

**An Integrative Investigation of Materialism: Exploring the
Influence of Cultural Orientation, Political Orientation, and Status
Threat**



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

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A thesis submitted to fulfil requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Discipline of Marketing,

The University of Sydney Business School

2024

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis presents a series of studies aimed at exploring materialism and status consumption behavior. The first study examines the relationship between cultural orientation, materialism, and status consumption behavior, incorporating horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism (Singelis et al., 1995). In doing so, the first paper seeks to reconcile the mixed findings in the literature which suggest that while generally individualists are more materialistic than collectivists (e.g., Kilbourne et al., 2005), there is evidence to the contrary (Wong, 1997). Incorporating the horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism, it finds only vertical individualism positively predicts materialism and status consumption behavior while other cultural orientations have negative relations to them. The second study proposes that political orientation could be a potential predictor of materialism since previous research has shown political orientations predict different consumer behavior such as complaining behavior (e.g., Jung et al., 2017). Finding the effects of political orientation influences on materialism subcomponents, namely, materialism-success, centrality, and happiness, this study refines our understanding of the relationship between political orientation and materialism. The third study examines the ways consumers engage in status restoration consumption behavior as a means to cope with different status-threatening situations. It finds consumers tend to show more status restoration consumption behavior when their social status is threatened compared to when their professional status is under threat, suggesting that social status threat could be more critical in consumer well-being. Collectively, this research contributes to the materialism and status consumption literature by suggesting a more comprehensive and nuanced relationship between cultural orientation, materialism, and status consumption, examining the personal factors that influence materialism such as cultural and political orientation, and exploring situational factors

of status consumption behavior; for example, status-threatening situations. Furthermore, it provides practical implications such as how to design marketing strategies for different cultural and politically oriented consumers and to utilize status restoration behaviors in social domains such as charity donation, which has not been well-documented in the literature (e.g., Klucarova & He, 2022).

Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work.

This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

.....

Eunbin O

Authorship Attribution Statement

Chapter 2 of this thesis is published as O, E., Garbarino, E., & Lee, J. (2023). Cultural Orientation, Materialism, and Status Consumption Behavior. *ANZMAC 2023*.

In addition to the statements above, in cases where I am not the corresponding author of a published item, permission to include the published material has been granted by the corresponding author.

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Eunbin O

As supervisor for the candidature upon which this thesis is based, I can confirm that the authorship attribution statements above are correct.

.....

Vince Mitchell

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Vince Mitchell and Professor Ellen Garbarino for their guidance and encouragement throughout my Ph.D. years. They are more than just supervisors, and I was so blessed to learn from them and work with them. Their caring support and encouragement led me to achieve this great milestone in my life and I am grateful for that.

I would like to thank the faculty of Discipline of Marketing at The University of Sydney Business School, especially Dr. Amy Kim and Dr. Kiju Jung for their support and encouragement. I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Julie Lee for her guidance on Chapter 2 of this thesis.

This thesis received editorial assistance from Editor John Mahony and I would like to acknowledge his effort, and also thank the Australian government for their financial support (Research Training Program Scholarship) for my Ph.D. years, including this editorial assistance.

I am so grateful for my family, especially for my loving parents. As always, their love and trust have made me strong enough to achieve this big milestone. Special thanks to my best husband in the world for his unconditional love and support and for just being there whenever I needed someone.

I would like to thank my dearest friends in Korea and Brisbane, especially Jimin, Jiwon, and Mary. If it were not for them, I would not have finished this journey. I thank my colleagues from Korea, Eunju and Yuhyun, for their support and encouragement. I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues in Sydney, especially Tina, Aaron, Chenyi, Laura, Nicole, Giovanni, Juan, and Eldrin for making Sydney one of the best places in my life with their love and support.

Many thanks to my furry friends for their emotional support and for having me continue my work to afford them and be with them.

Finally, I would like to thank my grandparents who would be so proud of me for finishing my Ph.D. I know they always look after me up there.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Materialism has been defined as a set of beliefs and values that emphasize the importance of material possessions in one's life (Richins & Dawson, 1992). The concept has been explored in various disciplines, including psychology, where studies often indicate that materialism may hinder psychological well-being (Dittmar et al., 2014), and in marketing, where materialism has also been extensively discussed, offering valuable insights into consumer behavior (Shrum et al., 2022). For instance, materialism helps researchers and practitioners understand the motivations and desires that drive individuals to gain and possess material goods (Richins, 2017).

Additionally, it serves as a basis for segmenting consumer markets, particularly in high-end brand goods and limited-edition products markets (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Understanding materialism is, therefore, crucial for consumer researchers and practitioners, as it provides guidelines on how to better market materialistic products and design effective marketing strategies.

In an effort to find the antecedents of materialism, early research has suggested that materialism is a personality-based trait such as possessiveness and envy (Belk, 1985) or a reflection of personal values, for example, being successful (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Other Scholars who focused on self vs. collective drivers of materialism have found that a self-focused goal orientation may arouse materialism (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 1997), while some have suggested that collective motives, such as following the social norms, arouse materialism (Awanis et al., 2017). Building on prior research, I try to examine further consumer features that drive materialism, such as the cultural orientation and political orientation. Those orientations

shape deep-seated consumers' values and attitudes toward material possessions, yet literature has provided mixed findings and unclear evidence.

For example, most research often assumes that individualism is a cultural driver for materialism as they have self-related goals such as to advance their social standing and improve their self-image (Kilbourne et al., 2005). However, this assumption is far from universal (Wong, 1997). We assume that the mixed findings in the literature might result from the oversimplification of individualism and collectivism with a lack of consideration of their horizontal and vertical dimensions. Among the four cultural orientations introduced by Triandis and Gelfand (1998), vertical individualism, which accepts power difference in the society by achievement and accomplishments, might mostly encourage materialism as the means to gain higher social standings than others. Conversely, horizontal individualism emphasizes equal status with others, which may lead to the least endorsement of materialism as material possessions often differentiate an individual's power over others. Hence, I expect different cultural orientations will have distinct relationships with materialism, and this has been examined in the first research project (Figure 1).

This different status motivations derived from horizontal and vertical dimensions will also lead to distinct relationships with status consumption behavior; for example, individualism with vertical orientation should endorse the strongest status consumption behavior among the four cultural orientations as they value the display of high social status as a reward for competition and hard work (e.g., Zhang & Nelson, 2016). As status consumption behavior has been suggested as a behavioral outcome of materialism (Flynn et al., 2016), we expect materialism will mediate the relationship between cultural orientation and status consumption behavior. We expect this investigation will add to materialism and status consumption behavior

literature where not much research has explored how horizontal and vertical dimensions of cultural orientation are related to status consumption behavior (e.g., Shukla, 2010).

The investigation of the effects of different cultural orientations on materialism and status consumption behavior in the first research project has prompted the next research project to explore additional consumer orientations that drive materialism (Figure 1). As literature suggests that political conservatives and liberals endorse different psychological traits, it led me to examine whether distinct political orientations will result in different levels of materialism. For instance, it has been found that conservatives are less open to experiences than liberals, and therefore less willing to try novel products (Osborne et al., in press). Additionally, conservatives are avoidant to changes, while liberals pursue social changes (Jost et al., 2008). Accordingly, these different psychological features and decision-making styles may influence their level of materialism. For example, liberals could be more materialistic than conservatives as they are more open to novel products, willing to advance their social status using material possessions, and obtain material goods to meet their ideal state. As such, I expect conservatives and liberals will endorse different levels of materialism.

The last research project in this thesis focused on the ‘status conscious’ nature of materialism, which is often displayed as status consumption behavior (Flynn et al., 2016). Especially, it tries to explore the situational drivers of status consumption behavior such as status threats (Figure 1). It has been suggested that status consumption behavior serves as a coping mechanism for status threats and help consumers manage their psychological well-being under those threats. Extensive literature found that consumers prefer products that can display their professional and/or financial success when their success-related status is threatened. For instance, when their professional status is threatened by confronting someone who is more

successful in their career, they choose fountain pens (which can often display professionalism and intelligence) over non-success-related products such as sweets (Gao et al., 2008). Meanwhile, recent research finds that status restoration consumption behavior can occur across domains (Goor et al., 2020). That is, when success-related status is threatened, it can be reinstated through social relationship-related consumption behavior. This across-domain status restoration consumption behavior, namely status pivoting, is significant in consumer research as it allows various status restoration consumption options to consumers and broadens implications for marketing practitioners. Yet, status pivoting has been mostly examined in success-related status threat (e.g., Goor et al., 2020), leaving a research gap on whether social relationship-related status threat can be restored by across-domain status restoration consumption behavior. Hence, my thesis tries to explore social relationship-related status threat and its restoration behavior both within and across domains, as well as examine possible moderators that may affect status restoration consumption behavior; for example, cultural orientation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and anxiety.

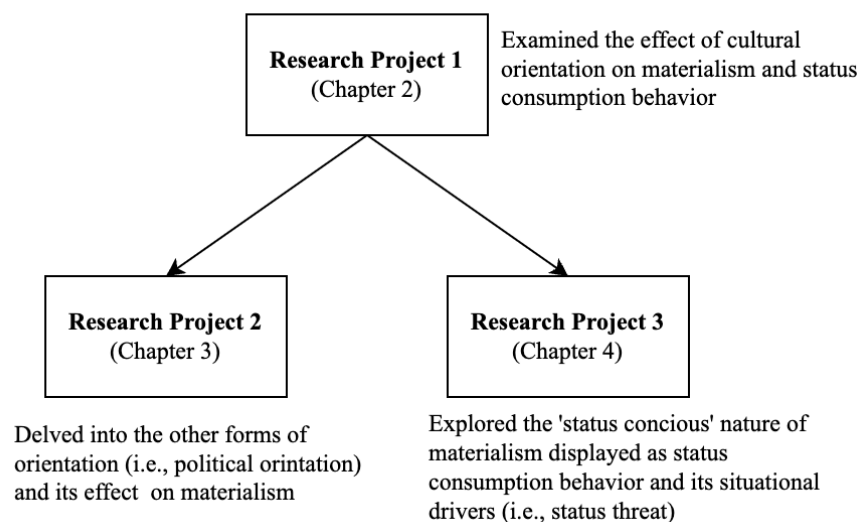


Figure 1. Research Projects Progression Diagram

1.2. Research Questions

The study of the role of culture in materialism generally finds that individualists are more materialistic than others (e.g., Kilbourne et al., 2005). However, the literature suggests mixed findings (e.g., Wong, 1997). As materialism is a key consumer feature in marketing practice as well as an important factor determining consumer well-being (e.g., Dittmar et al., 2014), reconciling the mixed findings in the literature is significant to better identify the target consumers for the market and consumer well-being strategies. I assume that the mixed findings in the literature might derive from the oversimplifying of individualism and collectivism. By incorporating horizontal and vertical dimensions of the culture introduced by Triandis and colleagues (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), this thesis is expected to unravel the nuances of the relationship between culture and materialism. Hence, the first research question addresses **how horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism are related to materialism and status consumption behavior (RQ1).**

The second research question is **whether materialism mediates the relationship between cultural orientation and status consumption behavior (RQ2).** Prior research suggests that materialism and status consumption behavior are interrelated, and that materialism often precedes status consumption behavior (Flynn et al., 2016). However, limited studies exist in the literature where materialism is examined as a mediator in the relationship between consumer features, such as cultural orientation, and status consumption behavior. Understanding the mechanism of consumers with certain cultural orientations showing a stronger tendency for status consumption behavior will refine our understanding of materialism and status consumption behavior. It will also provide practical implications on how to better target status

goods. Accordingly, Chapter 2 explores materialism as a mediator in the relationship between cultural orientation and status consumption behavior.

The next question is **how political conservatism and liberalism are related to materialism (RQ3)**. Previous research suggests that different political orientations have underlying distinctive psychological features such as cognition and motivation, indicating that different political orientations would result in different consumer values (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003). For example, researchers found that consumers with different political orientations display different consumer behaviors such as complaining and boycotting (Jost et al., 2017; Jung et al., 2017). Nonetheless, how political orientation is related to materialism is still unclear. Hence, in Chapter 3, I try to further investigate the relationship between political orientation and materialism using a series of studies with a research question about whether political orientation can be another key factor which may influence materialism. In doing so, this thesis tries to fill the research gap as well as to provide guidelines where practitioners can easily identify consumers with higher materialism tendency than others based on their political orientation.

Additionally, the next research question in this chapter addresses a **possible moderating effect of promotion focus on the relationship between political orientation and materialism (RQ4)**. Prior research has found that promotion focus highlights personal goals and ideals (Higgins, 1998), suggesting that those with high promotion focus will be likely to pursue material possessions as a means to achieve their goals and ideal states, such as financial success, higher status over others, and pleasure experience from the material goods. Hence, I expect promotion focus may moderate the relationship between political orientation and materialism and aim to examine regulatory focus as a moderator in the relationship between political orientation and materialism.

In my final research project, I further explore the connection between status and consumption by examining the role of consumption in status restoration. Specifically, it examines status restoration behavior in different status-threatening situations, which is the key status-related consumption behavior determining consumer well-being. Extensive research has explored status restoration consumption behavior with a primary focus on the within-domain of status, where consumers try to restore their threatened status using the same domain of status-signaling goods. For example, under the success-related status-threatening situation, consumers prefer success-related status goods such as luxuries over non-status goods which can easily display their power over others (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). However, a gap in research exists with status restoration behavior from the different domains. In situations where consumers experience social relationship status threats, whether they can restore their threatened status by using the success-related status goods instead (rather than the same domain of social relationship status goods) is not much examined. In regard to this, this thesis tries to answer the following question: **how can social relationship status threat be restored through consumption behavior? (RQ5)** Additionally, the final research question addresses **if there are situational and psychological moderators on status restoration consumption behavior (RQ6)**. To answer these research questions, the thesis examines if different cultural orientations and psychological features such as self-efficacy and general anxiety will show different status restoration behaviors.

1.3. Aims and Structure of the Thesis

Materialism is significant in determining consumption behaviors for certain types of goods, such as luxuries and limited products, and its role to signal success and status can serve as a coping

method for status threats. Hence, this research seeks to enhance our understanding of materialism by considering cultural orientation and political orientation as its predictors. Moreover, it aims to extend and highlight the function of materialism of signaling success and status in the status restoration consumption behavior context.

As the first step, Chapter 2 conducts a multi-country study to explore the overarching relationship between cultural orientation, materialism, and status consumption behavior (see Table 1). It finds cultural orientation can predict materialism and status consumption behavior, and further analysis reveals that materialism mediates the effect of cultural orientation on status consumption behavior. The implications of the finding of the refined relationship between these three constructs are discussed.

Political orientation is another form of cultural identity, similar to horizontal and vertical cultural orientations. For instance, prior research finds that collectivistic cultures are more conservative than individualistic cultures, and vertical cultures are more conservative than horizontal cultures (Bourgeois, 2002). Building on these findings, Chapter 3 examines political orientation as a possible predictor of materialism. Additionally, the regulatory focus is examined as a moderator of the relationship between political orientation and materialism (see Table 1). Finding the evidence for the complex relationship between political orientation and materialism, it discusses how we need to understand these two constructs and what practitioners can expect from consumers with different political orientations and their material values.

Chapter 4 delves into possessions to restore status in different social settings. Using different product taglines and real consumer consumption behavior in the form of charity donation, this chapter addresses that social status-threatening situations may be more crucial compared to success status-threatening situations, as consumers prefer the products of the same

domain of status threat under the social relationship status threat, rather than those of across-domain. Additionally, the chapter examines if horizontal and vertical dimensions of cultural orientations can yield different status restoration behaviors. A thorough examination of possible moderators and mediators is also conducted, and practical implications are discussed (see Table 1). Finally, in Chapter 5, I conclude the thesis by discussing the findings from the three research projects and suggest future research directions.

1.4. Conclusion

In answering the research questions above, this thesis seeks to make several contributions to both marketing literature and practice. Through an examination of the relationship between cultural orientation, materialism, and status consumption behavior, Chapter 2 tries to reconcile the mixed findings in the existing literature where literature generally finds that individualists are more materialistic than collectivists (Kilbourne et al., 2005); however, it is not universal (Wong, 1997). By incorporating horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism, the present research provides a nuanced relationship between individualism-collectivism and materialism.

In addition, it seeks to provide a refined relationship between materialism and status consumption behavior. Indeed, whether materialism can be a mediator of the relationship between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior is not well-documented (Flynn et al., 2013). In doing so, it also contributes to status consumption behavior literature and provides practical implications on how to design effective marketing strategies for consumers on each different cultural orientation.

By examining another possible predictor of materialism, namely political orientation, Chapter 3 aims to bridge an existing research gap. Despite extensive literature suggesting that conservatives and liberals may uphold distinct psychological attributes and traits that can lead to different materialism levels, limited research has explored the role of political orientation in influencing materialism (e.g., Ordabayeva et al., 2023). For example, research suggests that conservatives prefer to maintain the status quo (avoidant to changes) while liberals pursue (social) changes, which indicates that conservatives might not pursue material possessions to gain higher social standing over others (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003). This chapter therefore seeks to address this gap by investigating the relationship between political orientation and materialism.

Moreover, this chapter also investigates the potential moderating effect of regulatory focus on the aforementioned relationship between political orientation and materialism. By considering how regulatory focus, especially whether it is high promotion-focused or low promotion-focused, might interact with an individual's political orientation, the chapter aims to uncover nuances in the relationship between these factors and shed light on the underlying mechanisms that drive materialistic tendencies with different political orientations. Additionally, it examines different measures for political orientation and materialism; for example, political orientation measured by attitudes toward social issues such as immigration and abortion, and materialism measured by saving intention (vs. spending) and preference for materialistic products (vs. practical products). In doing so, it provides the existing literature with the implications of the potential of using real-life measures for materialism and political orientation. At the same time, it provides practical ways to capture consumers' political orientation and materialism so that practitioners can easily utilize these two consumer variables in mapping their target consumer demographics.

Finally, Chapter 4 focuses on status consumption behavior, especially as a coping mechanism for status threats. Existing literature generally examines status restoration consumption behavior when success-related status is threatened with an emphasis on within-domain status restoration consumption behavior. However, the within-domain status restoration consumption behavior may indeed hinder consumer well-being (Lisjak et al., 2014). Accordingly, Chapter 4 is devoted to fill the research gap where the social status threat is not actively examined in terms of across-domain status restoration behavior (namely, social pivoting) through the exploration of status restoration behavior in various status-threatening situations. At the same time, it tries to explore across-domain status restoration consumption behavior to provide practical implications for consumer well-being under various status threats. In doing so, it examines consumers' product preference and actual consumption behavior through charity donation. It also explores various interplays of consumers' cultural and personal features such as cultural orientations and self-esteem in status restoration consumption behavior. Hence, this research has significance in terms of consumer well-being and status consumption behavior, as social relationship status threat is critical to consumer well-being, and within-domain status restoration behavior to cope with this threat can hinder consumer well-being. Furthermore, it provides practical implications on how to protect consumer well-being from various status-threatening situations and how to best market social relationship-related products, such as charity donations, by examining consumers' preferred product taglines and their real donation behavior in different status-threatening situations.

Table 1. Research Questions and Methodology

Chapter	Research Question(s)	Methodology
Chapter 2	RQ1. <i>How are horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism related to materialism and status consumption behavior?</i> RQ2. <i>Can materialism mediate the relationship between cultural orientation and status consumption behavior?</i>	Survey, responses collected from 7 different countries (UK, USA, Australia, Brazil, Germany, Korea, China) Measures: • Horizontal and Vertical Individualism Collectivism (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) • Material Values Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992) • Status Consumption Scale (Eastman, Goldsmith, & Flynn, 1999)
Chapter 3	RQ3. <i>How are political conservatism and liberalism related to materialism?</i> RQ4. <i>What are the moderators of the relationship between political orientation and materialism? (e.g., regulatory focus)</i>	Survey Study 1: • Continuous measure for political orientation ("To what extent do you describe yourself as liberal or conservative?") • Categorical measure for political orientation ("Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, and Independent, or something else?") • Material Values Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992) Study 2: • Continuous measure for political orientation • Categorical measure for political orientation • Material Values Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992) • Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001) Study 3: • Issue-based political orientation • Election result-based political orientation (county, state) • Sharing (vs. possessing) (to measure materialism) • Saving (vs. spending) (to measure materialism)

		• Preference for materialistic product (vs. practical product) (to measure materialism) • Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001)
Chapter 4	RQ5: Can social relationship status threat be restored through across-domain status restoration consumption behavior (status pivoting)? RQ6: What are the moderators of the relationship between status threats and status restoration consumption behavior (e.g., cultural orientation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, anxiety)?	Scenario-based manipulation study (social status relationship threat vs. success-related status threat) Measures: • Status restoration consumption behavior: product tagline preference ("Office Coffee: Rich flavor, as rich as you will be" (across-domain status restoration), "Office Coffee: Brings people together" (within-domain status restoration), "Office Coffee: Like a beautiful day" (neutral)) • Status restoration consumption behavior: charity donation ("Dress for Success" (across-domain status restoration), "Coop Operation" (within-domain status restoration), "Keep Britain Tidy" (neutral)) • Cultural orientation: product tagline preference ("Award-winning Dessert: Treat yourself to this top-level dessert – you deserve it." (vertical individualism), "Unique Dessert: Treat yourself to something as unique as you are" (horizontal individualism), "Goodwill Dessert: Treat yourself and your neighbors, part of the proceeds will be donated to a local charity" (horizontal collectivism), "Beloved Dessert: Treat yourself to our most popular dessert that everyone has already fallen in love with" (vertical collectivism)) • Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

-
- ***General Self-Efficacy Scale*** (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)
 - ***General Anxiety Scale*** (Spitzer et al., 2006)
 - ***Horizontal and Vertical Individualism Collectivism***
(Triandis & Gelfand, 1998)
-

Chapter 2. The Relationship between Cultural Orientation and Status Consumption: The Mediating Role of Materialism

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Objectives

In understanding materialism, culture plays a significant role (e.g., Ger & Belk, 1990). The general assumption in the literature is that individualists are more materialistic than collectivists (e.g., Kilbourne et al., 2005). The main reason for this assumption is that, first, both individualists and materialists put importance on something that is far from a social relationship. For example, individualists put their self-related goals before collective goals and materialists put personal possessions before sound relationships (Van Boven et al., 2010). On the other hand, collectivists might avoid materialism (Wong, 1997), mainly to maintain group harmony and collective values (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As materialism is often considered a rather self-related value that is opposed to collective and in-group values (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002), collectivists will be likely to avoid materialism.

However, this assumption that individualists are more materialistic than collectivists is not always true (e.g., Awanis et al., 2017, see Table 2). Besides, this simple assumption ignores the increasingly nuanced understanding of individualism-collectivism and materialism, which might offer a different insight into how these constructs relate. Triandis and Gelfand (1998) introduced a horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism framework which can more accurately represent cultural orientations capturing the influence of social hierarchy and equality (Singelis et al., 1995). The present research examines whether this richer conceptualization leads to better insights into when individualism and collectivism will lead to more materialism and when it might not. I argue that an individual's level of vertical individualism might be more likely to result in materialism than horizontal individualism, as it will see material possessions as a way to create power distinction and

social status (Shavitt et al., 2006). On the contrary, horizontal individualism might not espouse materialism and may even have a negative attitude towards it due to the potential for the pursuit of possessions to provide uncomfortable power and status distinctions (Nelson & Shavitt, 2002). I also argue that, although collectivism might show negative attitudes toward materialism, vertical collectivism may hold less negative views than horizontal collectivism as it might accept social hierarchy and thus value status-related goals that material goods can signal.

Building on this reasoning, I expect that this focus on the role of materialism in status further suggests that materialism will mediate the effects of cultural orientation on status consumption, at least for vertical individualism. However, those that have aversive attitudes to gaining higher status over others, such as horizontal individualism and horizontal collectivism, might less endorse status consumption behavior.

In answering the research question regarding the relationship between individualism-collectivism, and materialism in more depth, the research makes three contributions. First, it provides a more detailed theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between materialism and culture. By revealing the different effects of vertical versus horizontal dimensions of culture, the present research provides meaningful insights and evidence for future researchers to better understand the true nature of the relationship between culture and materialism. Second, it could help us to reconcile the mixed results about the relationship between individualism-collectivism and materialism by showing that horizontal and vertical dimensions have different effects on materialism. Third, it provides useful insights for practitioners in designing their strategy; for example, designing marketing messages differently for the horizontal and vertical oriented consumers.

