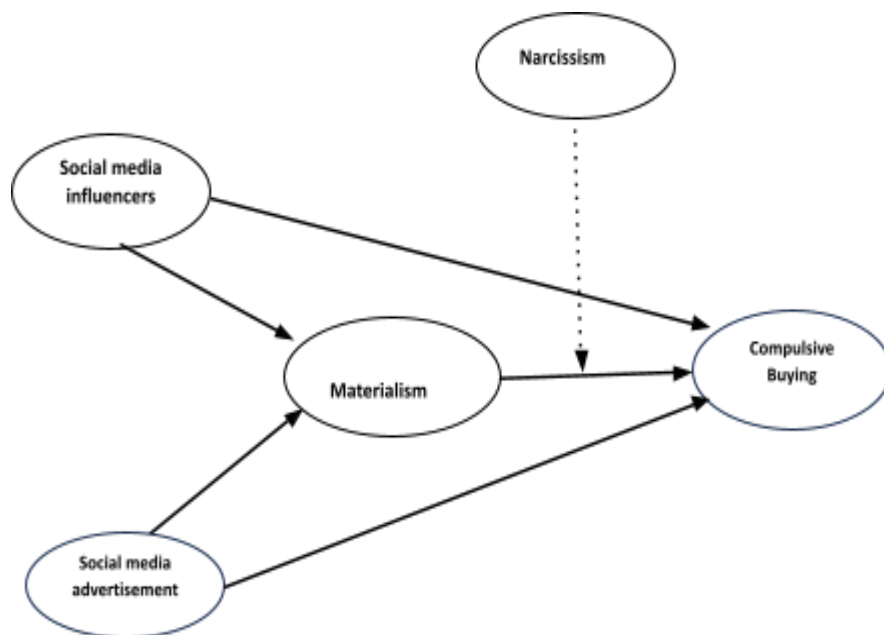


Figure (1): Conceptual model

4. Research Methodology

This research aims to determine how social media influencers and advertisement influence compulsive buying with the possible mediating impact of materialism as well as the moderating role of narcissism on the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying. The research is empirical and descriptive. research data was collected using an online survey to residents in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with a total of 300 participants. Likewise, this research uses a cross-section scheme to collect data from participants. the study uses a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach for hypotheses testing. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is done first to assess the appropriateness of the measurement model.

4.1 Measurement of variables

The study's questionnaire was modified based on scales used in previous studies (Appendix). Materialism was measured utilizing eight items used by Sirgy et al. (1998). The independent variable social media advertisements and social media influencers was measured employing proxy of Aragoncillo and Orus (2018). The dependent variable, compulsive buying, was measured using five items developed by Edwards (1992) and Edwards (1993). Narcissism is measured utilizing a scale used by Hendin and Cheek (1997). All variables were assessed by asking participants to describe how much they agree or disagree with certain statements using A five-point Likert scale to score all the items.

4.2 Sampling framework and data collection

A snowball sample was used as a non-probability sampling method because of the dispersed population. Data was collected using an online survey using survey Monkey. 300 complete responses were received. The data of these responses were used for the descriptive statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

4.3 Statistical analysis methods

Two statistical tools were applied to analyze the collected research data: Structural equation modeling (SEM) using Smart PLS software v4 and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). PLS-SEM is a helpful analysis tool that allows researchers to investigate the interrelationship the study variables (Hair et al., 2019). However, the statistical analysis was conducted through several stages, starting with descriptive analysis, measurement and structural model, and hypothesis testing.