Table 2. Cultural Orientation and Materialism in Literature

Research	Findings	Sample	Key Parameter
Wong (1997)	Collectivism is low on materialism and individualism is not related to materialism	US respondents	Modified materialism scale from Ger & Belk 1993, MVS (Richins & Dawson, 1992) IND-COL scale by Triandis et al. (1986)
Clarke III and Micken (2002)	Collectivists (Mexican respondents) are lower on materialism than individualists (Australian and US respondents). Australian and US respondents are not significantly different on materialism level French respondents (positioned between Australians and Mexicans in terms of individualism levels) are higher on materialism level than Australian, US, and Mexican respondents	Mexican, Australian, US, and French respondents	MVS (Richins & Dawson, 1992)
Kilbourne et al. (2005)	US respondents (individualists) and Canadians (individualists) are higher on materialism-success than Germans (less individualistic than US and Canadian respondents)	US and Canadian respondents	MVS (Richins & Dawson, 1992)
Ogden et al. (2011)	Collectivists (Chinese respondents) are higher on materialism level than individualists (Canadian respondents)	Chinese and Canadian respondents	MVS (Richins & Dawson, 1992)
Tobacyk et al. (2011)	Polish and US respondents are not significantly different on materialism level	Polish and US respondents	MVS (Richins & Dawson, 1992)

Workman and Lee (2011)	No difference in materialism level between collectivists (Korean respondents) and individualists (US respondents)	Korean and US respondents	MVS (Richins & Dawson, 1992)
Awanis et al. (2017)	Collectivists (Thai, Indian, Chinese respondents) are as materialistic as individualists (US respondents)	Thai, Indian, Chinese, and US respondents	MVS (Richins, 2004)
Yoo et al. (2021)	Collectivists (Chinese respondents) are higher on materialism than individualists (the US respondents)	Chinese and US respondents	MVS (Richins, 2004)
The present research	Vertical individualism will be higher on materialism than horizontal individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism	UK, US, Australian, German, Brazilian, Korean, and Chinese respondents	Horizontal and Vertical Individualism Collectivism (Singelis, 1994), MVS (Richins & Dawson, 1992)

2.2 Literature Review

In this chapter, I tried to examine the different levels of materialism and status consumption behavior tendency of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. Hence, the following literature review section will cover the conceptualization of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, materialism, and status consumption behavior and how they are associated with various consumer features and behaviors.

2.2.1. Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism

In their seminal work, Singelis et al. (1995) argued that the addition of a secondary dimension centered on the role of cultural hierarchy and equality would enrich our understanding of how individualism and collectivism affect people's preferences. This richer conceptualization identifies four types of cultural orientations: horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism (Singelis et al., 1995). Horizontal individualism emphasizes egalitarianism and endorses the importance of equality between individuals (Shavitt et al., 2006). It values universalism (Schwartz, 1992), and is more concerned about the welfare of others rather than their own power and achievement (Oishi et al., 1998) and tends to have an "aversion to conspicuously successful persons" (Shavitt et al., 2006, p. 326). For example, Australians (who are considered to have high level of horizontal individualism) tend to socially disapprove of conspicuous behaviors that are explicitly signaling social status and power, and similarly, Swedes and Danes dislike boastful attitudes and tend to place more importance on family than individual success (Nelson & Shavitt, 2002).

In contrast, vertical individualism accepts differences in power and status which are often obtained through individual achievement and success (Singelis et al., 1995). It tends to accept that climbing up the hierarchy through earning more power and success via

competition is part of society's norms (Shavitt et al., 2010) and is not opposed to showing their achievement and success since these are seen as the rewards gained from their efforts (Nelson & Shavitt, 2002). This is more consistent with the traditional unidimensional view of individualism that considers oneself as independent of others and self-directed (Hui & Triandis, 1986) and tends to emphasize one's autonomy and pursuit of their own happiness over that of others (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009; Oishi et al., 1998).

Collectivism emphasizes in-group harmony and sound relationships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Collectivists are found to share material possessions with others and avoid self-focused goals (Hui & Triandis, 1986), which suggests they might show aversive attitudes toward materialistic values. The horizontal-vertical dimension can add further nuance to these effects. People who are high on a horizontal collectivism, such as is prevalent in Brazil, value equality and hence strongly endorse equal status among others in their community (Singelis et al., 1995). Conversely, those who are high on vertical collectivism agree with the importance of social interconnectedness but accept inequality and hierarchy as part of society and see the value of behaving according to society's rules to get ahead (Singelis et al., 1995). It is noteworthy that the hierarchical systems of vertical individualism and collectivism are, however, different from each other. For example, vertical collectivism often accepts *ascribed hierarchy* where individuals tend to be born with their status while vertical individualism espouses *achieved hierarchy* where individuals can earn a higher status through competition (Shavitt et al., 2006, p. 339), which draws those who endorse high level of vertical collectivism to pursue in-group values as a way to gain status rather than strive for personal goals as those who are high on vertical individualism do.

2.2.2. Materialism

Materialism has been defined as an attachment of one's values to worldly possessions. Some scholars suggest that materialism is triggered by personality traits such as envy, non-generosity, possessiveness, and preservation (Ger & Belk, 1996), while others have posited that it is more closely related to personal values (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Early research found that, for example, materialists whose personal values are inclined to pursuing happiness tend to value material possessions to obtain happiness and life satisfaction, and those whose personal values lean toward being successful tend to favor status-signaling possessions over the mundane goods (Fournier & Richins, 1991).

Materialism has considerable influence on consumer behaviors. Materialistic people have been found to prefer tangible products over intangible goods (Belk, 1985), admire expensive and nicer goods (Richins & Dawson, 1992), and they especially enjoy luxury goods which can often display their success and status (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Hence, materialistic consumers have been favored by marketing practitioners as they are seen as potential buyers of those material goods and luxury goods, which makes them a key feature of consumer demographics.

2.2.3. Status Consumption Behavior

As materialism is often motivated by status-related goals – for example, to be more successful than others – it is displayed by status consumption behavior (Flynn et al., 2016). Status consumption behavior involves a consumer's tendency to seek to enhance their social status through the consumption of products that signal their enhanced status and prestige to themselves and relevant others (Eastman et al., 1999; Lee & Shrum, 2012). Status consumption is not limited to luxury goods or rich individuals; it is observed across income levels and cultures (Eastman et al., 1997; Eastman et al., 1999). Status consumption is a

common consumer behavior especially for luxury goods and social goods that are consumed in public. Literature suggests that materialistic people favor status-signaling goods (e.g., Hudders & Pandelaere, 2012); however, not much research has been done that directly examines the relationship between materialism and status consumption behavior (e.g., Goldsmith & Clark, 2012), leaving a significant research gap.

2.3. Hypotheses Development

Several key features of individualism suggest that those who endorse high level of individualism are likely to engage in material consumption behaviors in a way to enhance happiness and life satisfaction. For example, they seek to satisfy their own needs (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and they value their freedom and autonomy (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009), which often drives them to buy things to satisfy their personal wants (Kacen & Lee, 2002; Zhang & Shrum, 2009). Additionally, individualistic people are generally found to be hedonistic and fun-seeking (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009; Oishi et al., 1998); thus, they tend to enjoy the pleasurable experiences that material possessions may provide.

However, the horizontal and vertical dimensions might lead to different effects of individualism on materialism. The vertical dimension of culture emphasizes social hierarchy and status, and thus vertical individualism is more likely to see material possessions as a means to gaining higher status and power over others, leading vertical individualism to endorse materialism. In contrast, the horizontal dimension of culture values equal status across individuals, and this should translate into a lack of interest in status-signaling goods. Given its egalitarian values, horizontal individualism might reject materialism as a value especially if it is designed to indicate success or power to others.

On the other hand, vertical individualism should be positively related to materialism and this relationship would be the strongest among the four cultural orientations. This is

because the vertical dimension of culture accepts social hierarchy and power disparities among others and encourages status-related motivation to achieve higher social standing over others. At the same time, individualism underscores the distinction between oneself and others, prioritizing self-oriented goals over collective values. Hence, the convergence of the vertical dimension and individualism leads vertical individualism to exhibit strong materialism to satisfy its status-related goals that are often focused on one's social position in relation to others. Accordingly, among the four cultural orientations, vertical individualism will have the strongest endorsement of materialism (Hypothesis 1, see Figure 2).

In contrast, horizontal individualism holds egalitarian values that de-emphasize the importance of hierarchical differences (Singelis et al., 1995), making it less likely to see material goods, particularly luxurious goods, as a way to express one's standing (Nelson & Shavitt, 2002). Indeed, it might consider having excessive material goods as a signal of boastfulness. Therefore, in contrast to vertical individualism, horizontal individualism might show a negative relationship with materialism (Hypothesis 2, see Figure 2).

While individualism is often classified as independent, collectivism is seen as interdependent; the self is not seen as separate from the group and the focus is on one's relationships within the group (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, collectivism emphasizes in-group values and harmony, and studies find that collectivists prefer sharing goods with others over having personal possessions (Hui & Triandis, 1986; Singelis et al., 1995). Materialism, with its focus on individual acquisition, potentially conflicts with these collective and social goals, highlights its emphasis on oneself rather than their shared values and goals (Van Boven et al., 2010); hence, collectivism is likely to show aversion to materialism.

Collectivism itself will be aversive to materialism; however, the vertical dimension of culture will still be active in drawing the materialism tendency from vertical collectivism as it

indicates the deep-seated nature of inequality and divergence of power in society. More recent studies, for example, suggest that material possessions often satisfy social motives, such as belonging to desired social groups that are often depicted as a higher social status or more desirable at face value (e.g., Kassim et al., 2016).

Materialism often gives a negative impression to other social members (Van Boven et al., 2010), and thus, horizontal collectivism that emphasizes sociality and benevolence will be avoidant to materialism as they care for sound interpersonal relationships (Shavitt & Barnes, 2019). Therefore, the horizontal dimension will further suppress the value of materialism for collectivism, leading horizontal collectivism to have the least tendency toward materialism. Collectively, these findings suggest that both vertical collectivism and horizontal collectivism will have a negative relationship with materialism; however, vertical collectivism will show higher materialism tendency than horizontal collectivism due to its innate status-consciousness (Hypotheses 3 & 4, see Figure 2).

The status motive derived from cultural orientation will not only affect materialism, but also status consumption behavior. Hence, one might expect materialism to mediate the effects of cultural orientation on status consumption. Given the importance of status in vertical cultural orientations, we predict those with vertical orientations will be positively related to status consumption behavior. As horizontal individualism and horizontal collectivism values equal social standing among others, instead of accepting social hierarchy horizontal individualism and horizontal collectivism will be negatively related to status consumption behavior. The status motive in vertical individualism and vertical collectivism is different – for vertical individualism, it is more achievement-oriented where one's accomplishments warrant higher status (“achieved hierarchy”), while in vertical collectivism, it is to maintain the existing social hierarchy and keep social order (“ascribed hierarchy”) (Shavitt et al., 2006, p. 339). Hence, I predict only vertical individualism will be positively

related to status consumption behavior. Other cultural orientations, horizontal individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism, are expected to be negatively related to status consumption behavior. Furthermore, materialism will mediate the relationship between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior, as suggested in previous studies (e.g., Flynn et al., 2016) (Hypothesis 5, see Figure 2).

Hypothesis 1: Vertical individualism is positively related to materialism and its relationship with materialism will be the only positive among the four cultural orientations.

Hypothesis 2: Horizontal individualism will show a negative relationship with materialism.

Hypothesis 3: Vertical collectivism will show a negative relationship with materialism, but will show higher materialism than horizontal collectivism.

Hypothesis 4: Horizontal collectivism will show a negative relationship with materialism and its relationship will be the most negative among four cultural orientations.

Hypothesis 5: Materialism will mediate the relationships between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior.

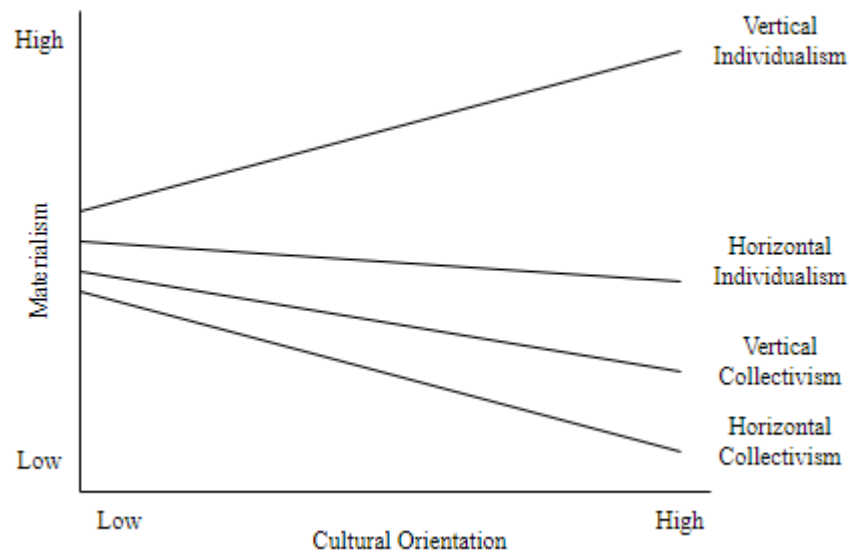


Figure 2. Hypotheses: Horizontal and Vertical Individualism Collectivism and Materialism

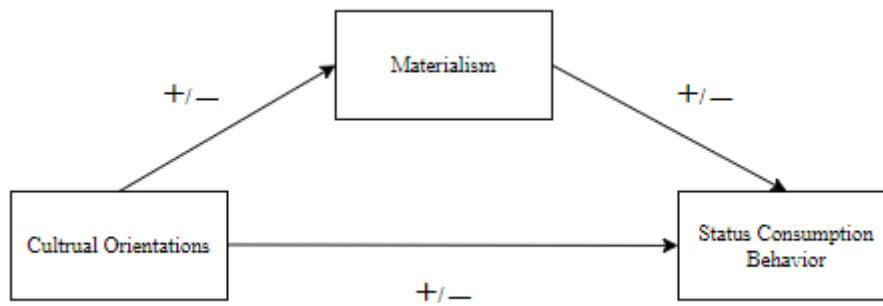


Figure 3. Hypotheses: Mediating Effect of Cultural Orientations on Status Consumption Behavior via Materialism

2.4. Overview of the Study

The present study aims to refine the relationship between individualism-collectivism and materialism by incorporating the horizontal and vertical dimensions. Furthermore, it aims to examine the mediating role of materialism in the relationship between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior. This research focuses on individual-level analysis in line with prior research showing that culture is not equal to country (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Vora et al., 2019). For example, the United States is depicted as an individualistic country, but not all Americans are equally individualistic. In fact, individuals from specific subcultures (e.g., Latin Americans and African Americans) tend to be less individualistic than other subcultures (e.g., Euro-Americans) (e.g., Duncanson et al., 2016; Oyserman et al., 2002). This indicates the importance of examining variances of individual values within the culture (Lalwani et al., 2006; Zhang & Nelson, 2016).

2.5. Methods

2.5.1. Participants

To test these hypotheses, a survey was conducted in seven countries representing a broad range of horizontal and vertical cultural orientations and to obtain enough variance on our central constructs (Czarnecka et al., 2020). Data were collected by an online panel provider as part of a larger study into people's shopping attitudes and behaviors from seven countries, including the UK, USA, Australia, Brazil, Germany, Korea, and China. Participants were recruited by email and paid by the panel provider in 'points' that are used for online purchases. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into German, Portuguese, Korean, and Mandarin by a bilingual translator, following the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970) for non-English-speaking countries. Initially, the data from 3,077 respondents were collected. After removing the incomplete responses, a total of 2,660

responses were included in the data analysis (UK = 249, USA = 249, Australia = 463, Brazil = 537, Germany = 634, Korea = 284, China = 244); 53.6% of the respondents are female and the average age is 24.47 ($SD_{age} = 3.22$). The demographic information of each country is shown in Table 3 and 4.

Table 3. Demographic Information of Each Country

	<i>N</i>	% Female	Age	
		%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
UK	134	53.8	24.08	3.469
USA	132	53.0	24.87	3.103
Australia	235	50.8	24.86	3.816
Germany	392	61.8	24.79	3.292
Brazil	282	52.5	23.96	2.940
Korea	221	51.4	24.51	2.396
China	116	47.5	23.95	2.778

Table 4. Income Information of Each Country

Country		Frequency Percent		Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
USA	Valid	Up to £15,000	41	16.5	19.4
		£15,000–£19,999	43	17.3	39.8
		£20,000–£24,999	34	13.7	55.9
		£25,000–£29,999	28	11.2	69.2
		£30,000–£34,999	20	8.0	78.7
		£35,000–£39,999	12	4.8	84.4
		£40,000–£44,999	7	2.8	87.7
		£45,000–£49,999	16	6.4	95.3
		£50,000–£54,999	2	.8	96.2
		£55,000–£59,999	6	2.4	99.1
		Over £60,000	2	.8	100.0
		Total	211	84.7	100.0
	Missing	System	38	15.3	
Total			249	100.0	
Australia	Valid	Up to £15,000	71	15.3	15.3
		£15,000–£19,999	85	18.4	33.7
		£20,000–£24,999	57	12.3	46.0
		£25,000–£29,999	52	11.2	57.2
		£30,000–£34,999	38	8.2	65.4
		£35,000–£39,999	24	5.2	70.6
		£40,000–£44,999	12	2.6	73.2
		£45,000–£49,999	8	1.7	74.9
		£50,000–£54,999	5	1.1	76.0
		£55,000–£59,999	4	.9	76.9
		Over £60,000	4	.9	77.8
		12	3	.6	78.4
		13	2	.4	78.8
		14	2	.4	79.3
		15	3	.6	79.9
		16	93	20.1	100.0
		Total	463	100.0	100.0
Brazil	Valid	Up to £15,000	14	2.6	3.3
		£15,000–£19,999	83	15.5	23.1
		£20,000–£24,999	106	19.7	48.3
		£25,000–£29,999	91	16.9	70.0
		£30,000–£34,999	49	9.1	81.7
		£35,000–£39,999	40	7.4	91.2
		£40,000–£44,999	17	3.2	95.2
		£45,000–£49,999	20	3.7	100.0
		Total	420	78.2	100.0
	Missing	System	117	21.8	
Total			537	100.0	
Germany	Valid	Up to £15,000	186	29.3	35.8
		£15,000–£19,999	89	14.0	52.9

		£20,000–£24,999	41	6.5	7.9	60.8
		£25,000–£29,999	26	4.1	5.0	65.8
		£30,000–£34,999	12	1.9	2.3	68.1
		£35,000–£39,999	11	1.7	2.1	70.2
		£40,000–£44,999	6	.9	1.2	71.3
		£45,000–£49,999	6	.9	1.2	72.5
		£50,000–£54,999	1	.2	.2	72.7
		Over £60,000	1	.2	.2	72.9
		12	1	.2	.2	73.1
		13	1	.2	.2	73.3
		15	3	.5	.6	73.8
		16	136	21.5	26.2	100.0
		Total	520	82.0	100.0	
	Missing System		114	18.0		
	Total		634	100.0		
Korea	Valid	Up to £15,000	32	11.3	11.4	11.4
		£15,000–£19,999	14	4.9	5.0	16.4
		£20,000–£24,999	10	3.5	3.6	19.9
		£25,000–£29,999	36	12.7	12.8	32.7
		£30,000–£34,999	41	14.4	14.6	47.3
		£35,000–£39,999	41	14.4	14.6	61.9
		£40,000–£44,999	32	11.3	11.4	73.3
		£45,000–£49,999	16	5.6	5.7	79.0
		£50,000–£54,999	9	3.2	3.2	82.2
		£55,000–£59,999	8	2.8	2.8	85.1
		Over £60,000	7	2.5	2.5	87.5
		12	5	1.8	1.8	89.3
		13	2	.7	.7	90.0
		15	6	2.1	2.1	92.2
		16	22	7.7	7.8	100.0
		Total	281	98.9	100.0	
	Missing System		3	1.1		
	Total		284	100.0		

2.5.2. Measures

Materialism

I used the 18-item Material Values Scale (MVS) (Richins & Dawson, 1992) to measure materialism as it has been widely validated and utilized in the literature (e.g., Richins, 2004). MVS is a three-dimensional measurement scale that includes materialism-success, centrality, and happiness. Example items for success are “I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes” and “I like to own things that impress people”, for centrality “I usually buy more than what I need” and “I enjoy spending money on things that aren’t practical”, and for happiness “My life would be better if I owned certain things I don’t have” and “I would be happier if I owned nicer things” (see Appendix A for the full items). These were rated on a strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) scale, and the reverse items were reworded, as suggested by Wong et al. (2003). Reliability of each subcomponent is well within the acceptable norms. Cronbach alpha for materialism-success is 0.89, for materialism-centrality is 0.79, and for materialism-happiness is 0.87. The reliability for 18 items is 0.93 which is enough to aggregate them as one composite measure (e.g., Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006).

Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism (HVIC)

I used the Horizontal/Vertical Individualism and Collectivism Scale to measure cultural orientation (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) which has been demonstrated its reliability and validity in measuring the cultural orientations. The 16-item scale has a set of 4-item subscales that measure each of four cultural orientations including Horizontal Individualism (HI), Vertical Individualism (VI), Horizontal Collectivism (HC), and Vertical Collectivism (VC). Example items for horizontal individualism include “I’d rather depend on myself than others”, and for vertical individualism, “Competition is the law of nature.” For horizontal collectivism, example items include “If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud”, and for vertical collectivism, “It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my group”

(see Appendix B for the full items). The items were rated on a strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) scale. The Cronbach alpha for HI and VI subscales are 0.79 and 0.72 respectively, and for HC and VC are 0.82 and 0.81 respectively, which are all within the acceptable range.

Status Consumption Behavior

I used the Status Consumption Behavior Scale by Eastman et al. (1999). The five items are measured on 7-point Likert scale. Example items include “I would buy a product just because it has status” and “I would pay more for a product if it had status” (see Appendix C for the full items). The Cronbach alpha for the five items is 0.76, which is within the acceptable range.

2.6. Analysis

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was calculated between the four constructs: HI, VI, HC, and VC. The HTMT Ratio between HI and VI was 0.55, HI and VC was 0.64, HI and HC was 0.64, VI and VC was 0.36, VI and HC was 0.34, and VC and HC was 0.86. Thus, the HTMT ratios between all the constructs were in all acceptable range (< 0.90) as suggested by Henseler et al. (2015) and I confirmed discriminant validity between the constructs.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of HVIC

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also conducted using AMOS to examine the measurement properties of Horizontal Vertical Individualism and Collectivism scale (see Tables 5 and 6). Acceptable model fit was achieved after removing one item from the VC subscale (“It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my group”) that is cross-loaded with the HC subscale ($\chi^2 = 1399.445$, $df = 84$, $p = 0.00$; CFI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.077).

The composite reliability (CR) of the constructs are all above the 0.60 norm (HI: 0.79, VI: 0.67, HC: 0.82, VC: 0.82 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (see Table 5). The shared variance between each of the dimensions was less than the lowest AVE score, supporting discriminant validity (Mulaik et al., 1989) (see Table 6). Finally, partial metric invariance was confirmed ($\chi^2_{diff} = 17.96$, $df_{diff} = 12$, $p > 1.00$), indicating that this construct could differ across the countries; however, it could be different only for a subset of the model's parameters (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998) (see Table 5 for the final item list).

Table 5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for HVIC

Variables	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR
Horizontal Individualism	I'd rather depend on myself than others.	0.763	0.790	0.489	0.791
	I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.	0.667			
	I often "do my own thing."	0.651			
	My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.	0.706			
Vertical Individualism	It is important that I do my job better than others.	0.687	0.709	0.361	0.666
	Winning is everything.	0.554			
	Competition is the law of nature.	0.668			
	When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.	0.485			
Horizontal Collectivism	If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.	0.737	0.816	0.528	0.817
	The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.	0.724			
	To me, pleasure is spending time with others.	0.651			
	I feel good when I cooperate with others.	0.791			
Vertical Collectivism	Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.	0.791	0.824	0.609	0.824
	It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.	0.773			
	Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.	0.778			

AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability

Table 6. Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4
Horizontal Individualism	(0.889)			
Vertical Individualism	0.402**	(0.601)		
Horizontal Collectivism	0.511**	0.239**	(0.726)	
Vertical Collectivism	0.471**	0.214**	0.625**	(0.780)

Notes: The square root values of AVE of each construct are presented diagonally.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

2.7. Results

In analyzing cultural orientation, it is important to acknowledge that individuals can have levels of multiple cultural orientations simultaneously (Triandis, 1995) and that individuals' cultural orientations may not precisely align to that of their residing country (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Vora et al., 2019). Hence, this research focuses on individual-level analysis, focusing on one's level of cultural orientations. Although I tried to focus on individual-level cultural orientation, individuals are inherently nested within their culture, and so a multilevel analysis is required. Examining individual-level variables with a relatively small number of samples of cluster-level units is a common practice in hierarchical modelling research (e.g., Gielens & Steenkamp, 2007; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). Hence, the equations are as follows where the Level 1 predictors were centered at individual level:

$$\text{Level 1: } \mathbf{MAT}_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\mathbf{CO}_{ij} - \mathbf{MEANCO}_i) + r_{ij}, \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}, \beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + u_{1j};$$

$$\text{Level 2: } \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j},$$

In these equations, *i* indicates individuals, *j* indicates country, MAT represents a person's materialism value, and CO represents a person's cultural orientation, namely horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. Combining the two levels yields the hierarchical model:

$$\text{Multilevel: } \mathbf{MAT}_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}(\mathbf{CO}_{ij} - \mathbf{MEANCO}_i) + \mu_{0j} + r_{ij}.$$

The Level 1 error term (r_{ij}) is assumed to be normally distributed with a mean of 0 and a variance of σ^2 and the random intercept (μ_{0j}) is assumed to be multivariate normally distributed over the groups, with an expected value of 0 and a variance of τ_{00} . The coefficient β_{0j} was specified as random so as to allow the intercept to vary across groups.

The regression analysis was conducted using SPSS statistics software and it revealed that vertical individualism positively predicts materialism at a significant level ($\gamma_{10} = 0.49, p < 0.001$), while horizontal individualism negatively predicts materialism at a significant level

($\gamma_{10} = -0.13, p < 0.001$). These findings align with my expectations that both the individualism and vertical dimensions of the cultural orientation affect materialism tendency. As hypothesized, vertical individualism is positively correlated with materialism, consistent with its emphasis on importance of hierarchy and their belief that their success is based on their individual position within the hierarchy. Conversely, the horizontal individualism shows the expected negative relationship to materialism, consistent with its being displeased by the garish show of wealth that conflicts with its egalitarian ideals.

The analysis further revealed that both horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism negatively predict materialism at significant level (HC: $\gamma_{10} = -0.38, p < .001$, VC: $\gamma_{10} = -0.21, p < .001$). While both collectivistic orientations show negative effects on materialism, the vertical aspect of the VC orientation significantly lessens the negative effect, consistent with my hypothesizing that the hierarchical beliefs of the vertical dimension will increase the attractiveness of materialism consumption ($t(5,608) = 4.58, p < 0.001$). The results also revealed that horizontal individualism is higher on materialism than either horizontal or vertical collectivism (compared to HC: $t(5,608) = 5.85, p < 0.001$ and compared to VC: $t(5,608) = 1.97, p < 0.05$). This finding implies that individualism/collectivism aspect has a larger impact on the perception of materialism than the horizontal/vertical dimension.

To further examine the relationship between materialism and cultural orientation, I tested whether materialism mediates the effects of cultural orientation on status consumption. Following Hayes' (2022) Process Macro via bootstrapping method, the mediation effect of cultural orientation on status consumption behavior via materialism was examined with 5,000 bootstrap re-samples. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of cultural orientations on status consumption (HI: $b = -0.14, SE = 0.030, 95\% CI = -0.20; -0.08$, VI: $b = 0.39, SE = 0.02, 95\% CI = 0.035; 0.043$, HC: $b = -0.35, SE = 0.03, 95\% CI = -0.41; -0.29$, VC: $b = -0.20, SE = 0.02, 95\% CI = -0.24; -0.15$). Therefore, all the established hypotheses are supported

(Table 7 and 9).¹ For all cultural orientations, materialism was a significant mediator of status consumption.

¹ Although it was not our focal interest, further analysis revealed that materialism-success mediates the relationship between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior and materialism-happiness moderates the relationship (HI: materialism-success: $b = -0.04$, $t = -3.08$, $p < 0.001$, materialism-happiness: $b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI = -0.26; -0.15, VI: materialism-success: $b = 0.47$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI = 0.43; 0.52, materialism-happiness: $b = 0.06$, $t = 6.37$, $p < 0.001$, HC: materialism-success: $b = -0.39$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI = -0.46; -0.33, materialism-happiness: $b = -0.03$, $t = -2.51$, $p = 0.01$, VC: materialism-success: $b = -0.24$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI = -0.29; -0.19, materialism-happiness: $b = -0.02$, $t = -2.19$, $p = 0.03$). These interaction effects (cultural orientation $\times$ materialism-success) accounted for a significant amount of variance in status consumption behavior (HI: $R^2 = .02$, $p < 0.001$, VI: $R^2 = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$, HC: $R^2 = 0.08$, $p < 0.001$, VC: $R^2 = 0.05$, $p < 0.001$). Specifically, for those with high HI, HC and VC showed more negative relationship with status consumption behavior when they have high materialism-happiness. Presumably, for those consumers, status-signaling products are not considered to make them happy or bring life satisfaction. However, vertical individualism with higher materialism-happiness showed stronger status consumption behavior than those with lower materialism-happiness, suggesting that status-signaling goods would be one of the methods for vertical individualism to obtain happiness. Finally, the results imply that the negative relationship with materialism-success for those with HI, HC and VC lead them to less favor status consumption behavior, while the positive relationship with materialism-success for those with VI leads them to more favor status consumption behavior.

Table 7. Regression Analysis Results Table for Materialism

Materialism		Estimates						
Parameter	VI		HI		HC		VC	
Fixed	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>
Intercepts	4.26***	0.200	4.30***	0.223	4.35***	0.216	4.12***	0.216
Cultural Orientation	0.49***	0.027	-0.13***	0.037	-0.38***	0.035	-0.20***	0.028
Gender	-0.03	0.050	0.09	0.052	0.04	0.051	0.09	0.052
Age	-0.01	0.008	-0.02**	0.008	-0.02***	0.008	-0.02	0.008
Income	0.08	0.056	-0.02	0.060	-0.04	0.058	-0.03	0.059
Variance component								
Random	HI	<i>SD</i>	VI	<i>SD</i>	HC	<i>SD</i>	VC	<i>SD</i>
Level 1 error variance	1.27	0.041	1.10	0.036	1.20	0.039	1.24	0.040
Level 2 error variance	0.04	0.026	0.01	0.007	0.04	0.026	0.03	0.021

Table 8. Regression Analysis Results Table for Status Consumption Behavior

Status Consumption Behavior		Estimates							
		VI		HI		HC		VC	
Parameter		Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>
Fixed									
Intercepts		3.88***	0.200	3.94***	0.233	3.96***	0.240	3.744***	0.234
Cultural Orientation		0.55***	0.027	-0.27***	0.054	-0.32***	0.037	-0.21***	0.030
Gender		0.11*	0.050	0.24***	0.054	0.21***	0.054	0.25***	0.054
Age		-0.01	0.008	-0.03***	0.008	-0.03***	0.008	-0.02*	0.008
Income		0.03	0.057	-0.04	0.061	-0.03	0.061	-0.03	0.061
		Variance component							
Random		HI	<i>SD</i>	VI	<i>SD</i>	HC	<i>SD</i>	VC	<i>SD</i>
Level 1 error variance		1.34	0.044	1.15	0.037	1.32	0.043	1.34	0.044
Level 2 error variance		0.05	0.035	0.01	0.008	0.06	0.042	0.05	0.036

Table 9. Mediation Analysis Summary

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
VI → Materialism → Status Consumption Behavior	0.602 (0.000)	0.214 (0.000)	0.388	0.349	0.429
HI → Materialism → Status Consumption Behavior	-0.311 (0.000)	-0.169 (0.000)	-0.142	-0.201	-0.082
HC → Materialism → Status Consumption Behavior	-0.402 (0.000)	-0.054 (0.000)	-0.348	-0.404	-0.291
VC → Materialism → Status Consumption Behavior	-0.275 (0.000)	-0.078 (0.000)	-0.197	-0.241	-0.153

2.8. General Discussion

Individualists are generally recognized as materialistic (e.g., Workman & Lee, 2011).

However, not all research agrees, with some finding that individualism is unrelated to materialism (Wong, 1997), suggesting that the relationship of these constructs may be more complex than the literature assumes. In trying to refine the nature of the relationship between individualism-collectivism and materialism, the present research incorporates the horizontal and vertical cultural dimensions (Singelis et al., 1995). Our analysis with data from seven countries revealed that one's level of vertical individualism positively predicts materialism while horizontal individualism shows a negative relationship with materialism. Furthermore, both horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism show negative relationships with materialism; however, horizontal collectivism showed the more negative relationship with materialism than vertical collectivism, supporting that the positive effects of the vertical dimension may partially counterbalance the negative effects of collectivism on materialism. Hence, the present research confirmed that vertical individualism is the only construct that is positively related to materialism while horizontal collectivism showed the most negative relationship with materialism among the four cultural orientations. These results are consistent with those high on vertical individualism believing that material possessions will signal their success to others (Torelli & Shavitt, 2010). On the other hand, those high on horizontal collectivism tend to show less regard for the material values (Torelli et al., 2012).

Our results found that vertical individualism is also the only construct that positively predicts status consumption behavior. Furthermore, materialism mediates the relationship between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior, suggesting that the positive and negative relationships between cultural orientation and materialism can be further applied to the status consumption behavior.

2.8.1. Theoretical Implications

Recent research suggests that collectivistic cultures are as materialistic as individualistic cultures (Awanis et al., 2017; Yoo et al., 2021); however, the present results revealed that both horizontal and vertical collectivists are aversive to materialism. The reason some researchers find that collectivistic countries are materialistic might be that their cultures are indeed becoming individualistic (Hamamura, 2012), where collectivistic countries such as Korea, Japan, and China scored higher on individualism than the USA (Oyserman et al., 2002). Hence, the examination of cultures at individual level could provide clearer insights than at country level in cultural studies (Triandis, 1995; Lalwani et al., 2006).

This research was conducted with multi-country data from seven different countries, where not much related research has been done (e.g., Awanis et al., 2017) despite the importance of allowing enough variance for cultural orientations (Czarnecka et al., 2020). In doing so, it found supporting evidence that only one's level of vertical individualism endorses materialism, and this finding can further reconcile mixed results from the literature. For example, Tobacyk et al. (2011) proposed that Americans will be more materialistic than Polish people as Americans score higher on individualism. However, they found no difference between the two countries in their materialism scores. I suggest that this finding is due to oversimplifying individualism. An early study found that Poland scored higher on vertical individualism than the USA (Poland: $M_{VI} = 20.19$, $SD = 5.10$, US: $M_{VI} = 18.26$, $SD = 5.60$, $t(483) = 3.97$, $p < .001$) (Robert et al., 2000), suggesting that Polish people could be higher on vertical individualism than Americans. Hence, if the vertical dimension of individualism had been considered in the research, the difference between the two countries may have been captured more clearly (e.g., Polish samples might have scored higher on vertical individualism and materialism than the American samples).

Another example is the study of Clarke III and Micken (2002), where French people show a higher materialism score than Americans even though they are lower on individualism. This may also derive from lack of considering horizontal and vertical dimensions in the research. Although France is lower on individualism than the USA, its power distance is higher (Hofstede Insights, 2023). As Hofstede's power distance can serve as a proxy measure that underlies vertical and horizontal distinction (Schimmack et al., 2005), France's higher power distance than the USA indicates that the French may be higher on vertical individualism than Americans which might account for their higher materialism. Similarly, Wong (1997) found no significant effect of individualism on materialism. This result could be due to oversimplifying individualism and materialism in the research since using overall measures for these two constructs may not capture the nuanced relationship as our findings suggest. As such, our research provides supporting evidence that the dimensions of individualism offer additional insight into how individualism relates to materialism.

The positive relationship between individualism and materialism has been predominantly found in Western countries which have independent self-construal (Belk, 1985; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Although, more recent studies found that collectivists have 'collective motives' for being materialistic such as to strengthen social relationships (e.g., Yoo et al., 2021), most studies focus on vertical collectivistic countries, such as Korea and Japan (e.g., Workman & Lee, 2011), instead of considering different dimensions of collectivism, namely horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism (e.g., Torelli et al., 2012). Hence, our research finding that, within collectivism, horizontal collectivism can be more aversive to material values, advances our understanding of the relationship between collectivism and materialism, suggesting that distinguishing horizontal and vertical dimensions is critical in consumer research.

Additionally, our research fills a research gap in the literature that often assumes a close relationship between materialism and status consumption behavior, but with a lack of empirical evidence (e.g., Eastman et al., 1997). The present research directly examines the mediating effect of cultural orientation and status consumption via materialism, which suggests materialism as a significant antecedent of status consumption behavior.

2.8.2. Managerial Implications

Materialism helps to explain consumers' attitudes toward material products, and therefore understanding materialistic values of consumers is critical for implementing a successful marketing strategy. In this regard, our research argues that a more tailored product advertising appeal, which reflects the differences between horizontal or vertical individualism and collectivism, would have greater resonance.

For example, our findings can aid practitioners to manage their marketing strategies effectively. Although practitioners generally assume that individualists are inherently materialists, and thus that they would prefer expensive and luxurious goods, our findings suggest that this would not be always true across all individualistic consumers. A better understanding of the type of individualism a consumer or culture espouses fine-tunes potential advertising appeals. Building on the previous work, which has shown that commercials in vertical cultures (e.g., the USA) often convey messages that highlight the power and status their products can provide (Shavitt & Barnes, 2019), I look at the implication of our work for such advertising messages. I do not wish to overstate the findings; however, I suggest that for consumers who hold high level of vertical individualism, the common method of presenting products such as luxury goods and well-known branded products as a way to exhibit their successful life will be effective. On the contrary, for those

with a more horizontal individualism, advertising focused on how the product would signal success would likely be unsuccessful.

The present evidence supports that marketing messages emphasizing material values such as luxury and prestige can generate a negative response from consumers with high level of collectivism, suggesting that practitioners should avoid excessively using materialism-related taglines in their marketing messages targeted at these subgroups. This strategy would be especially important for practitioners who aim to target consumers with high level of horizontal collectivism, such as Hispanic consumers (e.g., Hispanics; Shavitt & Barnes, 2019), who have been found to respond more positively to benevolent taglines than status-related messages (Torelli et al., 2012). Once again, I endeavor to avoid any overstatement of our findings; however, building on the prior research, I do believe that using value-oriented marketing messages would be more effective than typical materialistic messages for collectivistic consumers. For example, emphasizing community and local values for horizontal collectivistic consumers who endorse equality and benevolence would be more resonant, and highlighting family relationships would be more effective for vertical collectivistic consumers (Nelson & Shavitt, 2002; Oishi et al., 1998).

Finally, as the present research provides evidence that the relationship with materialism leads to status consumption behavior, for status-signaling goods such as luxury products it might be better to target consumers with high materialism as an effective strategy.

2.8.3. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

This research examines the correlational relationship between horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, and materialism. Further examination of the underlying mechanism of power and success to explain the relationships between these constructs is necessary to provide a better theoretical understanding and a thorough guide to practitioners.

As well as examining attitudes toward success or acceptance of hierarchy, other mediators like power distance perceptions that encourage people to engage in more social comparisons might also be examined. People with high level of horizontal cultural orientation probably hold less strong power distance perceptions, which might lead them to engage in less materialism as a means to gaining higher social status.

Another strong follow-up study would experimentally test the results by priming cultural orientation. Zhang and Nelson (2016) suggest that the values of vertical individualism could be primed to persuade consumers to buy status-signaling goods while those primed with values of horizontal collectivism would choose the environmental-friendly products. More research about priming consumers with the values of horizontal individualism (i.e., egalitarianism) and vertical collectivism (i.e., conformity) is necessary to examine if the primed values can lead to changes in materialistic behavior. Future studies could also test the different advertising appeals suggested in our implications section to provide a guideline for marketing practitioners about how to describe their products to best target different consumers with different cultural orientations.

2.9. Conclusion

Chapter 2 is devoted to examining the effect of cultural orientations on materialism and exploring the mediation effect of materialism on the relationship between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior. It finds only vertical individualism positively predicts materialism and status consumption behavior. At the same time, it confirms that materialism mediates the relationship between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior. In doing so, it provides a refined understanding of the effects of culture on materialism and status consumption behavior, adding to the present literature.

Chapter 3. The Relationship between Political Orientation and Materialism: Moderating Role of Regulatory Focus

3.1. Introduction

The investigation into the effects of cultural orientation on materialism and status consumption behavior in the previous chapter has led me to further explore additional drivers of materialism. As political orientation serves as another form of cultural identity, similar to horizontal and vertical cultural orientations, this research project aims to examine whether different political orientation will affect varying levels of materialism.

Evidence supporting the idea that political orientation can influence varying levels of materialism is available in the recent report by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the USA (2022). This report demonstrates that states exhibit distinct consumption styles in terms of material goods. For instance, New York showed just around 24% increase in its expenditure on material goods such as clothing compared to the previous year, while Nevada showed more than a 34% increase in expenditure on material goods. Considering the two states are historically described as liberal and conservative respectively in their political perspectives, this difference in consumption between the two states suggests the possible role of political orientation on consumption preference for material goods. Although researchers have recognized the importance of political orientation in understanding consumer behaviors (Carney et al., 2008), they tend to focus on behavioral outcomes such as complaining and boycotting (Jost et al., 2017; Jung et al., 2017), rather than on consumer values – for example, materialism – despite its importance in consumer behaviors and consumption choices (Flynn et al., 2016).

The psychological features of conservatives and liberals indicate a possible relationship between political orientation and materialism. Conservatives, who prioritize the preservation of in-group values (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003), might avoid materialism that is

often considered against these collective values (Van Boven et al., 2010). On the other hand, liberals, characterized by personality traits such as open to experiences (Oyserman & Schwarz, 2017), might derive greater enjoyment from diverse experiences that material possessions can offer. Hence, I propose that political orientation could be a possible predictor of materialism, with liberals potentially holding stronger materialistic values than conservatives.

3.1.1. Objectives

This chapter aims to examine the relationship between political orientation and materialism with three studies. Study 1 examines the main relationship between political orientation and study 2 explores a moderation role of regulatory focus, especially promotion focus. Study 3 tries to replicate the previous findings using different measures for political orientation and materialism.

This research contributes to previous literature in several ways. First, it opens up the possibility of political orientation as a potential predictor of materialism. By examining regulatory focus as a moderator of this relationship, it also provides a novel approach for the relationship between political orientation and materialism. Second, it provides a feasible way to capture consumers' materialism tendency by using practical methods that can represent political orientation and materialism such as zip code and product preferences. Third, it sets out some suggestions for future research which can investigate political orientation and materialism more deeply and allow practitioners to apply the findings into their marketing strategies more efficiently. Additionally, it provides practical implications for using behavioral measures such as saving and preference for materialistic products to capture consumers' materialism level.

3.2. Literature Review

This chapter investigates the relationship between political orientation and materialism, and the role of regulatory focus as a moderator in this relationship. Hence, this section reviews the definition and conceptualization of political orientation including political conservatism and liberals, and the relationship between political orientation and regulatory focus in the existing literature.

3.2.1. Political Orientation

Political Conservatism

Political conservatism refers to conservative political views and attitudes (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003). Previous research suggests distinct cognitive and personality traits of conservatives such as preference for order and stability over ambiguity and uncertainty (e.g., Jost et al., 2007, see Table 10). Consequently, they tend to be avoidant of changes and uphold the status quo (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003). This has been reflected in their consumption behaviors (Shavitt, 2017). For instance, conservatives often lean towards conventional products rather than newly launched ones, as they perceive the latter as uncertain and potentially risky without the guarantee of safety (Khan et al., 2013). Similarly, Oyserman and Schwarz (2017) suggests that conservatives show a greater affinity for advertisements that emphasize traditional lifestyles compared to those promoting nontraditional ones, such as veganism.

The avoidant attitudes toward change and compliance with the status quo affect other consumer behaviors; for example, complaining and boycotting (Jost et al., 2017, see Table 10). Conservatives tend to favor keeping the existing memberships rather than switching to new ones, even when no additional benefits are offered (Duhachek et al., 2014). Moreover, as they prefer the status quo, they are more accepting of inconveniences and unfairness, resulting in fewer complaints compared to liberals (Jung et al., 2017). Additionally,

conservatives exhibit fewer boycotting than liberals, as they are resistant to social changes and try to maintain the status quo (Jost et al., 2017).

Political Liberalism

Contrary to conservatism, liberalism is characterized by a greater inclination towards openness and tolerance of changes and ambiguity (Oyserman & Schwarz, 2017). Liberals, unlike conservatives, are less likely to harbor a dislike for uncertain situations or maintain the status quo (Jost, 2006). For example, liberals are more favorable to unfamiliar music and less hesitant to purchase newly launched products than conservatives (Khan et al., 2013; Ruth Glasgow et al., 1985). An interesting experiment of Shook and Fazio (2009) demonstrated that liberals are more open to new experiences than conservatives. In their series of studies using a game method called ‘Bean Fest’, where participants have to make decisions about accepting or rejecting beans to achieve higher scores, liberals demonstrated a greater willingness than conservatives to accept new beans, even though the outcome of choosing the new beans could be negative to their scores.

Furthermore, liberals value egalitarianism and actively work to address social inequality, advocating for progressive changes within the system. Contrary to conservatives, liberals tend to believe that a social system may be unethical and unjust (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003). This skepticism towards social systems is also evident in their consumption behavior, such as complaining and disputing. For instance, liberals are more likely to report the complaints about financial products than conservatives, perceiving them as unreasonable and unfair, while conservatives often find the products more acceptable (Jung et al., 2017, see Table 10).

Table 10. Some Key Differences between Conservatives and Liberals and Consumer Behavior

Conservatives	Liberals	Consumer Behavior
Resistant to changes, Maintaining status quo	Progressive attitude to social changes	Conservatives engage less in complaint behavior and boycotting than liberals (Jost et al., 2017; Jung et al., 2017)
Intolerant of ambiguity	Tolerant of uncertainty	Conservatives prefer practical goods over hedonic goods, while liberals prefer hedonic goods over practical goods (Farmer et al., 2021)
Fear of threat and loss	Open to experience	Conservatives possess conventional items, such as calendars and laundry baskets, more than liberals, while liberals possess experience-related items, such as music CDs and travel books, more than conservatives (Carney et al., 2008)
		Conservatives spend and tax less than liberals (Pettersson, 2000*; Blais et al., 1993**)
Need for order, structure, and closure	Integrative complexity	Conservatives are more likely to keep their place neat and tidy than liberals (Carney et al., 2008)

* Swedish samples

** Samples from 15 different countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK, USA, West Germany)

3.2.2. Regulatory Focus and Materialism

Materialism is suggested to consist of three material values, namely success, centrality, and happiness (Richins & Dawson, 1992), where materialism-success refers to a value orientation to consider material possessions as a way to display one's and others' success, materialism-centrality is a value orientation to believe that acquiring material possessions is important in one's life, and materialism-happiness is a value orientation to regard material possessions as a source of happiness in one's life.

In general, there are competing reasons for the relationship between political orientation and materialism. Research suggests the potential for conservatives to be more materialistic than liberals, attributed to their inclination towards competitiveness (Van Lange et al., 2012), which allows people to obtain higher social standing over others through material acquisitions (Van Lange et al., 2012). Meanwhile, as liberals are against social inequality and uphold egalitarianism (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003), they may be less inclined to pursue material possessions as a way to demonstrate higher positions over others. Moreover, research finds that conservatives seek product variety, in a belief that it is a part of social norms in Western culture (Fernandes & Mandel, 2014). This further implies that conservatives may endorse higher levels of materialism compared to liberals.

On the other hand, conservatives may put less importance on materialism in their life, as conservatives tend to preserve in-group values and traditions (Van Tonder, 2017), and materialism is often considered to be opposed to in-group values and harmful to social harmony (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 1997). In contrast, liberals are progressive and open to social changes (Jost et al., 2008), which may influence them to advance their social status using material possessions (Kim et al., 2018). Additionally, conservatives could less enjoy the pleasant experiences material possessions often provide. Conservatives tend to exhibit a greater aversion to novelty (Adaval & Wyer, 2022), thus they may spend less on novel

products, while liberals, more open to new products, are less hesitant to spend their money on novel products (Khan et al., 2013). Hence, conservatives could be less likely than liberals to actively pursue buying or having something new than liberals.

Considering the inherent inconsistency between the characteristics of political orientation and the factors that influence materialism, the prediction of the relationship between political orientation and materialism emerges as a complex task. Consequently, the exploration of potential moderating effects within this relationship assumes importance in understanding this stream of research.

I suggest that regulatory focus can be a potential moderator of the relationship between political orientation and materialism. Regulatory focus refers to one's innate inclination towards a specific type of goal pursuit, motivated by either ideals or their responsibilities and ought (Higgins, 1998). Promotion-focused individuals direct their efforts toward pursuing ideals and aspirations for personal growth and development, whereas prevention-focused individuals prioritize fulfilling obligations and securing personal safety and security (Brockner & Higgins, 2001).