5. Research Findings

5.1 Sample characteristics

Table (1) outlines the sample characteristics:

Table (1): Sample characteristics

Personal Information		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	146	48.7
	Female	154	51.3
Age	20-29	169	56.3
	30-39	64	21.3
	40-49	37	12.3
	More than 49	30	10.0
Educational level	Secondary	30	10.0
	Bachelor	202	67.3
	Master	45	15.0
	PhD	23	7.7
Nationality	Saudi	264	88
	Non-Saudi	36	12
Income	Less than 10000	60	20.0
	10000 -20000	162	54.0
	21000-30000	34	11.3
	31000-40000	19	6.3
	More than 40000	25	8.3
Total		300	100%

Table (1) illustrates the sample characteristics in terms of demographic categories, including gender, age, educational level, nationality, and income. Among the 300 complete responses, 48.7% were males and 51.3% were females. The majority of the sample (56.3%) were between 20 and 29 years old. Regarding educational level, 67.3% have a bachelor's, and 22.7% have a master's and PhD degree. The majority of the sample respondents (88%) were Saudi and 12% were non-Saudi. 54% of the sample earns between S.R 10,000 and 20,000. It is apparent that young participants, under the age of 30, represent 56 percent of all responses. The main reasons for that are; First, individuals in this age range are among the most avid users of social media

platforms. As a result, youngsters are more exposed to marketing on these platforms, making it an important topic to investigate. Second, social media marketing has a considerable impact on consumer behaviour, especially among younger groups.

5.2 Measurement model assessment

The first analysis is checking the measurement model, evaluating the scale's reliability and validity. This stage includes several tests, including Cronbach's α to check the internal consistency with a threshold value ($\alpha > .60$), composite reliability (CR>.70), convergent validity through Average Variance Extracted (AVE>.50), and discriminant validity through factor loading (loading > .60) (Hair et al., 2014; Sarstedt et al., 2022). The findings in Table (2) illustrate that all criteria are achieved and exceeded the threshold value for each scale after removing 5 items form Narcissism scale and 2 items from materialism scale, indicating adequate reliability and validity with the remaining items of the scales.

Table (2): Result of Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Factor loading	CR	Cronbach's α	AVE
Social media advertisements	SMA1	0.801	0.861	0.852	0.774
	SMA2	0.906			
	SMA3	0.927			
Social media influencers	SMI1	0.847	0.855	0.849	0.689
	SMI2	0.825			
	SMI3	0.871			
	SMI4	0.775			
Materialism	Mat1	0.809	0.914	0.912	0.695
	Mat2	0.744			
	Mat3	0.852			
	Mat4	0.827			
	Mat5	0.904			
	Mat6	0.857			
compulsive buying behaviour	CB1	0.876	0.902	0.899	0.714
	CB2	0.830			
	CB3	0.861			
	CB4	0.853			
	CB5	0.802			
Narcissism	NS1	0.809	0.891	0.878	0.672
	NS2	0.800			
	NS3	0.857			
	NS4	0.781			
	NS5	0.849			

5.3 Hypotheses testing



The research hypotheses were tested using the bootstrapping method in smart PLS software, with a 5000 resample, and the β coefficient value was calculated. Table (3) and Figure (2) illustrate the hypothesis testing results.

Table (3): Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T statistics	P values	Decision
H1: Social media advertisements -> compulsive buying	0.048	0.066	0.733	0.464	Not Supported
H2: Social media influencers -> compulsive buying	0.013	0.167	0.075	0.940	Not Supported
H3: Social media advertisements -> Materialism -> compulsive buying	0.32	0.065	4.918	0.000	Supported
H4: Social media influencers -> Materialism -> compulsive buying	0.085	0.067	1.264	0.206	Not Supported
H5: Materialism -> compulsive buying	0.847	0.02	41.371	0.000	Supported
H6: Narcissism x Materialism -> compulsive buying	0.012	0.022	0.531	0.595	Not Supported