The different goal pursuits derived from the distinct regulatory focus are found to affect consumption choices (Werth & Foerster, 2007). For example, Werth and Foerster (2007) examined the consumption frequency of 'lipsticks' and 'condoms' as a case in point. In their study, lipstick was considered as a promotion-focus product given that it displays consumers' ideal image, while condoms were categorized as prevention-focus products due to their preventive purpose. The findings revealed that promotion-focused consumers exhibited higher consumption frequency of lipsticks than condoms, while prevention-focused consumers used condoms more frequently than lipsticks.

Not much research has examined how regulatory focus influences the level of materialism; however, Lens et al. (2010) found supporting evidence that promotion focus is

positively related to materialism whereas prevention focus is negatively related to materialism. Building on this finding, I argue that promotion focus will moderate the relationship between political orientation and materialism where those with high promotion focus will endorse materialism more than those with low promotion focus as materialism can help achieve one's aims and goals (e.g., financial success and affluent lifestyle).

3.3. Hypotheses Development

Despite the mixed evidence in the literature, I predict that conservatives will be more materialistic than liberals for several reasons. First, materialism has a success motivation to display one's more successful life than others, which accepts power difference and social hierarchy. As conservatives are more willing to accept the social system and inequality (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003), they might be more inclined to materialism as the means to differentiate their social standing from others. On the contrary, the key value for liberals is egalitarianism, and they are opposed to social inequality (Jost et al., 2008), which may lead liberals to endorse material values less than conservatives.

Second, materialism encourages competitiveness to have more and nicer things than others to create status difference. Conservatives are assumed to be more competitive than liberals (Van Lange et al., 2012), which suggests that they are more likely to pursue material possessions than liberals. The competitiveness of conservatives also encourages them to choose "better" products than others, while liberals prefer "different" products from others (Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018). Thus, conservatives may consider material possessions as a reward to their competition, leading them to exhibit stronger material values than liberals.

Third, conservatives lean toward conventional and traditional values, which materialistic products often convey. The sense of enduring luxury and timeless appeal is often associated with high-end brands; for example, "Timeless Excellence" by Rolex and "A

Century of Elegance” by Bentley are showing how materialistic products, especially those that are luxurious and prestigious, display the conventional and traditional values of success that material products can provide. Conservatives may see more appeal in those traditional values of success than liberals, and thus be more likely to endorse materialism than liberals. Accordingly, this research expects the following:

Hypothesis 1: Conservatives will show stronger materialism than liberals.

Previous research suggests there should be salient goal orientation to better understand consumer preference. For example, Kim et al. (2018) argue that a certain goal should exist to understand the effects of political orientation on consumer outcomes, encouraging them to pursue their objective. Indeed, their research did not yield significant effects of political orientation on luxury preference; however, status-goal existence led conservatives to be more inclined to luxury preference than liberals.

Although materialism can serve as the means to achieve one’s ideal state, such as financial satisfaction and pleasure experiences, it is often treated as an undesirable value due to its self-focused values rather than collective ones (Van Boven et al., 2010). The collective values are significant to both conservatives and liberals. For example, they are the key values to maintain traditions to conservatives, and to keep the egalitarian goals for liberals. Therefore, materialism could be considered a value that they are encouraged to avoid and, even though they wish to enhance their social status and achieve their success-related goals through material acquisitions, it would be hard to pursue material possessions due to its negative impression on collective values. Hence, to better understand the effects of political orientation on materialism, I need to investigate those who are willing to take a risk to achieve their ideal goals and state. That is, those who are highly promotion-focused would

yield a more accurate relationship between political orientation and materialism as it filters out the conflicting values political conservatives may hold toward materialism (Higgins, 1998).

As such, promotion-focus could be the third variable to unravel the relationship between political orientation and materialism. If someone is promotion-focused, their personal goals and self-development become more visible than ever, which might have been suppressed by social norms and tradition. That is, conservatives with low promotion-focus will try to maintain the status quo, accepting their social standing in their society. However, conservatives with high promotion focus will have stronger success-related motivation to achieve higher position over others than those with low promotion focus. On the other hand, prior research suggests that liberals would be already on the high end of promotion focus (e.g., Cornwell & Higgins, 2013). For example, they are progressive, advocating for social change, and often driven by a desire to improve society and themselves (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008). Therefore, their materialistic tendencies may not be as strongly influenced as their promotion-focus increases.

Hypothesis 2: With high promotion focus, conservatives will endorse stronger materialism than those of liberals.

Prevention focus, contrary to promotion focus, discourages individuals from actively pursuing personal goals and ideal states (Higgins, 1998). Instead, it encourages them to be risk-averse, prompting those with a prevention focus to maintain their current position and ensure the best safety by preserving the status quo. Alternatively, it often drives those individuals to pursue material possessions to avoid any form of insecurity or uncertainty. For instance, prevention focus can lead individuals to seek material possessions to best secure

their financial stability or desirable self-image, minimizing potential risks and undesirable outcomes in their lives. Due to this competing mechanism, it is reasonable to expect that prevention focus may not significantly influence the level of materialism, therefore, no hypothesis was established regarding prevention focus. A more reasonable hypothesis would center around promotion focus with materialism, which is often associated with a desire for acquisition and accumulation, typically driven by a focus on personal gains and aspirations (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

3.4. Overview of the Studies

Chapter 3 includes a comprehensive examination consisting of three studies. The primary objective of study 1 is to explore the relationship between political orientation and materialism, including its subcomponents. Building upon the findings of study 1, study 2 aims to replicate the results while additionally exploring the potential moderating effect of regulatory focus on the relationship between political orientation and materialism. Finally, study 3 aims to replicate the findings using different measures for political orientation, specifically election results, and for materialism, including spending (vs. saving) and preference for materialistic goods (vs. practical goods).

3.5. Study 1: Preliminary Exploration of the Effects of Political Orientation on Materialism

Study 1 is conducted to explore the relationship between political orientation and materialism, including its subcomponents.

3.5.1. Methods

3.5.1.1. Participants

Initially, 256 US residents participated in the study through CloudResearch. However, 61 participants were removed due to their insincere responses including straight lining (Greszki et al., 2014). I further removed those whose political orientation is unclear, implying potential insincere responses. For example, nine participants reported over 5 on the political ideology scale (out of 7), indicating themselves as conservatives, but they identified their preferred party preference as Democrats, which does not match their political ideology. Similarly, four participants reported lower than 4 on the political ideology scale (out of 7), indicating themselves as liberals; however, their political party preference was Republicans. After removing those participants whose political orientation is mixed, 176 participants remained (Female = 118, $M_{age} = 46.18$, $SD_{age} = 15.192$). The key descriptive results are in Table 11.

3.5.1.2. Measures

Political Orientation

To measure political orientation, two items were used. First, I asked participants their political party preference using a single item as following: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or Independent, or something else?”. Among the participants, 49 of them identified themselves as Republican (27.1%), 67 as Democrats (37.0%), 52 as Independents (28.7%), 4 as others (2.2%), and 9 of them responded they have no preference (5.0%). Then, I asked their general political ideology using a single item “To what extent do you describe yourself as liberal or conservative?” on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = extremely liberal, 7 = extremely conservative). The average response for this item was 3.95 ($SD = 1.586$).

Materialism

The 18-item Material Values Scale (MVS) of Richins and Dawson (1992) was used to measure materialism and reverse items were reworded, as suggested by previous research (Dueber et al., 2022). MVS consists of three subscales, and some example items for materialism-success include: “I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes” and “I think the amount of material objects people own is a sign of success”; for materialism-centrality, “I usually buy more than what I need” and “The things I own are very important to me”; and for materialism-happiness, “I would be happier if I owned nicer things” and “I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things”. (See Appendix A for full items.)

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics in Study 1

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	46.19	15.192
Materialism	3.75	1.302
Materialism-Success	3.53	1.607
Materialism-Centrality	3.29	1.376
Materialism-Happiness	4.08	1.756
Political Ideology	3.95	1.586

Political Party Preference		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Republican	49	27.1	27.1	27.1
	Democrat	67	37.0	37.0	64.1
	Independent	52	28.7	28.7	92.8
	Other	4	2.2	2.2	95.0
	No preference	9	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	181	100.0	100.0	

Income (in USD)		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 10,000	21	11.6	11.6	11.6
	10,000 to 19,999	23	12.7	12.7	24.3
	20,000 to 29,999	27	14.9	14.9	39.2
	30,000 to 39,999	19	10.5	10.5	49.7
	40,000 to 49,999	18	9.9	9.9	59.7
	50,000 to 59,000	14	7.7	7.7	67.4
	60,000 to 69,999	11	6.1	6.1	73.5
	70,000 to 79,999	12	6.6	6.6	80.1
	80,000 to 89,999	4	2.2	2.2	82.3
	90,000 to 99,999	7	3.9	3.9	86.2
	100,000 to 149,999	16	8.8	8.8	95.0
	150,000 or more	9	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	181	100.0	100.0	

3.5.2. Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Structure of MVS

To examine the validity of materialism subcomponents, exploratory factor analysis was conducted. All 18 items were put in the analysis with varimax rotation. The factor analysis with the eigenvalues greater than 1 yielded three factors as previous research, accounting for 64.82% of the variance. As expected, a dimensionality issue was found with materialism-centrality as two items for the component (“I put more emphasis on material things than most people I know” and “The things I own are very important to me”) showed confounding loadings with materialism-success with the factor loadings of 0.502 and 0.435 respectively, and these are dropped from the further analysis (see Table 12 for the final items).

Table 12. EFA Results for MVS in Study 1^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
Materialism-Success			
Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.	.846	.152	.119
The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	.835	.141	.140
I think the amount of material objects people own is a sign of success.	.802	.135	.149
I like to own things that impress people.	.746	.184	.353
I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.	.713	.214	.168
I pay much attention to the material objects other people own.	.611	.203	.549
Materialism-Happiness			
I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.	.275	.847	.116
I don't yet have all the things I really need to enjoy life.	.085	.809	.149
My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.	.282	.803	.195
It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.	.098	.798	.267
I would be happier if I owned nicer things.	.409	.719	.212
Materialism-Centrality			

I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical.	.144	.195	.755
I usually buy more than what I need.	.053	.245	.710
I am not worried about keeping life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.	.172	.025	.692
I like a lot of luxury in my life.	.481	.328	.604
Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.	.453	.338	.524

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

3.5.3. Results

To examine the distinct relationship between political orientation and materialism, the research focuses only on Republicans and Democrats, which are on opposite sides to each other. By doing this, it is expected to provide a clearer relationship between these two constructs (conservatives and liberals).

Using political ideology as an independent variable and materialism as a dependent variable, the regression analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between political ideology and overall materialism ($b = -0.02$, $p = 0.72$), thus hypothesis 1 was not supported. Although I did not establish any hypothesis with each materialism subcomponent, I further analyzed the effects of political orientation on materialism subcomponents to examine if materialism subcomponents can yield some different results. The results found that there is no significant effect of political orientation on materialism (materialism-success: $b = -0.001$, $p = 0.99$, materialism-centrality: $b = 0.04$, $p = 0.54$, materialism-happiness: $b = -0.13$, $p = 0.12$).

3.5.4. Discussion

Study 1 is conducted to explore the relationship between political orientation and materialism. Contrary to our expectation, no significant relationship between political orientation and materialism was found, suggesting that there may be competing effects of political orientation on materialism. That is, the avoidance of material values by conservatives may conflict with their willingness to pursue material possessions as the means to advance their social standing. To refine this possible competing mechanism, I tried to deconstruct each component of material values, finding that the relationship between political orientation and materialism subcomponents remains insignificant with all three subcomponents.

The non-significant results suggest the possibility for other variables to influence the relationship between political orientation and materialism. One avenue of thinking is that conservatives and liberals with high promotion focus will have different attitudes towards materialism, where the goal to meet their ideal state through material possessions is salient (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008). Hence, study 2 is to examine an important moderation role of regulatory focus in the relationship between political orientation and materialism.

3.6. Study 2: Examination of Moderating Effect of Regulatory Focus

As study 1 found no main effect of political orientation, study 2 aims to confirm the findings of study 1 and examine if regulatory focus can moderate the relationship between political orientation and materialism.

3.6.1. Methods

3.6.1.1. Participants

A total of 261 responses were collected from the US residents through CloudResearch; however, 34 responses were removed from the dataset due to insincere responses including straight lining. As study 1, I further removed 23 responses since their political party preferences did not match with political ideology. For example, two participants who responded lower than 3 on the political ideology item (out of 7), indicating themselves as liberals, identified themselves as Republican when they were asked their party preference, and 21 participants who responded higher than 5 on the political ideology item (out of 7), indicating themselves as conservatives, identified themselves as Democrats when they were asked their party preference, resulting in the possibility of insincere responses. As a result, the final number of responses were 204 (Female = 112, $M_{age} = 43.74$). Descriptive statistics for the key variables can be found in Table 13.

3.6.1.2. Measures

Political Ideology

Study 2 used the same measures for political orientation used in study 1, which is a single item on 7-point scale (1 = extremely liberal, 7 = extremely conservative) and one item asking their political party preference. The average value for political ideology was 3.97 ($SD = 1.625$); 48 identified themselves as Republican (23.5%), 62 as Democrat (30.4%), 76 as Independent (37.3%), 3 as others (1.5%), and 15 as no preference (7.4%).

Materialism

The same measure for materialism from study 1 was used in study 2, which is an 18-item Material Values Scale by Richins and Dawson (1992).

Promotion Focus

The 11 items in the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ) of Higgins et al. (2001) was used to measure promotion focus on a 7-point Likert scale. Six of the original set of items are for promotion focus, including some example items such as “Growing up, do you often do well at different things that you try?” and “I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life” ($M_{promotion} = 4.63$, $SD = 1.145$) (see Appendix E for full items).

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics in Study 2

	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Age	43.74	18.058		
Materialism	3.67	1.402		
Materialism-Success	3.42	1.538		
Materialism-Centrality	3.67	1.474		
Materialism-Happiness	3.97	1.791		
Political Ideology	3.97	1.625		
Promotion-focus	4.63	1.145		

Political Party Preference	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Republican	48	23.5	23.5	23.5
Democrat	62	30.4	30.4	53.9
Independent	76	37.3	37.3	91.2
Other	3	1.5	1.5	92.6
No preference	15	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total	204	100.0	100.0	

Income	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
less than \$10,000	26	12.7	12.7	12.7
\$10,000 to \$19,999	24	11.8	11.8	24.5
\$20,000 to \$29,999	36	17.6	17.6	42.2
\$30,000 to \$39,999	18	8.8	8.8	51.0
\$40,000 to \$49,999	16	7.8	7.8	58.8
\$50,000 to \$59,999	24	11.8	11.8	70.6
\$60,000 to \$69,999	14	6.9	6.9	77.5
\$70,000 to \$79,999	11	5.4	5.4	82.8
\$80,000 to \$89,999	10	4.9	4.9	87.7
\$90,000 to \$99,999	7	3.4	3.4	91.2
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10	4.9	4.9	96.1
\$150,000 or more	8	3.9	3.9	100.0
Total	204	100.0	100.0	

3.6.2. Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Structure of MVS

Eighteen items of MVS were put in the analysis with varimax rotation. The maximum likelihood factor analysis with a cut-off point of 0.40 and the eigenvalues greater than 1 yielded three factors as the previous research, accounting for 65.05% of the variance (see Table 14). As expected, materialism-centrality had dimensionality issues where two items for materialism-centrality (“I put more emphasis on material things than most people I know” and “I like a lot of luxury in my life”) showed confounding loadings with materialism-success with the loadings of 0.692 and 0.533 respectively, and one item (“The things I own are very important to me”) was cross-loaded with materialism-happiness with the loadings of 0.446, and one item could not meet the acceptable cut-off point with the communalities of 0.200 (“I am not worried about keeping life simple, as far as possessions are concerned”). The Cronbach alpha for all the items is 0.93, which is in acceptable range to aggregate into one measure.

Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Structure of RFQ

Eleven items of RFQ were put in the analysis with varimax rotation. The maximum likelihood factor analysis with the fixed number of factors to yield two factors for this study resulted in accounting for 47.24% of the variance (see Tables 13 and 15). Three items for promotion focus showed confounding loadings with prevention focus with the loadings of 0.527, 0.453, and 0.309 respectively (“When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don’t perform as well as I ideally would like to do”, “Compared to most people, are you typically unable to get what you want out of life?”, and “I have found very few hobbies or activities in my life that capture my interest or motivate me to put effort into them”) and one item for prevention focus yielded itself as one distinct factor with the loading

of 0.593 (“How often did you obey rules and regulations that were established by your parents?”). Hence, these items were removed from further analysis. The Cronbach alpha for promotion-focus items is 0.66, which is in acceptable range to aggregate into one measure.

Table 14. EFA Results for MVS in Study 2^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
Materialism-Success			
I like to own things that impress people.	.776	.167	.365
The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	.774	.241	.119
I think the amount of material objects people own is a sign of success.	.743	.349	.118
Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.	.738	.401	.167
I pay much attention to the material objects other people own.	.715	.229	.391
I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.	.608	.297	.113
Materialism-Happiness			
I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.	.241	.830	.240
My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.	.255	.825	.178
I don't yet have all the things I really need to enjoy life.	.125	.817	.193
It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.	.273	.800	.229

I would be happier if I owned nicer things.	.442	.724	.270
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Materialism-Centrality

I usually buy more than what I need.	.026	.109	.820
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I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical.	.389	.173	.694
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Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.	.447	.356	.501
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 15. EFA Results of RFQ in Study 2^a

	Component	
	1	2
Prevention Focus		
Growing up, would you ever “cross the line” by doing things that your parents would not tolerate?	.841	.007
Growing up, did you ever act in ways that your parents thought were objectionable?	.789	.099
Did you get on your parents’ nerves often when you were growing up?	.763	-.009
Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times.	.701	.101
Promotion Focus		
I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.	.018	.769
Do you often do well at different things that you try?	.170	.749
How often have you accomplished things that got you “psyched” to work even harder	.159	.701

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

3.6.3. Results

Regression analysis revealed that significant main effect of political orientation was not found on materialism and its subcomponents, yielding the same results from study 1 (overall materialism: $b = 0.05$, $p = 0.38$, materialism-success: $b = 0.08$, $p = 0.23$, materialism-centrality: $b = 0.04$, $p = 0.46$, materialism-happiness: $b = 0.03$, $p = 0.69$).

Moderation analysis was conducted with Process macro, using model 1 with political ideology as an independent variable, materialism as a dependent variable, and promotion focus as a moderator. The bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals ($N = 5,000$) were set to test the significance of the moderation effect of promotion focus. In the analysis, conservatives were defined as those whose political ideology was +1SD than the mean score and liberals were those whose political ideology was -1SD than the mean score. The moderation analysis results revealed that, with high promotion focus, conservatives hold stronger materialism than liberals at marginal level ($b = 0.075$, $p = 0.06$), supporting hypothesis 2. Although it was not my focal interest, I analyzed each materialism subcomponent, finding that among those with high promotion focus, conservatives showed higher materialism-success and materialism-centrality than liberals (materialism-success: $b = 0.11$, $p = 0.02$, materialism-centrality: $b = 0.08$, $p = 0.05$). However, among those with high promotion focus, there was no difference in materialism-happiness between conservatives and liberals ($b = 0.09$, $p = 0.15$).

3.6.4. Discussion

Similar to study 1, study 2 finds evidence that the relationship between political orientation and materialism is much more complex than the literature generally suggests, implying the possible presence of competing effects from political conservatism and liberalism on materialism. Nevertheless, it found the moderating role of promotion focus on the

relationship between political orientation and materialism. Among those with high promotion focus, who progressively approach towards their desired goals (Higgins et al., 2001), conservatives endorse stronger materialism than liberals. These findings are consistent with the idea that the relationship between political orientation and materialism becomes clearer when specific goal pursuit is salient, such as pursuit of an ideal state (e.g., promotion focus) without any other possible goals (Kim et al., 2018).

The further analysis with materialism-success and materialism-centrality also revealed that high promotion-focused conservatives are likely to use material acquisitions to be more successful than others and to consider material possessions as more important in their life than liberals. Interestingly, it found political orientation is unrelated to materialism-happiness among the high promotion-focused. This finding suggests that material possessions are equally important to achieve life satisfaction and feel happiness for both conservatives and liberals with high promotion focus (Richins, 2017).

The significant finding from study 2 emphasizes the necessity of replicating the observed effects of political orientation on materialism while incorporating behavioral variables. Specifically, it is important to explore materialism through the lens of specific consumer behaviors such as spending (vs. saving) and possessing (vs. sharing) to see if political orientation can affect behavioral outcomes of materialism under promotion-focused goal pursuit. In the similar vein, political orientation could be captured by using real-life variables, such as consumers' political attitudes (e.g., if they agree or disagree with political issues such as abortion and immigration) and election results of their residence. This further investigation will allow us to derive more practical implications from the present research and shed light on the applied aspects of the findings.

3.7. Study 3: Replication of Findings using Real-Life Measures for Materialism and Political Orientation

Study 3 aims to further examine the relationship between political orientation and materialism, using a different measure for both political orientation and materialism. Previous research suggests that political orientation can be identified in multiple ways (Jost et al., 2017). For example, a proxy measure using zip code (Oishi et al., 2021) or attitudes toward social issues including immigration and abortion could serve as political orientation (Jung et al., 2017). By using real-life measures for political orientation, study 3 attempts to provide more practical contributions to the practitioners and researchers.

Study 3 also sought to use different measures to identify an individual's materialism. As materialism is related to multiple key consumer behaviors such as spending and consumption choices, using behavioral measures could yield more practical implications in the field. Literature suggests materialism would be reflected in saving and sharing intentions (Watson, 2003) and preference for luxuries over practical goods (Gurel-Atay et al., 2021). Accordingly, study 3 measures political orientation using political issue-based items, election results by zip code, and measures intention to share (vs. possess) and save (vs. spend) and preference for materialistic goods (vs. practical goods) as behavioral variables for materialism.

3.7.1. Methods

3.7.1.1. Participants

A total of 265 US citizens participated in study 3 through Prolific. As this research is mainly interested in political conservatism and liberalism, study 3 only focuses on respondents who identify themselves as either Republicans or Democrats as the previous two studies did; 142 of them are female (53.6%), 10 of them are described as “others” in terms of their gender,

and the average age is 38.25 years old ($SD = 13.27$). Descriptive analysis results for the key variables can be found in Table 16.

3.7.1.2. Measures

Political Orientation

Two measures were used for political orientation. First, an issue-based political orientation was measured using eight items from previous research (Jung et al., 2017). Those items are about social issues that could yield distinct attitudes based on one's political orientation. Some examples are "homosexuality should be accepted (discouraged) by society" and "stricter laws against abortion should be passed (should not be passed)". The participants were asked if they agree or disagree with the items. The full list of issue-based political ideology items can be found in Appendix E. All the nine items are good to be aggregated ($\alpha = 0.89$) and then coded as 1 for choosing conservative statements and 0 for choosing liberal statements, yielding from 0 for choosing all the liberal items to 9 for choosing all the conservative items.

Additional measures for political orientation are the 2020 election results by the county and the state. Study 3 converted participants' zip codes into conservatives and liberals by both county-level and state-level, since some counties may hold conservative (liberal) political attitudes while the election results of their state turned out to be liberal (conservative). The election results and issue-based political ideology were significantly correlated (election results by county and issue-based political ideology: $r = -0.232$, $p < 0.001$, election results by state: $r = -0.166$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that issue-based political orientation can successfully predict election results.

Materialism

Three behavioral intentions were measured for materialism. First, I measured sharing intentions, asking participants to choose between sharing and possessing if they have an extra US\$500. Second, I measured saving intentions, asking participants to choose between saving and spending if they have an extra US\$1,000. Finally, I measured their preference for materialistic products (over practical products) by using a modified measure of Khan and Dhar (2006). Participants were asked to choose between a materialistic product that was designer made and expensive and a practical one. I also measured the 18-item MVS by Richins and Dawson (1992).

Table 16. Descriptive Statistics in Study 3

		Mean	Std. Deviation		
Age		38.25	13.270		
Materialism		3.45	1.197		
Materialism-Success		2.98	1.336		
Materialism-Centrality		2.27	0.991		
Materialism-Happiness		4.17	1.698		
Promotion Focus		4.45	0.942		
Issue-based Political Orientation		-5.6868	5.05987		

		N	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Political Orientation by	Republican	105	39.6	40.2	40.2
Zip code (State-level)	Democrat	156	58.9	59.8	100.0
	Total	261	98.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.5		

		N	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Political Orientation	Republican	101	38.1	38.7	38.7
by Zip code	Democrat	160	60.4	61.3	100.0
(County-level)	Total	261	98.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.5		

		N	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Saving Intention	Spending	54	20.4	20.4	20.4
	Saving	211	79.6	79.6	100.0

		N	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Purchase	Practical goods	221	83.4	83.4	83.4
Intention	Materialistic goods	44	16.6	16.6	100.0
	Total	265	100.0	100.0	

3.7.2. Analysis

Real-life Measures for Political Orientation

To confirm if issue-based political orientation and election results can be used as real-life measures for political orientation, I examine if issue-based political orientation can predict election results at both state-level and county-level. The regression analysis revealed that both conservative states and counties scored higher on issue-based political orientation measures (state-level: $b = 0.015$, $p = 0.02$, county-level: $b = 0.021$, $p < 0.001$), implying that those real-life measures can demonstrate both state-level and county-level political orientation.

Compatibility of Behavioral Measures with MVS

Eighteen items of MVS were included in EFA. The maximum likelihood factor analysis with a cut-off point of 0.40 and the eigenvalues greater than 1 yielded three factors as the previous research suggests accounting for 64.50% of the variance. However, one item for materialism-centrality (“I put more emphasis on material things than most people I know”) was cross-loaded with items for materialism-success with factor loadings of 0.578; therefore, it was removed from further analysis (see Table 17). The EFA results of RFQ were acceptable, the maximum likelihood factor analysis with a cut-off point of 0.40 and the eigenvalues greater than 1 yielded two factors as the previous research suggests accounting for 51.2% of the variance (see Table 18).

Behavioral measures for materialism are dummy coded (sharing = 1, possessing = 0; saving = 1, buying = 0; preference for materialistic product = 1, practical product = 0, respectively), and to confirm the validity of our measures, I conducted logistic regression analysis to examine if materialism can predict these behavioral intentions. The results revealed that materialism did not predict sharing (vs. possessing) significantly ($b = 0.002$, $p =$

0.74). Consequently, I decided to drop ‘sharing’ from the behavioral materialism measure as it was not related to materialism. However, materialism significantly predicted saving (vs. buying) intention, suggesting that the stronger the materialism, the less willing to save ($b = -0.064, p = 0.002$). Finally, materialism significantly predicts the preference for materialistic product (over practical product) ($b = 0.049, p = 0.01$). Hence, I used saving (vs. buying) intentions and preference for materialistic (vs. practical) product as behavioral measures of materialism.

Table 17. EFA Results of MVS in Study 3^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
Materialism-Success			
I think the amount of material objects people own is a sign of success.	.788	.315	.039
Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.	.760	.184	.144
I pay much attention to the material objects other people own.	.755	.243	.263
I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.	.753	.141	.225
The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	.734	.293	.142
I like to own things that impress people.	.684	.187	.375
Materialism-Happiness			
My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.	.199	.878	.159
I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.	.148	.870	.172
I don't yet have all the things I really need to enjoy life.	.239	.801	.063
I would be happier if I owned nicer things.	.336	.793	.145
It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like	.227	.790	.189
Materialism-Centrality			
I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical.	.048	.215	.816
I usually buy more than what I need.	.108	-.056	.727
Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.	.266	.296	.684
I like a lot of luxury in my life.	.516	.181	.600
I am not worried about keeping life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.	.201	.112	.533
The things I own are very important to me.	.202	.333	.373

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 18. EFA Results of RFQ in Study 3^a

	Component	
	1	2
Growing up, did you ever act in ways that your parents' thought were objectionable?	.896	.042
Growing up, would you ever "cross the line" by doing things that your parents would not tolerate?	.858	.037
Did you get on your parents' nerves often when you were growing up?	.811	.088
How often did you obey rules and regulations that were established by your parents?	-.662	-.068
Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times.	.522	.325
I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.	-.166	-.736
When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don't perform as well as I ideally would like to do.	.295	.686
Do you often do well at different things that you try?	-.012	-.670
How often have you accomplished things that got you "psyched" to work even harder?	.133	-.620
I have found very few hobbies or activities in my life that capture my interest or motivate me to put effort into them.	.073	.594
Compared to most people, are you typically unable to get what you want out of life?	.295	.428

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

3.7.3. Results

Political Orientation and MVS

Similar to prior studies, no main effect of issue-based political ideology on materialism subcomponents was found (overall materialism: $b = -0.004$, $p = 0.79$, materialism-success: $b = 0.021$, $p = 0.20$, materialism-centrality: $b = -0.011$, $p = 0.36$, materialism-happiness: $b = -0.025$, $p = 0.23$). These results replicate the findings from previous studies of nonsignificant effects of political orientation on materialism. In addition, no main effect of political orientation by election results on materialism subcomponents was found when using both election results by state and county (election results by state; overall materialism: $b = -0.226$, $p = 0.13$, materialism-success: $b = -0.217$, $p = 0.20$, materialism-centrality: $b = -0.130$, $p = 0.30$, materialism-happiness: $b = -0.310$, $p = 0.15$, election results by county; overall materialism: $b = 0.072$, $p = 0.64$, materialism-success: $b = 0.064$, $p = 0.71$, materialism-centrality: $b = -0.046$, $p = 0.71$, materialism-happiness: $b = 0.125$, $p = 0.56$).

Political Orientation and Behavioral Measures for Materialism

A logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of issue-based political orientation on the likelihood of saving and preference for materialistic product. The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 7.937$, $p = 0.047$. The model explained 4.7% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in the saving intention and correctly classified 79.3% of cases where increasing political conservatism measured by issue-based items was related to an increased likelihood of saving intention, suggesting that conservatives are low on materialistic tendency. This result is conflicting with the findings of studies 1 and 2 and failing to support hypothesis 1. However, political orientation measured by election results was not associated with saving intention, replicating the findings of studies 1 and 2. Further analysis revealed that there was no significant main effect of political orientation on

preference for materialistic products ($\chi^2(3) = 3.525, p = 0.32$). Again, the non-significant effect of political orientation on materialistic tendency was found. Overall, the results with saving intention mostly show the non-significant effect of political orientation on materialism, but also provide mixed results with previous studies.

Effects of Regulatory Focus

Using issue-based political orientation as an independent variable, there was no moderation effect of promotion focus on the relationship between political orientation and materialism ($b = -0.01, p = 0.55$). Further analysis did not find its moderating effect on materialism subcomponents (materialism-success: $b = -0.02, p = 0.21$, materialism-centrality: $-0.01, p = 0.57$, materialism-happiness: $b = 0.01, p = 0.66$). There was no moderation effect of promotion focus on the relationship between issue-based political orientation and saving ($b = 0.04, p = 0.34$), nor preference for materialistic products ($b = -0.03, p = 0.34$). Hence, hypothesis 2 was not supported using issue-based political orientation as the predictor.

Then election results by state-level were used as an independent variable. No significant moderating effect of promotion focus on materialism was found for both materialism and most of its subcomponents (overall materialism: $b = -0.16, p = 0.29$, materialism-success: $b = 0.01, p = 0.97$, materialism-happiness: $b = -0.27, p = 0.18$). Interestingly, the results found that among those who are low on promotion focus, liberals were higher on materialism-centrality than conservatives ($b = -0.26, p = 0.05$). No further moderating effect was found when materialism was measured by real-life measures (saving intention: $b = 0.10, p = 0.77$, preference for materialistic products ($b = -0.24, p = 0.5$). Thus, hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Finally, election results by county-level were used as an independent variable. Promotion focus did not yield significant moderating effect on the relationship between

election results and materialism and its subcomponents (overall materialism: $b = 0.11, p = 0.47$, materialism-success: $b = 0.16, p = 0.36$, materialism-centrality: $b = 0.01, p = 0.96$, materialism-happiness: $b = 0.10, p = 0.61$), failing hypothesis 2. The results did not yield significant moderating effect of promotion focus on saving intention ($b = -0.42, p = 0.22$). However, promotion focus moderates the relationship between election results and preference for materialistic products at marginally significant level ($b = -0.64, p = 0.088$). Yet, the result suggests that conservatives with high promotion focus showed lower preference for materialistic products than liberals, which is conflicting with the findings from study 2.

3.7.4. Discussion

Study 3 examined the previous findings using real-life measures for political orientation and materialism. The results showed stronger intention for saving of conservatives compared to liberals, indicating that conservatives might be leaning toward financial securing behaviors, such as saving. Though this result is conflicting with the previous findings of studies 1 and 2, the result is aligned with the previous findings that conservatives tend to secure their safety and avoid potential risks (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003). Presumably, the conflicting results may derive from different measures for materialism. Hence, a cautious and more accurate interpretation for this result would be that conservatives show more financially safe behaviors, such as saving, than liberals as they tend to oppose social issues that could be a potential harm to them; for example, immigration, abortion, and environmental laws.

In terms of the moderating effect of promotion focus, it yielded conflicting results from the previous findings, showing that liberals identified by election results at state-level with low promotion focus are higher on materialism-centrality than conservatives. Presumably, a decrease in promotion focus may divert liberals from their priority goals and

ideals, such as community, social relationships, and egalitarian actions, prompting a shift towards material acquisitions instead.

Contrary to this finding, among those with high promotion focus, liberals identified by county-level election results showed stronger preference for materialistic products than conservatives at marginal level, suggesting mixed results throughout the study. I assume that there could be discrepancy between material values and behavioral intentions (Maio et al., 2001), even though the material values could predict these behavioral intentions. Hence, further studies to replicate the findings need to be conducted, and future research requires validation of the behavioral measures and their compatibility with the existing materialism scale.

3.8. General Discussion

Previous research suggests that different personality features and motivations associated with each political ideology can have distinct effects on consumer behaviors (e.g., Van Tonder, 2017). For example, conservatives tend to fear any changes as they could bring them threats and risks, and therefore they tend to stick to familiar ways instead of trying new things and taking any risks (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003). On the other hand, liberals are willing to take risks and pursue social changes. Building on previous research, this research tried to unravel the complex relationship between political orientation and materialism using three studies. I expected conservatives will be higher on materialism than liberals. Study 1 was conducted to examine this hypothesis and revealed that there was no significant difference on materialism between conservatives and liberals.

I postulate that the third variable might moderate the relationship and provide clearer effects of political orientation on materialism, which motivates us to conduct study 2 to examine the moderating effect of regulatory focus. Consistent with previous findings, study 2

did not reveal a significant direct effect of political orientation on materialism. However, when examining high promotion-focused individuals, a noteworthy distinction emerged, whereby conservatives exhibited higher levels of materialism-success compared to liberals, while both groups did not significantly differ on materialism-happiness. This finding highlights several key insights: firstly, to understand the relationship between political orientation and materialism, it is essential to consider the salience of specific goal pursuits; secondly, both political orientations demonstrate no difference in their pursuit of material goods for achieving happiness, which aligns with recent survey results (Pew Research Center, 2021) indicating material possessions as a universal end state among human beings; thirdly, conservatives, particularly when driven by promotion-focused goal pursuit, are more inclined to seek material acquisitions as a means to advance their social standing.

Study 3 aims to replicate the findings using real-life measures for both political orientation and materialism. The results confirmed that saving intention (vs. spending) and preference for materialistic goods (vs. practical goods) can predict materialism, implying the potential usage of these real-life measures to identify materialistic consumers based on their consumption behaviors.

3.8.1. Theoretical Contributions

Political orientation plays important roles in various consumer behaviors such as brand loyalty and consumption preferences (Chan & Ilicic, 2019). For example, conservatives prefer national brand and conventional products over foreign and novel ones (Khan et al., 2013). Similar results were also found in early studies; for instance, conservatives are found to prefer conventional items such as American flags and calendars, while liberals prefer items that can display their openness to experiences such as travel maps, books, and CDs (Carney et al., 2008). Logically then it follows that political orientation could be linked to consumers'

materialism, which, however, has not yet been fully explored and remains as a research gap (e.g., Friesen & Hibbing, 2016). Hence, this research examines the relationship between political orientations and materialism. In doing so, it fills the research gap and advances the literature on political orientation and consumer behavior.

Through three studies, the present research found no main effect of political orientation on materialism. I assume that this may be derived from the conflicting effects of political orientation on materialism. In contrast to my prediction, some findings from the previous literature suggest that conservatives could be less materialistic than others. For example, conservatives are less willing to change and more inclined to maintain the status quo than liberals (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003). This indicates that they are less willing to climb up the ladder using material acquisitions, and they will maintain their present status instead. On the other hand, liberals are progressive and intend to move up to higher status using material acquisitions (Kim et al., 2018). Hence, conservatives could be lower on materialism than liberals.

Furthermore, conservatives are more hesitant to adopt novel products compared to liberals (Khan et al., 2013). This suggests that liberals may have a greater propensity to enjoy more pleasurable experiences that material possessions often provide. Liberals are also more open to experiences, thus they are more inclined to seek out new and innovative products, while conservatives stick to the conventional products that they are more familiar with. Accordingly, conservatives may display less inclination toward material possessions, leading them to be less materialistic than liberals.

The competing effects of political orientation on consumer features are found in prior research. For example, Fernandes and Mandel (2014) finds no main effect of political orientation on variety-seeking due to the competing mechanism of political orientation. Similarly, Kim et al. (2018) finds no main effect of political orientation on luxury preference.

Hence, finding the third variable that can refine the relationship between political orientation and consumer outcome is significant to refine our understanding of these constructs. In this regard, I added regulatory focus to the literature on materialism (e.g., Kappes et al., 2020) as a potential variable to be considered. To our knowledge, the present research is the first to examine the moderating effects of promotion focus on the relationship between political orientation and materialism. I found that conservatives with high promotion focus are higher on materialism-success than liberals, suggesting that conservatives who are progressive towards their ideal goals could be more materialistic than liberals. Future research can develop this idea into further understanding of consumer behavior; for example, the negative effects of materialism on well-being might be moderated by promotion focus as material goods can advance life quality and life satisfaction that is an ultimate ideal state (Górník-Durose, 2021; Sirgy et al., 2021).

A growing amount of research affirms the importance to use various measures for political orientation as it is often influenced by situational factors (e.g., Federico & Malka, 2018), so the present research tries to examine the effects of political orientation on materialism through different measures from preceding studies such as an issue-based political orientation measure and election results converted from zip codes (Jung et al., 2017). In doing so, it allows us to capture the multifaceted nature of political orientation and materialism, which extends beyond the traditional left-right ideological spectrum.

Finally, I added new behavioral intention measures to the literature on the effects of materialism. Materialism as a disposition has been measured dominantly by the scales of Richins and Dawson (1992). Some researchers use measures that can be compatible with materialism such as money importance (Robak et al., 2007; Yoo et al., 2021); however, materialism refers to one's tendency to desire worldly possessions (Belk, 1984) which money seems hardly to serve, as it serves as the means to obtain those possessions instead. Hence, it

is controversial to accept money-related measures as compatible methods for materialism. Regarding this matter, I used behavioral measures for materialism that are novel approaches from the literature. As the present research confirms that saving intention and preference for materialistic products predict materialism, while sharing (vs. possessing) may not be directly related to materialism, future research can examine those behavioral intentions to overcome the existing limits of the materialism scale, such as social desirability (King & Bruner, 2000), and establish a behaviorally grounded understanding of materialism.

3.8.2. Practical Contributions

While I try not to overstate the findings as this research yielded inconsistent results, overall, there may be some practical implications of the results. As the effects of political orientation and materialism become prominent when they are high on promotion focus, practitioners may want to encourage conservatives to pursue their goals and ideals so that they can be willing to seek material acquisitions.

These behavioral intention measures can be used in marketing practices to capture consumers' materialism tendency which is often hard to grasp. Practitioners may examine consumers' saving tendency over spending and preference for materialistic products over practical products to identify consumers' materialism level and better market their products to target materialistic consumers, such as via high-end brands.

3.8.3. Limitations

Although this research advances our understanding of political orientation and materialism in the literature, there are still questions that need to be solved. First, as the present research could not yield consistent results, the relationship between political orientation and materialism needs to be examined again. I assume that respondents' political orientation

could be unstable and different from their usual state at that time the studies were conducted after COVID-19 when financial security and physical and mental safety haven't been hugely impacted for the majority of people. In uncertain and threatening times like this, liberals could become conservative, and conservatives could become even more conservative (Bonanno & Jost, 2006). Hence, further studies to clarify the relationship between political orientation and materialism are essential.

Second, how other political orientations beyond the conventional conservatism and liberalism influence the level of materialism needs be explored. The present research focuses on two main political orientations – conservatives and liberals – despite of the growing number of independents (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). However, other political orientations including libertarianism, moderates and independents, and radicals are still important consumer features that can broaden our understandings of consumer behavior and materialism (Morisi et al., 2019). Hence, future research might examine how those different political orientations affect materialism for deeper understandings of their effects on consumer behavior.

Third, culture differences should be examined. Political orientation as well as materialism have been mostly studied in Western cultures, and especially with US samples (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Richins, 2017), but there could be cultural differences in predicting political orientation and materialism. For example, the previous research shows that only Western European countries showed the positive relationship between political conservatism and acceptance of social inequality, but not Eastern Europe (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). This finding may suggest that the relationship between political conservatism and materialism-success with moderation effect of promotion focus could be stronger in Western European countries than Eastern European ones, as conservatives of Western Europe tend to accept social inequality more than those of Eastern Europe; thus, they might be more willing

to advance their social status. Therefore, a cross-cultural study with different samples from various cultures might better elucidate the effect of political orientation on materialism in different contexts.

Finally, this research examined a correlational relationship between political orientation and materialism. Political orientation and promotion focus can be primed by using situational cues. For instance, political orientation can be primed with salient mortality conditions – individuals become politically conservative when death signals are presented such as pictures of funerals and the grim reaper (Jost et al., 2004) – and promotion focus can be primed with writing tasks about one's ideals and goals (Cornwell & Higgins, 2013). Future study can examine if primed political orientation can change one's materialism tendency and/or if primed promotion focus can also moderate the relationship between political orientation and materialism so that this research can be further extended to have practical applications.

3.9. Conclusion

As political orientation can serve as another form of cultural orientation, Chapter 3 explores political orientation as a possible predictor for materialism. It finds evidence that political orientation might have competing effects on materialism, resulting in not significant direct effect on materialism. Hence, this chapter investigated promotion focus in a belief that salient goal pursuit might draw a clear relationship between political orientation and materialism. Finding that among the promotion-focused, conservatives exhibit higher level of materialism compared to liberals, it opens up the possibility of political orientation as a potential predictor of materialism, and promotion focus as a moderator of this relationship. Additionally, it unravels the potential usage of behavioral intentions such as saving and possessing for measuring materialism.

Chapter 4. Status Restoration Consumption Behavior

4.1. Introduction

In this final research project, I aimed to delve deeper into status consumption behavior, identified as a behavioral outcome of materialism in Chapter 2. Specifically, building on the insights regarding status consciousness from the previous chapters, Chapter 4 seeks to examine status consumption behavior as a coping mechanism for various threats to one's status.

The perception of having high/low status is often influenced by situational factors. For instance, individuals might experience high status when they are more successful in their career and make higher income than their peers, or even when they have better social relationships than others. Conversely, they may experience low status when they compare themselves to others who appear to be more successful than themselves or have more sound relationships with their family and friends or with the community. The situation where one experiences low status due to the existence of or confrontation with someone with higher status is called 'status threat' (Goor et al., 2020). Status threat has significant implications for consumer well-being as it arouses psychological discomfort by undermining their desired self-image and social connections (Gao et al., 2008; Lee & Shrum, 2012). Consequently, such experiences can lead to decreased overall well-being, prompting consumers to instinctively seek ways to regain their lost status and alleviate unpleasant emotions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

In dealing with status threat, consumers often turn to the acquisition of certain products as a relatively straightforward approach. Research has shown that when their status is threatened, particularly by the presence of more successful others, they try to restore it by purchasing goods that can showcase their success and achievements such as luxuries (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015). The majority of research in status threat and status restoration

consumption behavior has focused on how consumers restore their status using products within the same domain of threatened status. For example, when one's intelligence level is threatened, they try to regain it by choosing products that can signal their intelligence such as fountain pens rather than choosing more mundane goods like sweets (Gao et al., 2008).

The general way people try to restore status in the literature is to gain more status in the same domain (e.g., regain success status through success-signaling items); however, recent research has shed light on a different approach to dealing with status threat where consumers try to reinstate their status from different domains of status threat, which is called 'status pivoting' (Goor et al., 2020). For instance, when individuals encounter others who are more successful in professional and financial domains (success status threat), they try to restore their status by displaying their sound social relationships or unique personal attributes, such as their hobbies and spirituality. In their series of studies, Goor et al. (2020) found that consumers prefer products that showcase their identity as loving mothers over emphasizing their successful careers, or they opt for products that highlight their hobbies such as yoga or sports-related items. This research provides important insights to scholars and practitioners by demonstrating that status restoration can occur across various dimensions of status.

Nonetheless, other status-threatening situations, such as social relationship status, have not yet been examined in terms of status pivoting, despite the significance of social relatedness as a basic human need that has a direct impact on consumer well-being (Baumeister et al., 2005). If the success status can be restored through relationship-related products, the opposite way where social relationship status could be restored through success-related products needs to be examined to expand our understanding of status restoration consumption behavior.

Hence two research questions arise: first, whether the social relationship status threat can be restored by status pivoting; and second, what the possible factors that trigger status

pivoting in social relationship threats would be. By answering these two questions, this chapter aims to contribute to the existing literature and marketing practice. Specifically, it fills the gap by adding social relationship status threat to the status pivoting literature. In doing so, it provides practical suggestions for marketing practitioners targeting status products and those concerned with consumer well-being.

4.1.1. Objectives

This chapter aims to explore two primary forms of status threat and restoration behavior: professional status threat, where consumers encounter someone who surpasses them in professional careers and financial capabilities; and social relationship status threat, where consumers encounter those with stronger social relationships or belonging to social groups.

First, this chapter aims to replicate the recent findings related to status pivoting observed in the context of professional status threat. Then, it aims to determine whether status pivoting can also occur in situations involving social relationship status threats. Furthermore, this chapter tries to explore status pivoting within the context of consumers' actual consumption behavior using donation scenarios where consumers must allocate their real money. By exploring status pivoting in the domain of donations, it seeks to understand whether consumers display status pivoting in socially benevolent domains.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of this behavior, this chapter will also examine potential moderators that may influence the relationship between status threat and restoration behavior. For example, it examined cultural factors and psychological factors such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and general anxiety as potential moderators of this relationship.

4.2. Literature Review

This chapter examines status restoration consumption behavior under status threatening situations. Thus, the following section will review status threat and status restoration behavior both within and across status threat domain (status pivoting) in the existing literature.

4.2.1. Status Threat and Status Restoration Consumption Behavior

Status threat occurs when one's perceived status becomes low due to the existence of or encounter with someone whose status is higher (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). As status threat arouses psychological discomfort, it provokes restoration behavior, often by using certain products that can signal their threatened status (Rucker et al., 2012). For example, when someone's intelligence standing is threatened, they prefer products that can signal their intelligence (e.g., fountain pens) and, similarly, if someone's social relationship-related standing is threatened, they prefer consumption behaviors that can signal their kindness and benevolence such as donations (Gao et al., 2008; Lee & Shrum, 2012).

Literature has defined status threat and status restoration behavior mostly in the context of power dynamics. For instance, when consumers find themselves in situations of low status or subordination, they often attempt to enhance their perceived power and status by engaging in specific consumption behaviors. These behaviors involve the purchase of goods that serve as signals of high-power status, such as larger and more conspicuous items like clothing and jewelry, as well as expensive and luxurious products which can easily deliver the consumer's elevated status (Charles et al., 2009; Dubois et al., 2011). Scholars found that this consumption behavior occurs regardless of the mood or emotion repair resulting from experiencing low power, suggesting that motivation to seek higher status through consumption under status threat is an inherent aspect of the status restoration process

rather than merely an attempt to feel better after experiencing low power (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008).

However, status threats manifest in various contexts beyond the traditional power dynamics. For instance, status threats can arise from experiences related to professional achievements where individuals may encounter situations in which others are promoted while they themselves are not (Goor et al., 2020). They can be also influenced by financial capabilities where individuals grew up relatively poor compared to their peers (Griskevicius et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2022). Even racial backgrounds, particularly when their ethnicity is identified as a minority group within their society, can arouse status threats (Fontes & Fan, 2006). For instance, those from minority ethnic groups such as African Americans or Hispanic Americans prefer status goods such as luxuries more than Caucasian Americans (Charles et al., 2009).

In general, researchers have examined status threat and status restoration consumption within the same domain threat (see Table 19). When their social rank is threatened, for example, they try to restore their social rank by choosing products that can showcase their high social rank such as products with brands that entail status, power over others, and favorable impressions by others (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009). Similarly, in the context of financial status, consumers tend to seek to regain their status within the same domain of threat. For instance, when individuals experience poor financial capacity compared to others, they tend to seek limited-edition goods rather than mass-produced goods to emphasize their financial capacity to obtain the exclusive goods (Sharma & Alter, 2012).