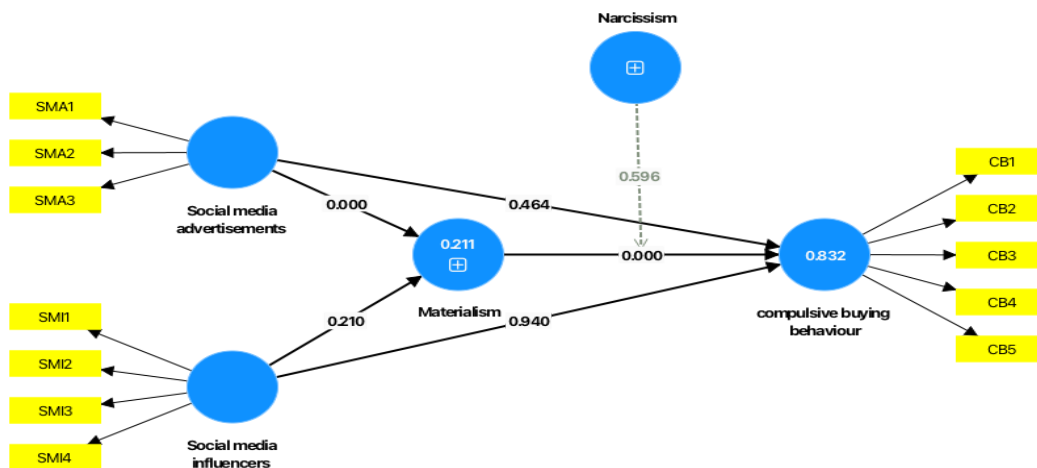


Figure (2): Path model

H1 predicted that social media advertisements positively and directly impact compulsive buying behavior. The result provides evidence against this prediction ($\beta = 0.048, p > .01$). Thus, H1 is not supported. Similarly, H2 predicted that social media influencers positively and directly impact compulsive buying. The outcome fails to confirm this prediction ($\beta = 0.013, p > .01$). Thus, H2 is not supported.

With respect to the mediation role of materialism, the findings provide evidence that materialism mediates the relationship between social media advertisements and compulsive buying ($\beta = 0.32, p < .01$). In contrast, materialism does not mediate the relationship between social media influencers and compulsive buying ($\beta = 0.085, p > .01$). Thus, H3 is supported, and H4 is not supported respectively. H5 predicted that materialism positively and directly impacts compulsive buying. The result confirms this prediction ($\beta = 0.847, p < .01$). Thus, H5 is supported. Finally, the results failed to provide evidence regarding the moderation role of narcissism on the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying ($\beta = 0.012, p > .01$). Thus, H6 is not supported.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The current study assessed the association among social media advertisement, influencers, materialism, narcissism and compulsive buying in Saudi Arabia. The finding revealed that materialism mediates the relationship between social media advertisements and compulsive buying. These findings may offer useful insights for knowing the factors that affect behaviour of the Saudi Arabian markets and shoppers. However, no one has specifically looked into the direct impact of social media advertisements and social media influencers on compulsive buying behaviour in Saudi Arabia with materialism as a mediating factor and narcissism as moderating factor; current study bridged this gap.

The findings revealed that social media advertisements have insignificant relationship with compulsive buying. This finding contradicts earlier research that repeatedly demonstrated a connection between social media advertisements and compulsive purchase (Mehta, 2000; Jameel et al., 2024), giving an indication that the residents in Saudi Arabia do not respond actively to social media ads. Similarly, social media influencers have an insignificant relationship with compulsive buying. This is inconsistent with Hanaysha (2022) who figured out that social media influencers contain a beneficial influence on compulsive buying. These results could be explained by answering a question concerning the extent to which consumers in Saudi Arabia evaluate the credibility of what is said on social media. The study results give an indication that consumers do not trust or believe the promotion messages done by firms through advertisements or influencers on social media. This may be attributed to the high level of experience of Saudi residents with social media.

In terms of the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying as well as the mediation role of materialism on the relationship between social media advertisements and influences, and compulsive buying. The findings confirm that materialism mediates the relationship between social media advertisements and compulsive buying, but not the relationship between social media influencers and compulsive buying. This means that materialistic consumers are influenced by social media advertisements, which is designed specifically to attract this trait of personality. Influencers may not have enough psychological expertise to convince materialistic consumers. Thus, materialism could not be a mediator between social media influencer and compulsive buying. However, this result contradicts previous research by Green et al. (2014) that found a positive correlation between materialism and individuals' attraction to celebrities and athletes.

With respect to the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying, the study found statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables. This result matches the findings of other studies that found significant linkage between materialism and compulsive buying, justifying it by the material objects that lead consumers to compulsive purchase (Pradhan et al., 2018; Ruvio et al., 2014; Khare 2014; Dittmar et al., 2014). Dittmar (2005) explained that consumers with high materialistic goal are more likely to be obsessive in buying products or services. Browne & Kaldenberg (1997) outlined that buyers are really concerned to acquire material products to express more about their standard of livings. Thus, materialistic people are more willing to use money, for lavish items, and more likely to be compulsive consumers (Nga et al., 2011; Podoshen and Andrzejewski, 2012).

Regarding the moderating effect of narcissism on the relationship between materialism and Compulsive buying, the results failed to provide evidence regarding the moderation role on this relationship. These results contradict the findings by Vazire and Funder (2006) and Ridgway et al. (2008). This may be attributed to the culture in Saudi Arabia where people are raised to have the unselfishness, modest and forgiveness values in their day-to-day behaviour, in such culture, narcissism cannot be a common value in Saudi Arabia. Hence, narcissism cannot play a role in purchase decisions.

7. Implications

This research contributes to the body of knowledge that currently exists. First, by testing and validating the variables of compulsive buying behaviour in Saudi Arabia. The study broadens a theoretical framework regarding the relationship between social media and compulsive buying. The findings of this research provide support to some reasons of compulsive buying, which covers a variety of sociocultural factors. The research findings demonstrated that materialism received a great attention in Saudi Arabia and could reshape that association between social media advertisements and compulsive buying. This empirical research clarifies these points. It demonstrates that people in Saudi Arabia are primarily affected by materialism towards compulsive buying due to social media advertisements.

Consumer's compulsive buying is a bad behaviour that may affect negatively consumer budget and psychology. Parallel to the marketing concept and adopting consumers' stance, the research findings give policymakers with further advice for reducing early youth desire for material items. The youth in Saudi Arabia are already influenced by consumerism. Governments should develop an educational programme for Saudi citizens to create a positive buyer attitude and discourage consumerism and obsessive purchasing. Activation



of the regulations and associations that protect consumers is important to encourage the adoption of the marketing orientation concept in businesses' code of conducts.

For scholars, one of the most notable findings is that materialism has a significant influence on compulsive buying in the Saudi context, providing a new insight for researchers to investigate in depth the factors that may impact materialism in developing or developed countries. Future research may be done to investigate the impact of materialism on consumer satisfaction. It may be a good trait for marketers, but is it also a trait that the consumer himself appreciates and considers as a virtue? It may not be so.

For corporate managers, this discovery makes a unique contribution to marketing managers' attention to focus on satisfying consumer needs and wants. Businesses can use consumer traits such as materialism in targeting, but not for increasing compulsive buying. Focus should be given to increasing customer satisfaction in product and services, and to the purchase transaction and consequences as a whole. Social media as an avenue of advertising is important to motivate consumers to buy the right products and services, not to exploit consumers and motivate them to buy what is not in need. The marketing orientation should guide developing marketing strategies in businesses to make customers first.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This research has some limitations. First, data were collected in Saudi Arabia's business capital area Riyadh, where teenagers are more influenced by contextual factors. Confounding factors needs to be controlled to be sure of the causal relationships. Second, this study focuses on all sorts of clients without distinguishing between sensible and irrational ones. Third, the research did not test and confirm the theoretical framework in a variety of settings or even for a specific brand or product class or industry. It is generally done to know general attitudes. Fourth, the current study focused solely on materialism and narcissism as mediator and moderator factors respectively, the other potential mediators or moderators were not studied. Fifth, the study used the snowball sampling method which is a non-probability sample and may not be representative for the study population. Sixth, cross-sectional data was used. Future research should employ a representative sample using a probability sampling method and collect data from around the country to present a full picture of Saudi residents, or to adopt experimental research method. Additionally, further research could be conducted in various circumstances, as well as extending the factors that cause compulsive buying behaviour and more mediating and moderating variables such as consumer motivation, attitudes, social status, word-of-mouth, reference groups, and occasion-based marketing.

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