4.2.2. Status Pivoting and Social Relationship Status Threat

Recent research by Goor et al. (2020) showed that status restoration consumption behavior can occur across different status-threatening domains, namely “status pivoting”. For example,

when one's professional career is threatened by encountering someone who is more successful in their career, they often display their sound social relationships or their spirituality instead. This recent research opens the possibility that status can be restored not necessarily from the same domain of threat, but also from different dimensions, allowing consumers a variety of options to regain their status and protect them from decreased well-being.

As much as one's professional status is important in their life, securing competence of oneself, social relationship status is also significant as it is an innate human need that is essential for one's well-being and optimal functioning as a human being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Hence, if one's social relationship status is threatened, it not only disrupts one's well-being, but also immediately triggers a distressing state (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This is often managed by certain consumption behaviors. For example, when their social relationship status gets threatened, they try to gain reconnection by spending their money on charity donations which other social members consider (Lee & Shrum, 2012). Similarly, consumers try to restore their social relationship status by purchasing items that have communicative features so that they can rebuild and reconnect with social members (Mead et al., 2010).

However, social relationship status has not been actively examined in terms of across-domain status restoration (e.g., Goor et al., 2020; Lee & Shrum, 2012; Rucker et al., 2010, see Table 19) despite that it could be detrimental to consumer well-being, and therefore various status threat coping mechanisms should be accessible to consumers. Furthermore, the examination of social relationship status threat and its restoration consumption behavior will affect consumers' product preference and evaluation. Indeed, both social rank status threats (high/low power over others) and social relationship status threats have been studied most often; however, they were generally examined within the same domain and least examined across domains from the existing literature. Therefore, it is worth further exploring whether

social relationship status can be reinstated through products of different domains of status, such as professional or financial status, to expand our understanding of social threat and restoration consumption behavior.

Table 19. Status Threat and Restoration Behavior in the Literature

Types of Status Threats	Research	Restoration Domain	Findings	Key Parameter
Social rank status (e.g., boss vs. subordinate)	Rucker and Galinsky (2008)	within domain	The experience of low power results in a greater willingness to pay for high-status products	willingness to pay for high-status and low-status products
	Rucker and Galinsky (2009)	within domain	The experience of low power results in a greater purchase intention toward status-related products	purchase intention toward status-related products and performance (quality)-related products
	Ordabayeva and Chandon (2010)	within domain	Bottom-tier consumers engage more in status consumption behavior even when equality increases	spending money on status consumption vs. saving; gift giving vs. spending money on oneself; preference for status products vs. status-neutral products
	Rucker et al. (2010)	across domain	The experience of low power results in more money spent on others than themselves	willingness to pay for self and others
	Dubois et al. (2011)	within domain	The experience of low power results in conspicuous display of larger-sized goods	preference for size: small, medium, and large

Race/Ethnicity status	Fontes and Fan (2006)	within domain	Low racial status results in spending more in status goods (e.g., housing and apparel)	Consumer Price Index (CPI); budget allocation on housing and apparel
	Charles et al. (2009)	within domain	Low racial status results in greater money spent on status-signaling goods	Consumer Expenditure Survey (CEX); money spent on status-signaling goods
Professional/Financial status	Gao et al. (2008)	within domain	The experience of the professional status threat results in preference for professional option over non-professional option	preference for professional-related product (fountain pen) vs. neutral product (candy) (as dichotomous variable)
	Sharma and Alter (2012)	within domain	The experience of the financial status threat results in preference for scarce products over mass-produced goods	consumption of scarce M&M candies (diverse colors) vs. abundant M&M candies (one color)
	Goor et al. (2020)	across domains	The experience of the professional/financial status threat results in preference for the social relationship status goods	preference for success-related products vs. social relationship-related products (as dichotomous variable)
Social relationship status	Mead et al. (2010)	within domain	The experience of the social relationship status threat results in a greater spending on affiliation-related products	preference for affiliation-provoking products vs. neutral products (as dichotomous variable)

	Lee and Shrum (2012)	within/across domains	The experience of the social relationship status threat results in greater conspicuous consumption and willingness to donate	preference for conspicuous brand logos (as continuous variable), willingness to donate (for homeless and children with illness)
	Chen et al. (2017)	within domain	The experience of the social relationship status threat results in greater preference for anthropomorphized brands	preference for anthropomorphized brands (as continuous variable)
	Lyngdoh et al. (2023)	within domain	The experience of the social relationship status threat results in greater preference for sharing information in SNS	Intention for sharing information in SNS
	Social relationship status, Professional status	The present study	within/across domains	The experience of the professional threat could result in across-domain status consumption behavior; the experience of the social relationship status threat could result in within-domain status consumption behavior
				preferences for product taglines (success-related, social relationship-related; as continuous variable), charity donations (professional-related, social relationship-related; as continuous variable), possible moderators: cultural orientation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and general anxiety

4.3. Hypotheses Development

Prior research has provided compelling evidence that within-domain restoration consumption behavior can effectively address social relationship status threats. In response to the perceived threat to their social relationship status, consumers actively seek to restore it by choosing products that can reinstate their social relationship status, even if some of these products are socially unpopular or illegal, such as chicken feet (to be affiliated with Asian partner) or cocaine (to affiliate with peers) (Mead et al., 2010). Similarly, they prefer anthropomorphized products and brands that can convey a sense of social connectedness under social relationship status threat (Chen et al., 2017; Mourey et al., 2017).

Parallel to within-domain restoration consumption behavior, the existing literature also suggests the possibility of across-domain restoration for social relationship status threat (status pivoting). For example, when individuals experience feelings of loneliness triggered by such threats, they may cope with their feeling of loneliness by displaying their environmental consciousness and engaging in ethical behaviors (e.g., Guo et al., 2020). They may attempt to alleviate loneliness through material acquisitions (Pieters, 2013; Shrum et al., 2022), which may create a sense of abundance and self-importance that can serve as a temporary buffer against social relationship status threats. Some consumers may even seek uniqueness instead of conformity to cope with social relationship status threats to enhance their distinct self-worth by differentiating themselves from others (Wan et al., 2013).

As such, the current literature has not yet yielded conclusive evidence as to whether within-domain status threat (compared to across-domain status threat) will be more prevalent for the social relationship status threat. In light of these multifaceted observations in the literature, the first hypothesis posits that within-domain status threat will emerge as more prominent for addressing social relationship status threat, building on the robust evidence of within-domain restoration behaviors observed in prior research. The second hypothesis,

conversely, suggests that across-domain status threat (status pivoting) may prove equally or more prevalent in this context, recognizing the diverse and adaptive nature of individuals' responses to social relationship status threats. Hence, the two alternative hypotheses are as following:

H1a: Social relationship status threat will lead to within-domain status restoration consumption behavior.

H1b: Social relationship status threat will lead to across-domain status restoration consumption behavior (status pivoting).

Within-domain status restoration is a more direct way to regain the threatened status, while across-domain status restoration is an indirect way to cope with the status threats. I argue that consumers will seek within-domain status restoration when the status threat is critical to their personal value. Conversely, they will allow an indirect way and seek across-domain status restoration when the status threat is less critical to their personal value. One of the core values that determine within and across domain status restoration is cultural values derived from one's cultural orientation. For example, horizontal individualism emphasizes equal status among others while vertical individualism values power differences. Additionally, horizontal collectivism prioritizes egalitarianism while vertical collectivism accepts social hierarchy. Certain cultural orientations will be more affected by either professional status threat or social relationship status threat. For example, vertically oriented cultural orientation (i.e., vertical individualism and vertical collectivism) could be more influenced by professional status threat as it is more critical in determining their standing in the social hierarchy. Vertical individualism considers gaining higher status and power through competition as a reward (Zhang & Nelson, 2016) and vertical collectivism places

value on collective goals while still acknowledging the significance of success and achievements (Shavitt et al., 2006). These orientations highlight the key cultural values tied to notions of success and status, and thus they will show within-domain restoration consumption behavior under professional status threat and across-domain restoration consumption behavior under the social relationship status threat.

On the other hand, horizontally oriented cultural orientation (i.e., horizontal individualism and horizontal collectivism) may be more affected by social relationship status threat as their society emphasizes egalitarian values (Shavitt et al., 2006). For instance, horizontal individualism values equality among individuals and is aversive to those who brag about their success. Similarly, horizontal collectivism values egalitarianism and emphasizes benevolent acts within society (Nelson & Shavitt, 2002). As such, the key cultural values of these orientations are related to fostering social relationships; thus, they will show within-domain restoration consumption behavior under social relationship status threat and will show across-domain restoration consumption behavior under professional status threat.

In normal situations where there is no threat present, consumers will choose the products that best convey their cultural values. However, to cope with status threats, consumers may lean towards the orientation that aligns with either success or social relationships even though it is different from their cultural values. For instance, if someone seeks to restore their status using success-related product consumption, they will likely prefer products that reflect values of vertical individualism or vertical collectivism even though they are high on horizontal individualism (or horizontal collectivism). Conversely, if someone aims to restore their status through strengthening social relationships, they may prefer products that align with horizontal individualism or horizontal collectivism although they are high on vertical individualism (or vertical collectivism). Hence, I hypothesize:

H2: Under a social relationship status threat, those who are high on vertical individualism (or vertical collectivism) will exhibit a higher tendency for cross-domain status restoration by favoring products associated with horizontal individualism (or horizontal collectivism) rather than adhering to their own cultural values of success.

H3: Under a social relationship status threat, those who are high on horizontal individualism (or horizontal collectivism) will exhibit a higher tendency for within-domain status restoration by choosing products that align with their cultural values of social relationships instead of favoring products associated with vertical individualism (or vertical collectivism).

H4: Under a professional status threat, those who are high on horizontal individualism (or horizontal collectivism) will exhibit a higher tendency for cross-domain status restoration by favoring products associated with vertical individualism (or vertical collectivism) rather than adhering to their own cultural values related to social relationships.

H5: Under a professional status threat, those who are high on vertical individualism (or vertical collectivism) will exhibit a higher tendency for within-domain status restoration by choosing products that align with their cultural values of success instead of favoring products associated with horizontal individualism (or horizontal collectivism).

In addition, a person's tendency to engage in status restoring behaviors both within and across domains will likely be moderated by their psychological characteristics. For instance, research has found that self-esteem can buffer the negative effects of social relationship threats, suggesting that if one has high self-esteem, one could be less impacted by status-threatening situations (Jiang et al., 2015; Leary, 1990). This implies that having a robust self-esteem serves as a protective shield, diminishing the potency of social relationship threats.

Another feature could be self-efficacy. Self-efficacy drives oneself to be determined and confident to achieve one's goals and aims (Bandura et al., 1999). A heightened sense of self-efficacy endows individuals with profound belief in their inherent capacity to confront and overcome challenging situations. Hence, if someone is high on self-efficacy, they have a strong belief that they can cope with challenging situations with their own capacity, and they can act to restore their status and will more actively seek status restoration than those who are low on self-efficacy (Karademas, 2006). This proactive stance underscores the pivotal role that self-efficacy plays in shaping the proactive pursuit of status restoration, setting the stage for a resilient and determined response to adverse situations.

General anxiety could be another potential moderator. If someone is already anxious about themselves and their surroundings, they will be more vulnerable to status-threatening situations, resulting in seeking more status restoration behaviors than those who are not (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Park & Maner, 2009). The pervasive sense of unease and apprehension magnifies the perceived significance of these challenges, potentially triggering a heightened inclination towards seeking status restoration behaviors.

H6: Those who are high on (1) self-esteem, (2) self-efficacy, and (3) anxiety will show stronger status restoration behavior both within and across domains of status threat.

4.4. Overview of the Study

An integrative study was conducted to examine the hypotheses and explore possible moderators. Using a scenario-based online survey, consumers were asked to choose preferred products with different taglines that conveyed either success or social relationships, and cultural values. Furthermore, instead of using dichotomous outcome variables as previous studies have (Goor et al., 2020), I used continuous variables which can provide descriptive insights.

4.5. Pretests

4.5.1. Pretest 1

I conducted three pretests to design the taglines so that they can be best aligned with each cultural orientation, and 108 responses were collected via Prolific (Female = 51, $M_{age} = 36.11$, $SD = 11.562$). The taglines that targeted each cultural orientation were “Signature Dessert: Treat yourself to a bit of luxury for your taste buds” (targeted vertical individualism value), “Special Dessert: Treat yourself to something unique, something few have had the chance to try” (targeted horizontal individualism value), “Goodwill Dessert: Treat yourself and your neighbors, part of proceeds will be donated to a local charity” (targeted horizontal individualism value), and “Beloved Dessert: Treat yourself to the most popular dessert among our customers” (targeted vertical collectivism value).

Regression analysis revealed that horizontal individualism did not yield any significant results with the taglines (Signature Dessert: $b = 0.13$, $p = 0.59$, Special Dessert: b

= 0.20, $p = 0.29$, Goodwill Dessert: $b = 0.14$, $p = 0.66$, Beloved Dessert: $b = 0.26$, $p = 0.41$). Additionally, vertical individualism did not predict Signature Dessert (vertical individualism value) as planned ($b = 0.14$, $p = 0.41$); however, it positively predicted Special Dessert ($b = 0.30$, $p = 0.03$). Horizontal collectivism did not predict Goodwill Dessert (horizontal collectivism value) as expected ($b = 0.33$, $p = 0.21$); however, it significantly predicted Signature Dessert ($b = 0.67$, $p = 0.01$) and Special Dessert ($b = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, vertical collectivism did not yield any significant results with the taglines (Signature Dessert: $b = -0.21$, $p = 0.29$, Special Dessert: $b = 0.13$, $p = 0.41$, Goodwill Dessert: $b = -0.003$, $p = 0.99$, Beloved Dessert: $b = 0.02$, $p = 0.94$).

4.5.2. Pretest 2

There were 120 responses collected via Prolific (Female = 70, $M_{age} = 35.45$, $SD = 9.735$). As pretest 1 did not yield an expected relationship between cultural orientation and the targeted taglines, I changed the taglines to be more aligned to each cultural orientation (Oishi et al., 1998) and conducted the second pretest.

The changed taglines are: “Award-winning Dessert: Treat yourself to this top-level dessert – you deserve it. Limited quantity available” (targeted vertical individualism value), “Unique Dessert: Treat yourself to something as unique as you are – why settle for the ordinary when you can be distinctive?” (targeted horizontal individualism value), “Goodwill Dessert: Treat yourself and your neighbors, part of proceeds will be donated to a local charity” (targeted horizontal individualism value), and “Beloved Dessert: Treat yourself to our most popular dessert. You will want to share your discovery with your friends and family” (targeted vertical collectivism value).

Regression analysis found no significant relationship between Award-winning Dessert and cultural orientations (HI: $b = 0.33$, $p = 0.23$, VI: $b = -0.05$, $p = 0.87$, HC: $b = -.31$, $p =$

0.33, VC: $b = 0.09, p = 0.74$). Beloved Dessert also did not yield any significant relationship with cultural orientations (HI: $b = 0.45, p = 0.09$, VI: $b = 0.06, p = 0.82$, HC: $b = -0.01, p = 0.96$, VC: $b = 0.01, p = 0.98$). Nonetheless, horizontal individualism significantly predicted Unique Dessert as expected ($b = 0.60, p = 0.03$), and horizontal collectivism significantly predicted Goodwill Dessert, which was aligned with our prediction ($b = 0.70, p = 0.01$).

As a result, I maintained the two taglines for horizontal individualism and horizontal collectivism values Unique Dessert and Goodwill Dessert) and built up the taglines for vertical individualism and vertical collectivism by adding more related values, such as ‘top-level’ for vertical individualism and ‘everyone has already fallen in love with’ for vertical collectivism taglines.

4.6. Methods

4.6.1. Participants

There were 587 responses collected via Prolific (Female = 351, $M_{age} = 44$). Participants were UK residents who are the major demographic of the Prolific platform. Descriptive analysis results for the key demographic variable can be found in Table 20.

Table 20. Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

<i>Gender</i>		
	N	%
Male	234	39.9%
Female	351	59.8%
Other	2	0.3%
<i>Education</i>		
	N	%
Some secondary	7	1.2%
Completed secondary school	101	17.2%
Vocational or similar	82	14.0%
Some university but no degree	52	8.9%
University bachelor's degree	192	32.7%
Graduate or professional degree	151	25.7%
Prefer not to say	2	0.3%
<i>Employment status</i>		
	N	%
Working full-time	322	54.9%
Working part-time	103	17.5%
Unemployed and looking for work	25	4.3%
A homemaker or stay-at-home parent	26	4.4%
Student	30	5.1%
Retired	54	9.2%
Other	27	4.6%
<i>Income</i>		
	N	%
Less than 20,000 pounds	109	18.6%
20,000–39,999 pounds	212	36.1%
40,000–59,999 pounds	125	21.3%
60,000–99,999 pounds	109	18.6%
More than 100,000 pounds	31	5.3%
Missing	1	0.2%

4.6.2. Measures

Manipulation of Status Threat

Participants were allocated to three conditions: professional status threat, social relationship status threat, and control condition where no threat was presented. In the professional status threat condition, a scenario revised from the previous study of Goor et al. (2020) was provided to the participants as follows: “Suppose you are having lunch with your coworkers. One of them shares the news that your coworker A has been promoted and given a pay raise since A's latest project is producing impressive results. You also work on this project, and as your idea is better than A's and you have worked harder than A, you think you deserve the promotion, not A”. In the social relationship status threat condition, a scenario was developed by the author and provided to the participants as follows: “Suppose you are having lunch with your coworkers. They start talking about going out for drinks after work. You also want to join, but nobody asks you. You drop a hint about your interest, but everyone seems to ignore it.” Finally, participants in the control condition received: “Suppose you are having lunch with your coworkers. One of them shares the news that they are going out today to pick up a new pet and they are very happy about it. You are excited to hear about it as you too are hoping to adopt a pet soon.” Participants were asked to briefly write down how they would feel in the situation after reading the message (see the Appendix G for the full stimuli).

Status Restoration Behavior

Three different measures were used for status restoration behavior. First, I asked how likely they would be to choose the tagline for a newly launched coffee to best increase sales. For professional status restoration, the tagline was “Office Coffee: Rich flavor, as rich as you will be”; for social relationship status restoration, “Office Coffee: Brings people together”; and for the neutral option, “Office Coffee: Like a beautiful day”. Participants were asked to

indicate likelihood to choose for each tagline using a 7-point scale, 1 being ‘not at all likely’ and 7 being ‘very likely’. The three taglines were displayed in random order (see Table 21).

To examine the real spending behavior for status restoration, I used charity donation as another measure. Participants were told that one of the participants will be chosen for an additional £50 which can be kept by the participant or donated to the charity organizations. They were also told that if the participant decides to give donations to the charities, I will double that amount and give it to the charity of their choice. For example, if the participant decides to give the charities £25, then they will receive £25, and the charities will receive $2 \times £25$ (equals £50). And if the participant decides to give the charities £0, then they will receive £50, and the charities will receive £0. Three charities were selected, “Dress for Success” was selected to examine professional status restoration – it provides people with professional attire so they can secure employment. “Coop Operation” was chosen to examine social relationship status restoration – it helps people overcome loneliness and improve their relational well-being. Finally, “Keep Britain Tidy” was given as a neutral option – it helps eliminate litter and waste in public spaces. They were asked how much they want to donate to each charity and the charities were displayed in random order (see Table 21).

Finally, to examine the role culture can play in status restoration consumption, the study provided four sales taglines for desserts that are aligned to one of each cultural orientation and tried to examine how likely they would choose each product that conveys different cultural values apart from their own under specific threats. The taglines are as follows: for horizontal individualism, “Unique Dessert: Treat yourself to something as unique as you are – why settle for the ordinary when you are an original”; for vertical individualism, “Award-Winning Dessert: Treat yourself to this top-level dessert – you deserve it. Limited quantity available”; for horizontal collectivism, “Goodwill Dessert: Treat yourself and your neighbors, part of proceeds will be donated to a local charity”; and for vertical collectivism,

“Beloved Dessert: Treat yourself to our most popular dessert that everyone has already fallen in love with. You will want to share your discovery with your friends and family”.

Participants were asked to indicate their preference for each tagline using a 7-point scale, 1 being ‘not at all likely’ and 7 being ‘very likely’ and the four taglines were displayed in a random order (see Table 21).

Cultural Orientation

A 16-item of Horizontal/Vertical Individualism and Collectivism Scale (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) was used to measure cultural orientation. The 16-item scale has a set of 4-item subscales that measure each of four cultural orientations including Horizontal Individualism (HI), Vertical Individualism (VI), Horizontal Collectivism (HC), and Vertical Collectivism (VC). Example items for horizontal individualism include “I’d rather depend on myself than others”, and for vertical individualism, “Competition is the law of nature.” For horizontal collectivism, example items include “If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud”, and for vertical collectivism, “It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my group.” The items were rated on a strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) scale.

Table 21. Stimuli Used in the Present Study

Stimuli	Targeted Values
<i>To what extent would you choose this product?</i>	
Coffee	
"Office Coffee: Rich flavor, as rich as you will be"	Success
"Office Coffee: Brings people together"	Social relationship
"Office Coffee: Like a beautiful day"	Neutral
Charity	
Dress for Success: Providing people with professional attire so they can secure employment	Success
Coop Operation: Tackling Loneliness: Helps people overcome loneliness to improve their well-being.	Social relationship
Keep Britain Tidy: Eliminates litter and waste to improve public spaces.	Neutral
Dessert	
Award-winning Dessert: Treat yourself to this top-level dessert – you deserve it.	Vertical individualistic values
Unique Dessert: Treat yourself to something as unique as you are	Horizontal individualistic values
Goodwill Dessert: Treat yourself and your neighbors, part of the proceeds will be donated to a local charity.	Horizontal collectivistic values
Beloved Dessert: Treat yourself to our most popular dessert that everyone has already fallen in love with	Vertical collectivistic values

Self-esteem

A 10-item scale by Rosenberg (1965) was used to measure self-esteem. Some example items are "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" and "I feel that I have a number of good qualities". The Cronbach alpha for the items was 0.93, which was in an acceptable range (see Appendix H for full items).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was measured using the General Self-Efficacy Scale by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). Example items include "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough" and "I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort". The Cronbach alpha for the items was 0.94, which was in an acceptable range (see Appendix I for full items).

Anxiety

The study measured general anxiety using a 7-item scale by Spitzer et al. (2006). It asked how often the participants have experienced certain anxiety symptoms including "feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge" and "feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen". The Cronbach alpha for the items was 0.94, which was in an acceptable range (see Appendix J for full items).

4.7. Analysis

Manipulation check

To see if the participants feel that their professional status is threatened in the professional status threat condition, the study asked them to write down how would they feel in the given situations of the scenario. Using the sentiment analysis, I found that negative emotions were more mentioned in both the professional and social relationship status threat conditions than

control conditions (professional status threat condition = 86%, social relationship status threat condition = 95.9%, control condition = 11.4%). As a result, I concluded that the manipulation was successful.

Exploratory Factor Analysis of HVIC

Sixteen items of HVIC were put in the analysis with varimax rotation. The maximum likelihood factor analysis with a cut-off point of 0.40 and a fixed number of factors to yield four factors for this study resulted in accounting for 63.83% of the variance. The Cronbach alpha for horizontal individualism was 0.74, for vertical individualism was 0.79, for horizontal collectivism was 0.81, and for vertical collectivism was 0.81, which were all in the acceptable range. To avoid any multicollinearity issue, I mean-centered their cultural orientations at individual level (Smith & Sasaki, 1979).

4.8. Results

4.8.1. Status Restoration Consumption Behavior

I first examined the coffee tagline to test our hypothesis. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that the willingness to choose success tagline is different across the three conditions at a marginally significant level ($F(2) = 2.927, p = 0.06$) and the social relationship tagline is different across the three conditions at a significant level ($F(2) = 5.043, p = 0.007$). There is no difference on willingness to choose the neutral tagline across the conditions ($F(2) = 0.161, p > 0.1$).

Using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD), mean comparison analysis was conducted. Under the social relationship threat, it indicated that participants reported less willingness to choose the success tagline than the control condition ($M_{\text{difference}} = -0.46, p =$

0.04). Additionally, participants from the social threat condition reported less willingness to choose the social relationship tagline than the control condition ($M_{\text{difference}} = -0.59, p = 0.005$).

Under the professional threat condition, there was no difference in willingness to choose the success tagline with the social relationship status threat condition and control condition (with the social relationship status threat: $M_{\text{difference}} = -0.24, p = 0.42$, with control condition: $M_{\text{difference}} = -0.22, p = 0.53$). There was no difference in willingness to choose the social relationship tagline between the professional status threat and the social relationship status threat condition, and control condition (with the social relationship status threat: $M_{\text{difference}} = 0.21, p = 0.50$, with control condition: $M_{\text{difference}} = -0.38, p = 0.13$).

To sum up, the results only found that the social threat condition reported less willingness to choose both the success tagline and social relationship tagline than the control condition. Nonetheless, the results from descriptive statistics suggest that under professional status threat, participants favor the social relationship tagline more than the success tagline ($M_{\text{social}} = 3.75, M_{\text{success}} = 2.71$), which might suggest status restoration in different domains (status pivoting). On the other hand, under social relationship status threat, participants favor the social relationship tagline more than the success tagline ($M_{\text{social}} = 3.54, M_{\text{success}} = 2.47$), which might indicate status restoration within the same domains (hypothesis 1b) (see Table 22 for the descriptive statistics results).

Table 22. Descriptive Statistics for Coffee Tagline

Condition		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional	Success tagline	153	2.71	1.791
Status Threat	Relationship tagline	153	3.75	1.748
	Neutral	153	3.61	1.781
	Valid N (listwise)	153		
Social	Success tagline	195	2.47	1.600
Relationship	Relationship tagline	195	3.54	1.700
Status threat	Neutral	195	3.56	1.886
	Valid N (listwise)	195		
Control (No Threat)	Success tagline	153	2.92	1.883
	Relationship tagline	153	4.13	1.716
	Neutral	153	3.67	1.642
	Valid N (listwise)	153		

Using charity donation as another dependent variable, no difference was found on different charity options across the conditions (success-related charity: $F(2) = 1.038, p > 0.1$, social-related charity: $F(2) = 0.253, p > 0.1$, neutral charity: $F(2) = 1.723, p > 0.1$, give money to oneself: $F(2) = 1.912, p > 0.1$). Despite a non-significant difference, the results from descriptive statistics suggest that under professional status threat, participants favor the social relationship-related charity more than success-related charity ($M_{social} = 10.35, M_{success} = 4.70$), which might suggest status restoration in different domains (status pivoting). On the other hand, under social relationship status threat, participants favor social relationship tagline more than success tagline ($M_{social} = 9.60, M_{success} = 3.84$), which might indicate status restoration within the same domains (hypothesis 1b) (see Table 23 for the descriptive statistics results).

Table 23. Descriptive Statistics for Charity Donation

Condition		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional	Success charity	153	4.70	6.391
Status Threat	Relationship charity	153	10.34	9.809
	Neutral	153	6.86	7.342
	To oneself	153	28.08	15.094
	Valid N (listwise)	153		
Social	Success charity	195	3.84	5.604
Relationship	Relationship charity	195	9.60	9.885
Status threat	Neutral	195	5.44	7.921
	To oneself	195	31.11	15.460
	Valid N (listwise)	195		
Control (No Threat)	Success charity	153	3.82	6.733
	Relationship charity	153	9.69	11.159
	Neutral	153	5.55	7.565
	To oneself	153	30.92	16.083
	Valid N (listwise)	153		

4.8.2. Cultural Orientation and Status Restoration Consumption Behavior

Using Haye's (2022) Process macro, the moderation analysis with 5,000 bootstraps resample was conducted to examine the potential moderating effect of cultural orientation on status restoration consumption behavior. Furthermore, to identify someone's strongest cultural orientation among the four (HI, VI, HC, VC), I centered their cultural orientations at individual level. This approach enables to analyze one's individual level of cultural orientation and avoid multicollinearity issues in regression analysis (Smith & Sasaki, 1979), even when individuals are high on multiple cultural orientations simultaneously. The dependent variables are dessert taglines which are designed to be aligned with each cultural orientation (see Table 24 for the descriptive statistics).

I first examined the control condition where no threat was present to see if consumers of each distinct cultural orientation will show a preference for those products that are aligned with their cultural values. I expected that horizontal individualism will be positively related to Unique Dessert; however, the results revealed that horizontal individualism is negatively related to Beloved Dessert ($b = -0.43$, $SE = 0.16$, $t(152) = -2.70$, $p < 0.01$), but not significantly related to Unique Dessert. However, given that Beloved Dessert is opposed to being unique, I believe the negative relationship between horizontal individualism and Beloved Dessert is reasonable.

I also expected vertical individualism to be positively related to Award-winning Dessert. What I found was that vertical individualism is not significantly related to Award-winning Dessert, but negatively related to Unique Dessert ($b = -0.24$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(152) = -1.85$, $p = 0.07$), Goodwill Dessert ($b = -0.40$, $SE = 0.10$, $t(152) = -4.07$, $p < 0.001$), and Beloved Dessert ($b = -0.37$, $SE = 0.112$, $t(152) = -3.31$, $p = 0.001$).

Vertical collectivism is positively related to Beloved Dessert ($b = 0.52$, $SE = 0.14$, $t(152) = 3.82$, $p < 0.01$), which is aligned with our expectations. In addition to that, it was

also positively related to Award-winning Dessert ($b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(152) = 2.60$, $p = 0.01$) and Goodwill Dessert ($b = 0.40$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(152) = 3.38$, $p < 0.001$).

Finally, horizontal collectivism is positively related to Goodwill Dessert ($b = 0.29$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(152) = 2.49$, $p = 0.01$) and also Beloved Dessert ($b = 0.34$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(152) = 2.52$, $p = 0.01$). Although the relationships between each cultural orientation and targeted dessert taglines are not clear-cut, none of them is related to the taglines that are not aligned with their core values. For example, horizontal individualism was not related to Award-winning Dessert, which is opposed to their egalitarian values, vertical individualism was not related to Goodwill Dessert which does not accept social inequality, horizontal collectivism was not related to Award-winning Dessert which might harm their collective goals due to the encouragement of competitions, and vertical collectivism was not related to horizontal individualism which prefers to stand out rather than to blend in.

Under social relationship status threat, vertical individualism positively predicted Unique Dessert ($b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(194) = 1.71$, $p = 0.089$) at a marginally significant level, suggesting across-domain status restoration (status pivoting) and supporting hypothesis 2. Additionally, it negatively predicted Goodwill Dessert ($b = -0.36$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(194) = -3.25$, $p = 0.001$). Presumably, they wish to restore their social relationship status using their uniqueness instead of benevolence which is too far from their cultural values. Vertical collectivism positively related to Unique Dessert ($b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(194) = 1.71$, $p = 0.089$) at a marginally significant level, suggesting possible across-domain status restoration through being unique instead of blending in (status pivoting) and supporting hypothesis 2. Collectively, these results support hypothesis 2.

Horizontal collectivism positively predicted Goodwill Dessert only ($b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(194) = 2.42$, $p < 0.001$), which indicates that horizontal collectivism shows status restoration within the same domain under social relationship status threat. Thus, it supports

hypothesis 3. Horizontal individualism did not yield any significant relationships under social relationship status threat (horizontal individualism on Unique Dessert: $b = -0.17$, $SE = 0.16$, $t(194) = -1.10$, $p > 0.1$, Award-winning Dessert: $b = -0.15$, $SE = 0.16$, $t(194) = -0.91$, $p > 0.1$, Goodwill Dessert: $b = -0.08$, $SE = 0.16$, $t(194) = -0.51$, $p > 0.1$, Beloved Dessert: $b = -0.19$, $SE = 0.16$, $t(195) = -1.21$, $p > 0.1$), failing to support hypothesis 3. Hence, the results partially supported hypothesis 3 only related to horizontal collectivism.

Under professional status threat, the results revealed that horizontal individualism negatively predicted Award-winning Dessert ($b = -0.38$, $SE = 0.15$, $t(152) = -2.61$, $p = 0.01$), which suggests that those who are high on horizontal individualism are even more aversive toward competitive values that the award-winning tagline conveys. Other significant results were not found; thus, hypothesis 4 was not supported with horizontal individualism. On the contrary, horizontal collectivism positively predicted Award-winning Dessert ($b = 0.24$, $SE = 0.14$, $t(152) = 1.75$, $p = 0.08$) at a marginally significant level, and also Goodwill Dessert ($b = 0.35$, $SE = 0.14$, $t(152) = 2.55$, $p = 0.01$), suggesting that status restoration happens both within the same domain and across the different domains. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was not fully supported.

Interestingly, vertical individualism and vertical collectivism did not yield any significant relationships with sales tagline under professional status threat (vertical individualism on Unique Dessert: $b = -0.09$, $SE = 0.14$, $t(152) = -0.68$, $p > 0.1$, Award-winning Dessert: $b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(152) = 0.05$, $p > 0.1$, Goodwill Dessert: $b = -0.13$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(152) = -1.04$, $p > 0.1$, Beloved Dessert: $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(152) = 0.46$, $p > 0.1$; vertical collectivism on Unique Dessert: $b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.18$, $t(152) = 0.78$, $p > 0.1$, Award-winning Dessert: $b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.17$, $t(152) = 0.70$, $p > 0.1$, Goodwill Dessert: $b = -0.19$, $SE = 0.17$, $t(152) = -1.10$, $p > 0.1$, Beloved Dessert: $b = -0.05$, $SE = 0.17$, $t(152) = -0.30$, $p >$

0.1). Though these results failed to support hypothesis 5, they indicate that professional status threat only impacted those who are horizontally oriented.

Collectively, under conditions of no threat, cultural orientation had little consistent effect on tagline preference. However, it becomes more predictable when the person is under threat. For example, vertical individualism is negatively related to Unique Dessert, Goodwill Dessert, and Beloved Dessert when there is no threat. However, under the social relationship status threat, it positively predicted Unique Dessert and negatively predicted Goodwill Dessert. Similarly, vertical collectivism is positively related to Beloved Dessert, Award-winning Dessert, and Goodwill Dessert. Yet, it is only related to Unique Dessert under the social relationship status threat.

Table 24. Descriptive Statistics for Dessert Tagline

Condition		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional Status Threat	Unique	153	4.08	1.758
	Award-winning	153	4.67	1.577
	Goodwill	153	4.79	1.604
	Beloved	153	4.23	1.640
	Total	153		
Social Relationship Status Threat	Unique	195	3.98	1.653
	Award-winning	195	4.61	1.672
	Goodwill	195	4.96	1.624
	Beloved	195	3.97	1.649
	Total	195		
Control (No Threat)	Unique	153	4.01	1.760
	Award-winning	153	4.75	1.440
	Goodwill	153	5.13	1.361
	Beloved	153	4.20	1.581
	Total	153		

Although I designed dessert taglines that targeted each cultural orientation with a particular interest to examine the role of cultural orientation in status threat and status restoration consumption behavior, I expected there could be some relationship between cultural orientation and coffee tagline as well.

Regression analysis was conducted, and the results revealed that horizontal individualism was negatively related to success-related tagline under social relationship status threat at marginal level ($b = -0.29, p = 0.06$), but it was not significantly related to the tagline under professional status threat and no threat condition (professional status threat: $b = -0.12, p = 0.47$, no threat: $b = -0.29, p = 0.14$). This result confirms again that those who endorse horizontal individualism are even more aversive toward success-related values under social relationship status threat. Further analysis yielded no significant results with social relationship-related tagline (professional status threat: $b = -0.21, p = 0.20$, social relationship status threat: $b = -0.26, p = 0.12$, no threat: $b = -0.24, p = 0.18$).

Vertical individualism was positively related to success-tagline under social relationship status threat ($b = 0.30, p = 0.01$), but not under professional status threat and no threat (professional status threat: $b = 0.11, p = 0.46$, no threat: $b = 0.08, p = 0.55$), indicating that across-domain status restoration consumption behavior occurs. It was negatively related to social relationship-related tagline under no threat condition ($b = -0.26, p = 0.04$), but not under the professional status threat and social relationship status threat (professional status threat: $b = -0.06, p = 0.68$, social relationship status threat: $b = -0.08, p = 0.53$). This result supports that those who are high on vertical individualism prefer success-signaling products.

Under social relationship status threat, horizontal collectivism was negatively related to success-tagline ($b = -0.27, p = 0.05$), but not under professional status threat and no threat (professional status threat: $b = -0.08, p = 0.64$, no threat: $b = 0.02, p = 0.89$). This result indicates that those who endorse high level of horizontal collectivism are less likely to choose

success-related products under social relationship status threat. No further relationship between horizontal collectivism and social relationship-related tagline was found (under professional status threat: $b = 0.22, p = 0.16$, under social relationship status threat: $b = 0.06, p = 0.69$, under no threat: $b = 0.20, p = 0.18$).

Vertical collectivism did not yield significant relationships with success-related tagline (under professional status threat: $b = 0.07, p = 0.71$, under social relationship status threat: $b = 0.06, p = 0.64$, under no threat: $b = 0.07, p = 0.70$). It was positively related with social relationship-related tagline under no threat condition ($b = 0.36, p = 0.02$), but not under professional status threat and social relationship status threat (under professional status threat: $b = 0.05, p = 0.77$, under social relationship status threat: $b = 0.24, p = 0.09$).

4.8.3. Other Potential Moderators

Self-esteem

A moderation analysis was conducted by using PROCESS Macro by Hayes (2022) with 5,000 bootstraps resample, and the results revealed that under social relationship status threat, those with high self-esteem showed less preference for success-related coffee tagline than those in no threat condition at a marginally significant level ($b = -0.26, SE = 0.14, t(495) = -1.85, p = 0.065$). This result suggests that those with high self-esteem generally favor success-related taglines; however, they may not be significantly impacted by social relationship status threat, and thus they do not necessarily seek status pivoting in those threatening situations. Further analysis revealed that no moderation effect was found on the relationship-related coffee tagline and charity donations. Presumably, the moderation effect of self-esteem may be limited to social relationship status threat and therefore this finding should be carefully translated into real consumption behavior.

Self-efficacy

Through the same moderation analysis, the results found that self-efficacy moderates the effect on the success-related coffee tagline ($b = -0.36$, $SE = 0.17$, $t(495) = -2.06$, $p = 0.04$), but not on the relationship-related coffee tagline and charity donations. The results indicated that those with high self-efficacy showed less preference for the success-related coffee tagline compared to professional status threat and no threat condition. Hence, I concluded that the moderation effect of self-efficacy may be also limited to social relationship status threat.

Anxiety

The moderation analysis did not yield any significant results on either coffee taglines or charity donations. Hence, I concluded that status restoration consumption behavior may happen regardless of one's level of general anxiety.

Cultural Orientations and Possible Moderators

Although inconsistent, the results also found some interactions between psychological features and cultural orientations on status consumption behavior. Those who are high on horizontal individualism with low self-esteem showed less preference for Goodwill Dessert under both professional status and social status threat compared to no threat condition (professional status threat: $b = -0.64$, $SE = 0.33$, $t(489) = -1.96$, $p = 0.05$; social relationship status threat: $b = -0.90$, $SE = 0.34$, $t(489) = -2.68$, $p = 0.01$). When those with high horizontal individualism have high self-esteem, they showed a stronger preference for Goodwill Dessert under social relationship status threat than no threat condition, but their preference for Goodwill Dessert in professional threat was not different from no threat condition (professional status threat: $b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.36$, $t(489) = 0.31$, $p > 0.1$; social relationship status threat: $b = 0.67$, $SE = 0.33$, $t(489) = 2.05$, $p = 0.04$). Additionally, those who are high

on horizontal individualism with high anxiety reported less preference for Goodwill Dessert under both professional status threat and social relationship status threat (professional status threat: $b = -0.77$, $SE = 0.33$, $t(489) = -2.32$, $p = 0.02$; social relationship status threat: $b = -0.64$, $SE = 0.34$, $t(489) = -1.89$, $p = 0.06$).

Those who are high on vertical individualism with high self-esteem showed a stronger preference for Unique Dessert under professional status threat, but not under social threat (professional status threat: $b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.14$, $t(489) = 1.97$, $p = 0.05$; social relationship status threat: $b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(489) = 0.94$, $p > 0.1$). Those who endorse vertical individualism with high anxiety showed less preference for Goodwill Dessert under professional threat at a marginally significant level, but not under the social threat (professional status threat: $b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(489) = -1.82$, $p = 0.07$; social relationship status threat: $b = -0.08$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(489) = -0.94$, $p > 0.1$).

Those who endorse high level of horizontal collectivism with low self-efficacy reported a lower preference for Goodwill Dessert under both professional status threat and social relationship status threat (professional status threat: $b = -0.80$, $SE = 0.36$, $t(489) = -2.22$, $p = 0.03$; social relationship status threat: $b = -0.59$, $SE = 0.32$, $t(489) = -1.84$, $p = 0.067$) compared to no threat condition. As those with high horizontal collectivism showed a robust relationship with Goodwill Dessert, this finding suggests that low self-efficacy could be a barrier to restoring their threatened status using socially benevolent products.

Those who are high on vertical collectivism with high self-esteem showed less preference for Goodwill Dessert both under the professional status threat and the social relationship status threat compared to no threat condition (professional status threat: $b = -0.88$, $SE = 0.36$, $t(489) = -2.42$, $p = 0.02$; social relationship status threat: $b = -0.57$, $SE = 0.32$, $t(489) = -1.76$, $p = 0.079$). Furthermore, those with high level of vertical collectivism with high anxiety reported a higher preference for the Award-winning Dessert under social

threat ($b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(489) = 1.86$, $p = 0.064$) compared to no threat condition.

Conversely, those with high level of vertical collectivism with low anxiety reported lower preference for Beloved Dessert under both professional status threat and social relationship status threat compared to no threat condition (professional status threat: $b = -0.71$, $SE = 0.39$, $t(489) = -1.85$, $p = 0.065$; social relationship status threat: $b = -1.18$, $SE = 0.34$, $t(489) = -3.43$, $p = 0.001$).

4.9. Discussion

An integrative study was conducted to examine status restoration consumption behavior – not only professional status threat but also social relationship status threat that not much research has examined (e.g., Goor et al., 2020). Additionally, it aimed to explore status restoration consumption behaviors in different types of consumption such as preference of product taglines and charity donation.

The results yielded inconsistent findings; however, several noteworthy results were observed. The descriptive statistics results suggest that under professional status threat, participants favor the social relationship tagline more than the success tagline ($M_{social} = 3.75$, $M_{success} = 2.71$), which might suggest status restoration across the different domains (status pivoting). On the other hand, under social relationship status threat, participants favor the social relationship tagline more than the success tagline ($M_{social} = 3.54$, $M_{success} = 2.47$), which might indicate status restoration within the same domains. Similarly, using charity donation as another dependent variable, the descriptive statistics results suggest that under professional status threat, participants favor relationship-related charity more than success-related charity ($M_{social} = 10.35$, $M_{success} = 4.70$), which might suggest status restoration across the different domains (status pivoting). However, under social relationship status threat, participants favor the social relationship tagline more than the success tagline ($M_{social} = 9.60$, $M_{success} = 3.84$),

which might indicate status restoration within the same domains. These two results indicate that social relationship status threat could be more critical to people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995); thus, once it gets threatened, it could only be restored by social relationships.

Furthermore, as it is a more primary status threat to oneself, it could help other status threat domains to be restored; for example, professional status threat may be able to be restored by sound social relationships.

Using each different sales tagline, the study confirmed that cultural orientation can moderate the effects of different status threats on status pivoting. Specifically, those with high level of vertical orientation showed status pivoting under social relationship threat. Some mixed findings suggest, however, that those with high level of horizontal orientation might restore their status through both within and across-domain status restoration behavior under professional threat.

This research explored possible moderators of the relationship between status threat and status restoration consumption behavior. The results suggest that those with high self-esteem and self-efficacy may not be significantly impacted by social relationship status threat, and thus they do not necessarily seek status pivoting in those threatening situations. Hence, high self-esteem and self-efficacy could be important psychological factors that can alleviate undesirable outcomes from status threats, such as diminished well-being (Leary, 1990). Those moderators showed an interplay with cultural orientations and preferred product taglines. For example, those who are high on horizontal individualism with high self-esteem showed stronger within-domain status restoration consumption behavior under social relationship status threat, and this was also true for those with high anxiety. Conversely, those who endorse vertical individualism with high self-esteem showed stronger across-domain status restoration consumption behavior under professional status threat. These results imply

that horizontal and vertical distinctions of individualism may provide nuanced effects of status restoration consumption behavior under different threats.

Those with high level of horizontal collectivism with low self-efficacy reported a lower preference for Goodwill Dessert under both professional status threat and social relationship status threat compared to those who are high on self-efficacy. As those who endorse high level of horizontal collectivism showed a robust relationship with Goodwill Dessert, this finding might suggest that low self-efficacy could be a barrier to restoring their threatened status using socially benevolent products. Therefore, to better market charities for those with high level of horizontal individualism, it would be better to enhance their self-efficacy level.

Finally, those with high level of vertical collectivism with high self-esteem showed less status pivoting compared to those with low self-esteem under both professional status threat and social relationship status threat, suggesting that high self-esteem can mitigate the effect of status threat so that those with high self-esteem do not necessarily seek status restoration actively. Hence, enhancing self-esteem could be beneficial for those with high level of vertical collectivism to keep them from negative outcomes of status threats.

4.9.1. Theoretical Contributions

Literature has documented the negative effect of social relationship status threat on consumer well-being and the corresponding consumer behavior to manage the negative experience (Shrum et al., 2023). However, a growing body of literature suggests that certain coping mechanisms for the social relationship status threat, especially the within-domain status restoration, may lead to backfire effects. For example, coping with the status threat within the same domain (i.e., through consumption of products that are related to social relationships) may inadvertently re-arouse social disconnection as it likely causes those individuals to be

self-focused (Fumagalli et al., 2022). Moreover, within-domain status restoration can disrupt one's capacity for self-control in other aspects of life as available psychological resources may be depleted in the pursuit of status restoration (Lisjak et al., 2014). Despite these findings, a remarkable lack of research has examined how social relationship status can be restored through across-domain status consumption behaviors (status pivoting) that are not necessarily related to social relationships. In this regard, this research fills the research gap in the literature by addressing the complex interplay between social relationship status threat, cultural orientation, and psychological features, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and general anxiety, in determining whether within-domain status restoration is indeed necessary.

Furthermore, instead of using dichotomous dependent variables, our research used continuous variables where consumers can indicate their nuanced preference under different status-threatening situations. This approach allows us to capture the subtle variations in consumers' preferences and behaviors under different status-threatening situations, offering a more comprehensive analysis of their responses. By employing continuous variables, this research moves beyond the limitations of dichotomous measures, which often oversimplify the complexity of consumer responses.

4.9.2. Managerial Implications

Research has shown that consumers are willing to spend their money on products that have the potential to reinstate their status under status-threatening situations (Duclos et al., 2012). Hence, understanding the status threat and corresponding status restoration consumption behavior will indeed provide significant implications for marketing practitioners.

For practitioners who aim to protect consumer well-being from status threats, it is crucial to develop tailored strategies that consider consumers' different cultural orientations. For vertically oriented consumers facing social relationship status threats – for example,

getting through a break-up or divorce, or cyberbullying – practitioners can offer products that foster social connectedness and reaffirm their sense of belonging. On the other hand, as vertically oriented individuals are less affected by professional status threats compared to horizontally oriented consumers, marketing strategies could be designed to specifically address the needs of horizontally oriented consumers under professional status threats. Considering that horizontal individualism exhibits stronger aversive attitudes towards products that emphasize competitive values as a means of restoring one's social relationship status (e.g., Award-winning Dessert), practitioners may avoid highlighting these values in their products, especially in situations where social relationship status is threatened. Our findings can be applied to a variety of products. For instance, prior research has shown that social relationship status threats likely induce consumers to favor products with certain physical traits, such as visually compacted products to fill their psychological gap (Su et al., 2019). Although our exploration of consumers' actual spending behavior on charity donations did not yield statistically significant results, this aspect of the research holds potential for future investigations and practical implications. Future studies may further delve into consumers' philanthropic behaviors and explore the factors that influence their charitable spending in response to social relationship status threats.

4.9.3. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

A comprehensive investigation was undertaken in the form of a single study to analyze various situations involving status threats and the subsequent consumption behaviors to restore status, but the results yielded were somewhat inconsistent. Hence, more studies are required using different manipulations to replicate findings, reconcile the mixed findings, and provide a deeper understanding of the status threat and status consumption behaviors.

To comprehensively understand the intricacies of status dynamics, future research should adopt a multifaceted approach that encompasses a broader spectrum of status threat situations and encompasses diverse demographics (e.g., Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). Cultural orientation is especially complex, as one's own level of cultural orientation may differ from that of their residing country (e.g., Australians living in China). This incongruence can potentially give rise to another form of status for consumers who wish to fit into the host country. By undertaking such thorough investigations, this research can shed light on the underlying mechanisms that drive status restoration consumption behaviors and achieve a more holistic understanding of human behavior in the face of status-related challenges.

Additionally, I acknowledge the significance of status threat and status restoration consumption behavior in relation to consumer well-being. However, the present research has not explored well-being. Therefore, future research should incorporate well-being measures and investigate the type of status restoration consumption behavior (whether within or across domain) that are more beneficial than the other to consumer well-being in the face of various status threats, including those related to professional status and social relationship.

As highlighted in previous studies, the nature of the social relationship status threat can influence the type of status restoration behaviors individuals adopt. For instance, when consumers perceive a threat of being “ignored” by others, they may resort to conspicuous consumption behavior; while, in situations where the social relationship status threat induces feelings of “rejection”, consumers may demonstrate socially benevolent consumption behavior, such as charity donation (Lee & Shrum, 2012). Therefore, further research should refine the different types of social relationship status threats to better understand their corresponding restoration behavior and interplay with distinct cultural orientations and psychological features.

4.10. Conclusion

This chapter explores status restoration consumption behavior under professional status threat and social relationship status threat. It explores various consumption area, including charity donation. It further explores cultural orientation and psychological features such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and general anxiety as moderators in status restoration consumption behavior. The results suggests that social relationship status threat could be more significant than professional status threat, however, future research needs to replicate those findings and refine our understanding of status restoration consumption behavior.

Chapter 5. General Discussion

5.1. Summary of Main Findings

5.1.1. Cultural Orientation, Materialism, and Status Consumption

Culture has been examined in conjunction with consumers' level of materialism from early studies such as Ger and Belk, 1996. In general, the distinctive traits of individualism and collectivism have led scholars to assume that those with individualism might be stronger on materialism than those with collectivism (e.g., Kilbourne et al., 2005). However, some research has found that individualism is not related to materialism (Wong, 1997), while others suggest that those with collectivism can be as materialistic as those with individualism (Awanis et al., 2017). Hence this chapter tries to unravel the mixed findings in the literature and examine the relationship between cultural orientations and materialism. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the relationship between cultural orientation, materialism, and status consumption behavior, which has been posited as a behavioral outcome of materialism in previous studies (e.g., Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006).

Our analysis of the data from seven different countries showed that only vertical individualism exhibits a positive relationship with materialism and status consumption behavior. In contrast, other cultural orientations including horizontal individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism are negatively associated with materialism and status consumption behavior. Horizontal collectivism especially displayed the most negative relationship with materialism and status consumption behavior, suggesting that horizontal collectivists are very likely to avoid materialistic and status-signaling products.

These findings suggest the possible reason for the mixed findings in the literature, which is that individualism and collectivism might be oversimplified in the research. The horizontal and vertical dimensions determine the acceptance of power difference and inequality, thus different cultural orientations on horizontal and vertical dimensions may

endorse distinct relations with materialism as the means to gain higher social status and display their more successful life to others. Our research confirms that individualistic consumers tend to be more materialistic than collective consumers. However, those who are high on horizontal individualism show negative attitudes toward materialism. Furthermore, both dimensions of collectivism endorse a negative relation to materialism; however, one's level of vertical collectivism endorses materialism more than horizontal collectivism as it accepts social hierarchy and power inequality. Hence, I expect that the previous research could provide refined and distinct effects of culture on materialism.

At the same time, the second objective of this study was to explore the relationship between cultural orientation, materialism, and status consumption behavior. I examined materialism as a mediator of the relationship between cultural orientations and status consumption behavior, as suggested by the literature showing that materialism precedes status consumption behavior (Flynn et al., 2016). The analysis revealed that materialism mediates the relationship between cultural orientation and status consumption behavior. This indicates that materialism stands as a significant consumer value that triggers status consumption behavior. Furthermore, it suggests that materialism underlies the different attitudes toward status consumption behavior across distinct cultural orientations.

5.1.2. Political Orientation and Materialism

Political orientation could serve as another form of cultural orientation; for instance, horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism can be used to predict election results (Zhang et al., 2009). Hence, Chapter 3 examined if political orientation can predict an individual's level of materialism. This inquiry not only contributes to our understanding of materialism but also sheds light on the potential influences of political orientation on consumer behavior related to materialism.

Using a series of studies, Chapter 3 finds that the relationship between political ideology and materialism is more complicated than the literature assumes, which challenges the presumed simplicity that the existing literature might suggest. Hence, I tried to examine not only the overall materialism but also three subcomponents of materialism, namely materialism-success, centrality, and happiness, to refine the relationship between political orientation and materialism. I also examined promotion focus as a moderator. Study 1 found no main effect of political orientation on overall materialism. Regarding materialism-happiness, the results are more nuanced, indicating that the more conservative, the less endorsement of materialism-happiness. However, this finding was not replicated in the follow-up study. Moving on to study 2, our moderation analysis suggests there was a moderating effect of promotion focus on the relationship between political orientation and materialism. Specifically, the results indicate that conservatives with high promotion focus hold stronger materialism-success and centrality than liberals.

Study 3 was conducted to bolster the findings and to introduce real-life measures for political orientation and materialism. This includes an approach of using an issue-based political orientation measure where respondents are presented with choices between conservative and liberal stances on pertinent social issues such as immigration and abortion. Furthermore, the election results based on their residential information are used to identify their political orientation. For materialism, I used sharing (vs. possessing), saving (vs. spending), and preference for materialistic products (vs. practical products).

The study found no main effect of issue-based political ideology on materialism and its subcomponents. Similarly, there was no main effect of political orientation derived from the election results (both county-level and state-level) on materialism and its subcomponents. However, further analysis found that political conservatism measured by issue-based items was related to an increased likelihood of saving intention and preference for materialistic

products. Meanwhile, the saving intention and preference for materialistic products were not related to political orientation measured by election results.

Study 3 found no moderating effect of promotion focus, except that promotion focus moderates the relationship between political orientation by election results (county-level) and preference for materialistic products. This suggests that among those with high promotion focus, liberals showed a stronger preference for materialistic products than liberals – a finding that is conflicting with results from the prior study that, among those with high promotion focus, conservatives are higher on materialism-success than liberals. To sum up, our mixed results underscore the complexity of the relationship between political orientation and materialism.

5.1.3. Status Restoration Consumption Behavior

Material possessions are often used to display one's social standing and success (Richins & Dawson, 1992). For this reason, consumers use certain material possessions when their success or social standing is threatened (Gao et al., 2008). Chapter 4 takes an in-depth exploration of this type of consumption of success-related goods, especially its role as a coping mechanism for various types of status threats. Our study delves into two primary forms of status threats: success-related status threats where individuals encounter those who are more financially and professionally successful, and the social relationship status threat where individuals encounter those with stronger interpersonal relationships. The outcome variables are success-related status consumption behavior that emphasizes success value in their products, and relationship-related status consumption behavior that emphasizes relationships in their products, serving as markers of one's social standing.

Our examination of descriptive statistics yields intriguing insights. The results suggest that the success status threat can be restored by relationship-related status products;

however, the social relationship status threat leads consumers to prefer the same domain of status products, namely the relationship-related products. This suggests that social relationship status threat is more critical and significant to consumers, as consumers tend to believe it could only be restored by social relationships-related products instead of success-signaling products.

The study further finds that cultural orientation plays a role in status restoration consumption behavior. Vertical individualism and vertical collectivism showed across-domain status restoration (status pivoting) under social relationship threat, while horizontal collectivism showed within-domain status restoration consumption behavior under the same threat. Notably, horizontal individualism did not show any significant status restoration consumption behavior under the professional status threat. Additionally, horizontal individualism displayed even more aversive attitude toward success-related taglines under the professional status threat, while horizontal collectivism showed both within and across domain status restoration consumption behavior. In contrast, vertical individualism and vertical collectivism did not display any significant status restoration consumption behavior under the professional status threat, indicating the professional status threat only impacted those who are horizontally oriented.

Furthermore, psychological features such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and general anxiety are examined. The results suggest that those with high self-esteem showed less preference for success-related taglines than those in the no threat condition under the social relationship status threat. Similarly, those with high self-efficacy showed less status pivoting under the social relationship status threat. These results indicate that high self-esteem may not be significantly impacted by the social relationship status threat. However, there was no moderation effect of anxiety on status restoration consumption behavior.

The interplay of cultural orientations and psychological features was also found. Those who are high on horizontal individualism with high self-esteem showed status pivoting under the social relationship status threat and those with low self-esteem and high anxiety reported less status pivoting. Those who are high on vertical individualism with high self-esteem showed status pivoting under the success status threat, and those with high anxiety showed less status pivoting under the social relationship status threat. Those with high level of horizontal collectivism with low self-efficacy reported a lower preference for socially benevolent products under both professional status threat and social relationship status threat. I assume that low self-efficacy could be a barrier to status restoration consumption behavior using socially benevolent products, as those who endorse high level of horizontal collectivism showed a robust relationship with Goodwill Dessert. Similarly, those with high level of vertical collectivism with high self-esteem showed less preference for socially benevolent products under both the success status threat and the social relationship status threat. Additionally, those with high anxiety reported status pivoting, preferring success-related products under the social relationship status threat.

While the patterns arising from these psychological traits may not be entirely consistent, the findings that the interplay of the cultural orientations and psychological features, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and anxiety, can affect status restoration consumption behavior indeed suggest that they need to be considered in future research and practice.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

Materialism has been actively explored for decades (Belk, 1985). However, a notable gap in the existing literature remains with unclear evidence concerning the relationship between cultural orientation, materialism, and its consequential consumer outcome of status

consumption behavior. In this regard, this research contributes to the culture and materialism literature, providing evidence that horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism can provide a nuanced relationship between materialism and status consumption behavior. For example, this research adds to the findings of Kilbourne et al. (2005) and Awanis et al. (2017) that suggest individualists are more materialistic than collectivists, and that collectivists are as materialistic as individualists, providing a refined relationship between individualism and collectivism by incorporating horizontal and vertical dimensions of culture. I also expect future research will yield more precise and nuanced insights into the effects of culture on consumer behavior.

Moreover, the present research provides supporting evidence that materialism acts as a precursor to status consumption behavior. This contributes to the literature which has shown a strong correlation between materialism and status consumption, yet often neglects to comprehensively examine both constructs within the same study (e.g., Kim & Jang, 2014). Similarly, scholars have often suggested that status consumption behavior is a behavioral outcome of materialism. However, not much research has considered materialism as a mediator in their research (Clark et al., 2007). In this regard, this research adds depth to the existing literature and emphasizes the necessity of jointly examining both constructs.

This thesis identifies another gap in the literature related to the investigation of political orientation as a predictor of materialism (e.g., Van Lange et al., 2012). Chapter 3 provides evidence suggesting that the relationship between political orientation and materialism is highly complex. Nonetheless, the present research found the moderating effects of promotion focus in two studies where promotion-focused conservatives are more materialistic than liberals, which is, however, not replicated in the following study. Despite the mixed findings, the results contribute to the existing literature where the promotion focus

has not been actively examined regarding materialism and open the possibility to be examined in future study (e.g., Lens et al., 2010).

Additionally, the present research opens up the possibility of using real-life measures for materialism and political orientation. By measuring saving intention and preference for materialistic products over practical products, instead of using multi-item scales in the literature, it could overcome some possible limitations of existing scales; for example, social desirability issues of the scales and validity issues when using them across cultures (King & Bruner, 2000; Wong et al., 2003). Similarly, by measuring political orientation based on their attitudes toward societal issues, such as abortion and immigration, as well as election results based on their location, it could capture someone's political orientation more accurately than using single-item political orientation measures in the literature (e.g., Jost, 2006).

My final research on the status threat and status restoration consumption behavior examined two primary status threats: professional status threat and social relationship status threat. As the status threat and the corresponding status restoration consumption behavior have been mostly examined in success-related status domains such as high/low power over others and financial/professional success (e.g., Rucker et al., 2012), the social relationship status threat has remained as a research gap. In this regard, it contributes to the literature, finding the descriptive statistical evidence that indicates the social relationship status threat would be more significant to consumers than the success status threat.

This final research finds that consumers prefer social-relationship related products under social status threat (within-domain status restoration consumption behavior), rather than success-related products that materialism generally brings. Nonetheless, it found a moderating effect of cultural orientation on across-domain status restoration consumption behavior (status pivoting). For example, it finds that the success status threat tends to impact those who are horizontally oriented, and those who are vertically oriented tend to be

influenced more by the social relationship status threat than the success status threat. These findings add to the status pivoting literature (Goor et al., 2020) where cultural orientation can be a moderator on different status threats and status restoration consumption behavior.

Furthermore, it suggests the importance of considering horizontal and vertical dimensions in the professional status threat and the social relationship status threat research. This research also adds self-esteem, self-efficacy, and general anxiety as moderators to the status threat and restoration literature (e.g., Rucker & Galinsky, 2008) where psychological traits have been often overlooked. Our findings indicate that those with high self-esteem and high self-efficacy showed less preference for status pivoting using success-related products under the social relationship status threat. However, it found that status restoration consumption behavior could occur regardless of one's level of general anxiety. Hence, these findings contribute to the existing status restoration literature, emphasizing the intricate interplay between psychological traits, status restoration, and status pivoting. High self-esteem and self-efficacy may act as protective factors, reducing the need for individuals to pivot their status when confronted with certain threats. However, the overarching desire to restore one's status remains a powerful driver, even in the presence of general anxiety.

5.3. Practical Implications

This research also provides important implications for practitioners. Primarily, materialism emerges as a pivotal factor determining consumer well-being, often being blamed for its detrimental effect on consumer well-being (Dittmar et al., 2014). Consequently, it becomes critical for practitioners or policymakers to understand which cultural orientation tends to exhibit higher materialism. This understanding can inform strategies to mitigate the negative effects of materialism on consumer well-being. Specifically, in assessing who might be most vulnerable to materialism, careful attention might be necessary for those with high level of

vertical individualism, who show the strongest preference for materialism in our research and are thus, vulnerable to decreased well-being.

In contrast to a vulnerability and well-being lens, when considering who might be the best prospects for buying material things through a marketing for profit lens, this insight holds significance for marketing practitioners who aim to market their materialistic and status goods. The best target for such practitioners would be those with high level of vertical individualism and the least likely target would be those with high level of horizontal collectivism. They also may want to design their marketing messages to convey those cultural values to their targeted consumers. For example, emphasizing achievement and competition would be efficient for those who are high on vertical individualism; however, it would produce a backfire effect on those who endorse high level of horizontal individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism. The present research acknowledges that identifying one's cultural orientation in the practical field may be challenging. However, country of residence can serve as a proxy measure for cultural orientation (e.g., vertical individualism for the U.S. residents and horizontal individualism for Australian residents).

Additionally, this research opens up the potential for the use of real-life measures for political orientation and materialism. While acknowledging mixed findings, practitioners could leverage available options and consider indirect measures for political orientation and materialism to identify consumer features. For example, the results indicate that issue-based political orientation and political orientations measured by state-level election outcome predicted higher saving intention of conservatives compared to liberals. Hence, practitioners may want to identify consumers' political orientation by their attitudes toward social issues and/or residential information if they want to learn about their saving behavior. Similarly, practitioners may want to target the counties with liberal election results to best market their materialistic products as this research found that among those who endorse high promotion-

focus, liberals identified by their county-level election results showed a stronger preference for materialistic products (vs. practical products) than conservatives.

This research opens up the potential of social relationship status threat as significant in research in consumer behavior and consumer well-being. Practitioners concerned with consumer well-being should prioritize the social relationship status threat over the professional status threat to protect against negative impacts on consumer well-being. By offering options related to sound social relationships, such as charitable and volunteer activities and board games that encourage interpersonal interactions, practitioners can leverage the potential of status restoration consumption behavior under social relationship status threats.

Furthermore, this research unveils that those with horizontal cultural orientations are more affected by the success status threat, while those with vertical cultural orientations are more influenced by the social relationship status threats, showing more status restoration consumption behaviors. Practitioners can identify consumers' cultural orientations and utilize this information to differentiate their marketing strategies, targeting specific products such as either success-related products or social relationship-related products under different status-threatening situations.

Although consistent patterns of moderating effects of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and anxiety on the relationship between status threats and status restoration consumption behavior were not conclusively identified, the results suggest that some cultural orientations with those psychological traits exhibit different patterns of status restoration consumption behavior. Those with high level of horizontal collectivists with low self-efficacy especially showed a lower preference for Goodwill Dessert under both the success status threat and the social relationship status threat, which contrasts with their consistent main effect on preference for social relationship-related products. This suggests that low self-efficacy could hinder status

restoration using socially benevolent products. Hence, practitioners might consider enhancing consumers' self-efficacy to effectively encourage status restoration behaviors, particularly with socially benevolent products. Future research could delve into the interplay of additional psychological traits that might even discourage status restoration consumption behavior or even socially benevolent consumption behavior.

5.4. Limitations

This thesis examined the two closely related constructs, materialism and status consumption behavior, with an in-depth focus on each construct shedding light on both constructs individually while also presenting valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners. However, it acknowledges several limitations.

First, the relationship between cultural orientation, materialism, and status consumption was primarily based on correlational analysis and so was the examination of the relationship between political orientation and materialism. To make the findings more robust and practical, additional experimental studies would be necessary. Future studies can manipulate cultural orientations and political orientations and examine if the change in the consumers' cultural orientation and political orientation can alter their level of materialism and preference for status consumption.

Furthermore, the examination of the effects of political orientation on materialism yielded inconsistent results. Hence, other possible moderators and mediators such as personality (e.g., narcissism), personal values and beliefs (e.g., self-directed, belief in a just world) should be examined for a comprehensive understanding. It is also important to recognize that our research has been limited to the context of the USA and its consumers. As political orientations differ across countries, future research should examine how political orientation is related to materialism and consumer behavior in different countries to broaden

our understanding and practical implications for global markets. Its insights also bear significance for future research, suggesting that the relationship between different cultural orientations and distinct domains of status threats should be explored to gain a comprehensive understanding of status threats and restoration behaviors.

Additionally, this research acknowledges identifying professional and social relationship-related status threat in the practical field can be challenging. Professional status threats may be discerned by comparing one's socioeconomic level with that of their residing community. However, social relationship-related status threats pose a greater challenge due to their personal and intimate nature. Therefore, more efforts should be directed towards identifying various status threats, particularly those related to social relationships, for practical implications.

Finally, one single study was conducted for integrative research on status threats and status restoration consumption behavior, and additional studies are essential to replicate the findings. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the scenarios used in this study inherently incorporate social settings within the narratives. To ensure the accuracy of the conclusions, future research could employ more neutral scenarios that exclude social contexts, facilitating a more precise understanding of status restoration consumption behavior. Moreover, this study focused on two types of status threats – professional status threat and social relationship status threat. To enhance our understanding, it is important to explore other domains of status threats. For example, marital status threat where single consumers may feel threatened when they encounter those who are married, or employment status threat where non-employed consumers feel threatened when they encounter those who have a stable job, could be examined to enrich our understanding of status consumption behavior as a coping mechanism for various status threats in society.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Material Value Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992)

Materialism-Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.
2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.
3. I think the amount of material objects people own is a sign of success.
4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.
5. I like to own things that impress people.
6. I pay much attention to the material objects other people own.

Materialism-Centrality

7. I usually buy more than what I need.
8. I am not worried about keeping life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.
9. The things I own are very important to me.
10. I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical.
11. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.
12. I like a lot of luxury in my life.
13. I put more emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Materialism-Happiness

14. I don't yet have all the things I really need to enjoy life.
15. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.
16. I would be happier if I owned nicer things.
17. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

18. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Appendix B

Horizontal Vertical Individualism Collectivism Scale (Singelis, 1994)

Horizontal Individualism

1. I'd rather depend on myself than others.
2. I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.
3. I often do "my own thing."
4. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.

Vertical Individualism

1. It is important that I do my job better than others.
2. Winning is everything.
3. Competition is the law of nature.
4. When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.

Horizontal Collectivism

1. If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.
2. The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.
3. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.
4. I feel good when I cooperate with others.

Vertical Collectivism

1. Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
2. It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.
3. Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.
4. It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my group.

Appendix C

Status Consumption Behavior (Eastman et al., 1999)

1. I would buy a product just because it has status.
2. I am interested in new products with status.
3. I would pay more for a product if it had status.
4. The status of a product is irrelevant to me.
5. A product is more valuable to me if it has some snob appeal.

Appendix D (Chapter 2)

Descriptive Statistics by Country

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>				
Country		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
UK	Materialism	249	3.9047	1.34890
	Status Consumption Behavior	0		
	Horizontal Individualism	249	4.9277	1.25153
	Vertical Individualism	249	3.8173	1.22299
	Horizontal Collectivism	249	4.7259	1.19577
	Vertical Collectivism	249	4.7771	1.17883
	Valid N (listwise)	0		
USA	Materialism	249	3.5593	1.32878
	Status Consumption Behavior	249	3.0490	1.34152
	Horizontal Individualism	249	5.0241	1.22759
	Vertical Individualism	249	3.8494	1.27274
	Horizontal Collectivism	249	4.7570	1.27147
	Vertical Collectivism	249	4.9036	1.30359
	Valid N (listwise)	249		
China	Materialism	244	4.4920	1.00366
	Status Consumption Behavior	244	4.1270	1.26949
	Horizontal Individualism	244	4.8852	1.10025
	Vertical Individualism	244	4.7725	1.05969
	Horizontal Collectivism	244	4.7490	1.01367
	Vertical Collectivism	244	5.1076	1.13627
	Valid N (listwise)	244		
Australia	Materialism	463	3.7037	1.19949
	Status Consumption Behavior	463	3.2143	1.13819
	Horizontal Individualism	463	5.1107	1.13295
	Vertical Individualism	463	3.8359	1.13642
	Horizontal Collectivism	463	4.9887	1.09443
	Vertical Collectivism	463	4.9795	1.23052
	Valid N (listwise)	463		
Brazil	Materialism	537	3.6759	1.21771
	Status Consumption Behavior	537	3.1184	1.29982
	Horizontal Individualism	537	5.1536	1.29891
	Vertical Individualism	537	4.0326	1.26155
	Horizontal Collectivism	537	5.2444	1.31135
	Vertical Collectivism	537	5.2118	1.36160
	Valid N (listwise)	537		

Germany	Materialism	634	3.6065	1.01583
	Status Consumption Behavior	634	3.2297	1.03096
	Horizontal Individualism	634	4.7054	1.20167
	Vertical Individualism	634	3.9077	1.11616
	Horizontal Collectivism	634	4.7902	1.16549
	Vertical Collectivism	634	4.8718	1.25392
	Valid N (listwise)	634		
Korea	Materialism	283	4.2034	.90557
	Status Consumption Behavior	283	3.8587	1.16830
	Horizontal Individualism	283	4.5733	.92812
	Vertical Individualism	283	4.6511	.99285
	Horizontal Collectivism	283	4.6908	.94310
	Vertical Collectivism	283	4.5972	.97182
	Valid N (listwise)	283		

Appendix E (Chapter 3, Study 1 & 2)

Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001)

1. Compared to most people, are you typically unable to get what you want out of life?
2. Growing up, would you ever “cross the line” by doing things that your parents would not tolerate?
3. How often have you accomplished things that got you “psyched” to work even harder?
4. Did you get on your parents’ nerves often when you were growing up?
5. How often did you obey rules and regulations that were established by your parents?
6. Growing up, did you ever act in ways that your parents’ thought were objectionable?
7. Do you often do well at different thing that you try?
8. Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times.
9. When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don’t perform as well as I ideally would like to do.
10. I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life.
11. I have found very few hobbies or activities in my life that capture my interest or motivate me to put effort into them.

Appendix F (Chapter 3, Study 3)

Issue-based Political Ideology (modified from Jung et al. (2017))

Instruction: Among the statements below, please choose one statement that you agree with the most.

1.
 - Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days.
 - Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition.
2.
 - Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents.
 - Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care.
3.
 - Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy.
 - Stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost.
4.
 - Homosexuality should be accepted by society.
 - Homosexuality should be discouraged by society.
5.
 - Poor people have hard lives because government benefits don't go far enough to help them live decently.
 - Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return.
6.
 - Stricter laws against abortion should be passed.
 - Stricter laws against abortion should not be passed.
7.
 - Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good.
 - Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest.
8.
 - The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy.
 - The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt.
9.
 - Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit.
 - Business corporations make too much profit.

Appendix G. Stimuli Used in the Study (Chapter 4)

Professional Status Threat Condition:



Suppose you are having lunch with your coworkers. One of them shares the news that your coworker **A** has been promoted and given a pay raise since **A**'s latest project is producing impressive results. You also work on this project, and as your idea is better than **A**'s and you have worked harder than **A**, you think you deserve the promotion, not **A**.

Social Relationship Status Threat Condition:



Suppose you are having lunch with your coworkers. They start talking about going out for drinks after work. You also want to join, but nobody asks you. You drop a hint about your interest, but everyone seems to ignore it.

How would you feel in this situation? Please write it down in the box below.

No threat Condition (Control):



Suppose you are having lunch with your coworkers. One of them shares the news that they are going out today to pick up a new pet and they are very happy about it. You are excited to hear about it as you too are hoping to adopt a pet soon.

Please reflect on how you would feel about this situation and write it down in the box below.

Appendix H (Chapter 4)

Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Appendix I (Chapter 4)

General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

Appendix J (Chapter 4)

General Anxiety Scale (Spitzer et al., 2006)

Instruction: Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying
3. Worrying too much about different things
4. Trouble relaxing
5. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable
7. Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen