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**Spending money on well-being: Identity and
motivation processes involved in the association
of well-being with material and experiential
consumer products**

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PhD Psychology
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September, 2017

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

DECLARATION OF CONTRIBUTION

Paper 1 is in preparation to be submitted to a journal:

Moldes, O., Banerjee, R., Easterbrook, J. M., Harris, R. P. & Dittmar, H. (2017) Spending Money on “My Sense of Self”: Identity-Related Functions of Material and Experiential Purchases and its Relationships to Well-Being. *Manuscript in preparation*

The author contributions are as follows: Olaya Moldes Andrés was responsible for all aspects of data collection, data analysis, writing of the manuscript; Robin Banerjee, Matthew J. Easterbrook and Peter R. Harris were responsible for providing feedback on study design, data analysis and corrections to the manuscript. Olaya Moldes Andrés, Helga Dittmar and Peter R. Harris were collectively responsible for the initial conception of the research.

Paper 2 is submitted to the Journal of Motivation and Emotion as:

Moldes, O., Harris, R. P., Easterbrook, J. M. & Banerjee, R. (2017) Spending choices and anticipated well-being: The role of goal orientations and identity-related functions. *Manuscript submitted to Motivation and Emotion*

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Paper 3 is in preparation to be submitted to a journal:

Moldes, O., Easterbrook, J. M., Harris, R. P. & Banerjee, R. (2017) Exploring the Link between Identity and Well-being: Self-defining versus Self-expressive Functions from Purchases.

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SUMMARY

Spending money on well-being: Identity and motivation processes involved in the association of well-being with material and experiential consumer products

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This thesis investigates the identity and motivation processes involved in the association of well-being with consumer products (material or experiential). Through a series of four empirical studies looking at consumer spending behaviours, it both tests and extends some of the theoretical claims made by motivated identity construction theory (MICT, Vignoles, 2011), which postulates that the satisfaction of identity motives (such as self-esteem, distinctiveness or effectiveness) enhance well-being, and self-determination (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 2002), which postulates that the pursuit of the extrinsic goals (such as wealth, image and fame) leads to lower well-being.

The current thesis suggests that it might not be so much what consumers buy (material or experiential purchases), but how consumer products are thought to transform or enhance one's extended sense of self by satisfying identity motives (MICT) (Paper 1 and 3), and why people are motivated to make a spending behaviour that drives the effects on well-being that consumers associate with a purchase (SDT: intrinsic or extrinsic goals; paper 2). As a result, the present research contributes to the literature on material and experiential consumption by providing a theoretically-driven explanation for the differences in well-being found between the different types of consumer products as identity processes mediate the relationship between what consumers buy and the well-being associated with a purchase, and that goal orientations

predict both those identity processes and the initial choice of spending behaviour.

Moreover, it provides a behavioural explanation for the extended body of literature that has found a negative relationship between extrinsic goals and well-being (i.e., Dittmar, Bond et al., 2014) as it fills in the gap between goals and well-being by suggesting that concrete behaviours concerning the allocation of economic resources mediate the relationship between goals pursued and the well-being experienced.

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INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

“I’m not interested in money, I just want to *be* wonderful” – Marilyn Monroe.¹

The relationship between money and happiness has been an area of massive expansion in the field of economic psychology over recent decades (Lea & Webley, 2014). Early research appeared to show a mild positive association between income and happiness at a national level, but this association was found to be weaker and inconsistent when comparisons were made between countries and over time (Easterlin, 1974). These results suggested that the relationship between happiness and income might be relative to the social norm or standard of wealth, and that hedonic adaptation and a continuous rise in aspirations also play an important role. Further research also revealed that the relationship between income and well-being seemed to be stronger in the lower bounds; however, when basic needs are fulfilled, money appears to have little impact on subjective well-being (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). Certainly, one could argue that money as a physical piece of metal, paper or a virtual number on a digital screen might not provide any hedonic value to its owner until it is exchanged for other goods and services. Therefore, over the last decade, a rapidly growing area of research, which has been named “the science of spending” (Dunn & Weidman, 2015), has suggested that perhaps it is the way individuals spend their money that might impact upon well-being (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). This PhD aims to examine this idea by exploring the associations between different types of purchases and the well-being that consumers link to those purchases through the changes that the consumer products might bring to the buyer’s extended sense of self. As Marilyn Monroe hinted, perhaps

¹ Quote attributed to Marilyn Monroe in *Will acting spoil Marilyn Monroe?* by Pete Martin, 1956. Emphasis added to *be*.

money might not be interesting in itself to individuals, but the enhancement or transformation of one's sense of self *is*, suggesting that it is possible that the hedonic value of money might depend on the extent to which it helps people to *be* whatever they desire.

Economic and social context

To understand individual spending behaviours, we need to examine the wider context in which they take place. In most current western societies it has become indispensable that its individual members spend money on goods and services in order to maintain and increase the wealth of the group. Consumer expenditure constitutes 65% of the UK gross domestic product and this figure is in line with other developed countries such as the United States (68.1%), Italy (60.8%), Spain (57.8%), Germany (53.9%) and France (55.3%) (Word Bank, 2017). These data not only highlight the importance that individuals, as consumers, have on the growth and development of a country's wealth, but they also reflect the need for the current economic system to find strategies to motivate people to keep on spending money beyond covering their basic needs in order to maintain the status quo and ensure a frequent and constant cash flow. In the UK alone, £17.52 billion was spent on advertisements in 2016, a growth of 3.7% over the previous year (Statista, 2016). These numbers reflect the increasing efforts that the producers of goods and services make to sell their consumer products.

Some authors have claimed that the current consumer culture heightens the importance of purchasing as a way to achieve desirable psychological outcomes, such as happiness, a positive sense of identity, status or meaningful personal relationships (Dittmar, 2008). Indeed, the promise of achieving happiness through the use of consumer products has been explicit in advertisements. Billboards and magazines are awash with campaigns such as "Open a Coke, open happiness", "Happiness is a choice"

by Pepsi, the “Happiness quest” by Cadbury, “Get in, get happy” by Volkswagen, “Happiness is not around the corner, happiness is the corner” by BMW, “Happiness starts here” by McDonald’s, or “Happiness is a journey, not a destination. Take the right step” by Scholl. In the current consumer culture, happiness has become a key selling tool comparable with “the promise of heaven” in religion as it pledges a future desired end state that motivates individuals to shape their present behaviour.

Some authors have suggested that we are experiencing within western societies a “happiness turn”; that is, an increase in popularity of well-being discourses that enable the flourishing of the “feel-good” industry based on the promise of a more fulfilling life (Ahmed, 2010). Furthermore, it seems that past and future estimations of well-being attached to consumer products are important factors for individuals in making spending decision (Alba & Williams, 2013). However, despite the rise in well-being discourses surrounding consumption and the influence that well-being estimations seem to have for motivating consumers to spend money, most research in social psychology has approached buying behaviours as a way of escaping aversive or negative emotions, and it has largely been focused on dysfunctional consumption (e.g. Dittmar, 2005; Dittmar, Beattie, & Friese, 1996; Dittmar & Bond, 2010; Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Donnelly, Ksendzova, Howell, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2016; O’Guinn & Faber, 1989; Richins, 2011, 2013). Only in recent years have a number of studies examined the associations between consumer products and well-being (e.g. Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003; Whillans, Dunn, Smeets, Bekkers, & Norton, 2017). If individuals in consumer societies spend their money to achieve happiness, certainly understanding the associations that people make between consumer products and well-being would help us to gain further insights into everyday spending behaviours.

Furthermore, it has also been suggested that marketing and advertising play a central role in postmodern societies as they provide consumer products with the symbolic meanings that allow individuals to construct and communicate an identity (Elliot, 1997). Indeed, over the past decades, the construction of identity through the use of symbolic meanings of consumer products has been an active area of research in social psychology (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001; Anderson, 2007; Belk, 1989; Dittmar, 1992; Dittmar, 1994; Dittmar, 2008; Dittmar, Beattie, & Friese, 1995; Dittmar, Long, & Meek, 2004; Richins, 1994; Richins, 2011). Nevertheless, little research has explored the psychological processes that link spending behaviours, identity and well-being. In fact, the few studies that have examined the connections between the identity and well-being associated with a product have looked only at the centrality or impact that a particular purchase might have on the sense of identity of the buyer, and at the differences between consumer products in enhancing that sense of identity (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Guevarra & Howell, 2014; Thomas, 2010), and they have not determined in which ways purchases might modify or enhance the extended sense of self of the buyer or how those changes might be associated with gains in well-being. As a result, this PhD was designed to gain a deeper understanding of the identity construction processes underlying consumption and the links to well-being that individuals associate with their spending choices, following in the wake of recent research that has moved away from the study of the abnormal or deviant buying into gaining new insights into everyday consumption.

Consumption and well-being

The area of research looking at the relationship between consumption and well-being lies between economic and consumer psychology as it examines the relationship between money and well-being by investigating the impact that spending behaviours

might have on happiness. Therefore, this area of research aims to gain further insight into the classic question of economic psychology “*Does money bring happiness?*” by exploring the uses that individuals, as consumers, make of their money.

The studies within the science of spending approach the individual as an *emotional* decision maker following previous consumer psychology literature that has appointed affective states as the cause and consequence for individuals to engage in buying behaviours and make spending choices (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2000; Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Dittmar, 2008; Gardner, 1985; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Richins, 1997; Richins, 2011). Furthermore, this area of research builds on the distinction previously made in consumer psychology between utilitarian and hedonic benefits of consumer products that separates the instrumental and practical functions from the pleasurable and hedonic gains (Alba & Williams, 2013; Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000).

The studies looking at the relationship between spending behaviours and individual well-being could be roughly divided into three sub-areas:

- 1) Material versus experiential consumption studies have looked at the differences between spending money on material items as opposed to buying experiences (such as Carter & Gilovich, 2010, 2012; Howell & Guevarra, 2013; Pchelin & Howell, 2014; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003; Zhang, Howell, Caprariello, & Guevarra, 2014)

- 2) Pro-social versus pro-self spending studies examine the differences between spending money on one’s self as opposed to spending it on others (such as Aknin et al., 2013; Aknin, Mayraz, & Helliwell, 2017; Aknin, Sandstrom, Dunn, & Norton, 2011;

Dunn et al., 2008; Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2014; Geenen, Hohelüchter, Langholf, & Walther, 2014).

3) Money as a “way to buy time” studies have looked at the relationship between spending money on time-saving services and well-being (such as Whillans et al., 2017; Whillans, Weidman, & Dunn, 2016).

The initial set of studies that gave birth to the science of spending suggested that buying *experiences* might lead to higher levels of well-being than buying *material* items (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), and these findings have been consistently replicated across different populations and procedures (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Kumar, Killingsworth, & Gilovich, 2014; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009; Thomas & Millar, 2013). The “experience recommendation”, or the suggestion to spend money on experiences over material possessions to enhance one’s well-being, is not a new idea as, according to some authors, it can be traced back to the eighteenth-century work of David Hume (Nicolao et al., 2009). However, Van Boven and colleagues (2003) were the first to empirically test this idea by using questionnaires and started a stream of research that has been praised as a model for developing a highly impactful research programme for other areas in psychology (Dunn & Weidman, 2015).

Furthermore, the distinction between material and experiential purchases becomes theoretically important for social psychological research, as it enables the study of specific consumer spending choices and buying behaviours that could provide further insights into the extensive body of literature that has associated materialistic values, or individual differences in holding beliefs that wealth and possessions define success and provide happiness (Richins, 1994), with well-being (Dittmar, Bond, Hurst & Kasser, 2014).

Conceptual and methodological challenges

Before embracing the study of identity and well-being in the context of spending money on consumer products, we need to examine several conceptual and methodological challenges, such as: What is an experience and what is a material item? What is well-being and how can it be measured in a consumer context? When should we measure well-being – before, during or after making a purchase? and What other drivers of consumption need to be taken into account when looking at identity processes and well-being?

What is an experience and what is a material item? Conceptually, experiential purchases were initially defined as “*spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience*” and material purchases as “*spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a material possession*” (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003, p. 1194). However, the term “life experience” has been suggested to highlight the idea of an extraordinary or memorable purchase (Schmitt, 2014), whereas the term “material possessions” might equate to materialism and, therefore, might be stigmatised or linked to negative stereotypes (Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010). Other authors had simplified these definitions to “*something one purchases to do*” for experiential purchases and “*something one purchases to have*” for material ones (Carter & Gilovich, 2010, p. 156), overcoming the unintended possible bias in the initial definitions.

However, in practice, the distinction between material and experiential purchases for consumers might not be clear-cut. One of the problems repeatedly mentioned in the literature is the fuzzy boundary between material and experiential purchases (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Guevarra & Howell, 2015). Some material purchases, such as a guitar, could provide an experience or could

be purchased as a collectable item to keep in one's possession (Carter & Gilovich, 2014; Guevarra & Howell, 2015). Therefore, we could expect individual variation in the perception of the material or experiential characteristics from similar purchases depending on the use that the consumer might give to the purchase. To solve this issue, Guevarra & Howell (2015) proposed to add "experiential products" – products that facilitate an experience – as a third category to the material–experiential dichotomy, which they described as a product.

Nevertheless, purchases such as holidays or music festivals that might be commonly seen as experiences could be in fact associated with tangible items such as physical tickets, wristbands or souvenirs that might be kept and stored as memorabilia after the experience has been consumed. In addition, novel or unusual consumer experiences have been described as collectibles (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011). Therefore, experiential purchases might be also perceived as having some materialistic characteristic due to the tangible tokens associated with them that can be stored and kept in one's possession and even perceived as collectable purchases. In addition, previous studies have manipulated the frame of experiential and material perceptions of the same hypothetical purchase. That is, they presented the same item (such as a TV or a music box set) but manipulated the experiential or material presentation to the participants. These studies have demonstrated that thinking about the different experiential or material aspects of a purchase influenced the way the purchase was evaluated (Carter & Gilovich, 2010, 2012; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). As a result, I believe that the use of a dichotomous (or trichotomous) variable to classify all of the available purchases in the market place as either material or experiential (or something in the middle) prevents researchers from gaining information about the possible variations between similar purchases and the buyers' own subjective perceptions.

What is well-being? How can it be measured in a consumer context? Recent research into well-being has shown a need to differentiate between emotional well-being, or feelings experienced in everyday life, from global life evaluations of well-being, or thoughts that come to mind when evaluating one's life as a whole (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). However, research within the science of spending presents a lack of agreement on which dimensions of well-being associated with a purchase need to be studied. While some authors have investigated consumer satisfaction with a purchase (*"How satisfied were you with your purchase?"*) (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Howell & Hill, 2009), others have assessed short-term emotions of happiness evoked by a purchase (*"How happy did your purchase make you?"*) (Guevarra & Howell, 2014; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), investigated long-term hedonic evaluations made of their spending choices (*"How much do you think this purchase has increased your overall life satisfaction?"*) (Pchelin & Howell, 2014; Zhang et al., 2014), or aggregated both short-term and long-term benefits from purchases (Millar & Thomas, 2009; Nicolao et al., 2009). Nevertheless, in consumption, product-evoked emotions, or feelings that are associated with a purchase, and gains in life satisfaction, or thoughts that come to mind when evaluating the relative enhancement in well-being that a purchase brings, could differ in their valence. For example, the consumption of a meal high in sugar or fat could enhance an individual's momentary feeling of happiness and joy, but might negatively contribute to their long-term life satisfaction if this consumption conflicts with their commitment to lose weight or eat more healthily. On the other hand, buying a gym membership could be associated with a positive increase in the life satisfaction of the buyer as perhaps that purchase is perceived to help them move closer to their health or aesthetic objectives, but it might evoke some negative emotions if the buyer does not enjoy the experience of working out or the effort that exercising might require.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the empirical studies included in this thesis, in line with most research within the science of spending, measure subjective estimations of well-being that the buyer associates with a future or a past purchase (*“How happy do you think that your purchase will make you?”* Or *“How much do you think this purchase has increased your overall life satisfaction?”*). However, these attributions of happiness and life satisfaction to a particular consumer product do not provide an objective estimation of the enhancement in well-being that an individual might obtain from spending money, or an overall reflection of their baseline or future well-being. Therefore, the current research examines subjective associations made between consumer products, which represent the economic value paid in exchange for a purchase, and the well-being that they perceive to obtain, or the hedonic value that is associated with that purchase. This type of measure was used not only to be consistent with the previous literature on the science of spending, but because the aim of this thesis was to better understand spending behaviours, or *why* people buy. Therefore, as it has been suggested that individuals make spending decisions based on past and future estimations of well-being attached to a consumer product (Alba & Williams, 2013), understanding the psychological processes underlying the attribution of well-being to purchases will help us to better comprehend and predict individuals’ consumer behaviours.

When should we measure well-being associated with a purchase – before, during or after buying it? Purchasing is a continuous process (Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Howell & Guevarra, 2013; Richins, 2013) as consumers can increase their psychological sense of well-being before they spend money by anticipating a specific purchase, enjoy the benefits of its consumption and also, later on, can remember its effects and relish the positive impact that it had on their lives.

Therefore, it is important to determine when well-being associated with a purchase is measured, as it could change over time (Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Guevarra & Howell, 2015). Research in the science of spending can be classified by the temporal focus of the experimental design. Therefore, studies in this area can fall into three different categories: (1) studies that have looked at anticipated value by asking participants to forecast the well-being that is expected to be gained from a future purchase (e.g. Capriello & Reis 2013; Carter & Gilovich, 2010, 2012; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003; Pchelin & Howell, 2014); (2) studies that measured momentary value by asking participants to report their happiness right after the consumption of a material or experiential item under laboratory conditions (e.g. Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Nicolao et al., 2009); and (3) studies that examined the “afterglow” value by asking participants to retrospectively evaluate the hedonic value associated with a purchase (e.g. Capriello & Reis, 2013; Carter & Gilovich, 2010, 2012; Howell & Hill, 2009; Millar & Thomas, 2009; Nicolao et al., 2009; Pchelin & Howell, 2014; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Guevarra and Howell (2014) also suggested including the purchase experience itself, or when the economic transaction is carried out, as a separate fourth category. But this might overlap with momentary value (e.g. a meal in a restaurant) or could be “contaminated” by the anticipated or retrospective value that consumers associate with their purchase depending on whether the payment is made before or after the consumption of the purchase. For these and perhaps other reasons, no studies have collected well-being data at the time that money is exchanged for a material or experiential item.

Furthermore, research in psychology has determined that the type of information used by individuals when making a well-being judgement from an event or an experience differs between retrospective and forecasted hedonic evaluations

(Kahneman, 2000). When people make a retrospective judgement they tend to use the peak moment of the event (i.e. the most intense feeling experienced), and how the experience ended, to judge the event as a whole (Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993). Nevertheless, memories might not always provide accurate representations of experiences, as there seems to be a tendency to increase the remembered enjoyment of an experience in comparison to the actual event (Miron-Shatz, Kahneman & Stone, 2009). On the other hand, when people forecast affective experiences, the information used tends to be the prediction of the initial reaction to the event or what Kahneman (2000) has described as the “transition to the new situation” (p. 703). However, future-focus hedonic evaluations are also subject to inaccuracy, as people have been found to make systematic errors when forecasting emotions (Wilson & Gilbert, 2005). Therefore, it is important to understand when the well-being associated with a purchase is measured in order to understand the nature and limitations of the judgement.

In addition, identity construction processes have been thought to differ between past and future temporal focus as it has been suggested that people tend to develop a narrative to make sense of the past (McAdams, 2011) but juggle between possible sets of positive and negative selves when projecting into the future (Oyserman & James, 2011). Therefore, it is possible that consumers integrate their past purchases differently from their future ones into their sense of self, as they might rationalise a story to justify their past consumer choices but could tolerate some uncertainty and play with a set of different alternatives when looking at their future purchases.

What other drivers of consumption need to be taken into account when looking at identity processes and well-being associated with consumer products?

The consumer behaviour literature has identified several functions that purchasing might provide to the buyer beyond the construction of an identity, including buying as a

mechanism to regulate mood or escape aversive emotions (Dittmar, 2008, 2011; Donnelly et al., 2016), as a way to display social status (Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Dittmar, 2008; Rochberg-Halton, 1984), and as a goal attainment strategy (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Vohs & Baumeister, 2011).

Purchasing as a way of regulating emotions. Dittmar described the function of “emotional expression and regulation” as the use of purchasing as a mechanism to control or enhance the consumer’s mood (2011, p. 751). This function, which has been found to be more prominent with certain self-expressive types of goods, such as clothes, appears to occur more in women (Dittmar, 2008), and has been linked to compulsive buying (Dittmar & Kapur, 2011). Moreover, recent research on materialism has mentioned the acquisition of goods as a defence mechanism used to escape from dysphoric moods (Donnelly et al., 2016). However, this function has traditionally only been explored in the context of dysfunctional consumption patterns for material items. Nevertheless, experiential purchases have been found to better satisfy the function of emotional regulation than material items (Moldes, 2014). As a result, it is possible that the perceived positive benefits of buying experiences previously found in the “science of spending” might be driven by the fact that experiential items are better at enhancing and regulating the consumer’s mood.

Purchasing as a way to gain social status. A frequently mentioned function for buying in the consumer behaviour literature is the acquisition of possessions to improve social status or to generate envy or admiration (Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Dittmar, 2008; Rochberg-Halton, 1984). This function for purchasing was defined by Thorstein Veblen in 1899 (as cited in Ordabayeva & Chardo, 2010) as “conspicuous consumption” and has also been related to materialism and impulse buying (Dittmar, 2008; Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). The function of

projected identity has been described as a way to project certain status or identity to others (Dittmar, 2011), but has not been explored for experiential purchases; indeed, the possible associations between this function and well-being have not yet been established. Nevertheless, the function of *projected identity* is an important aspect of the construction of the identity of the buyer.

Purchasing as a goal attainment strategy. Buying has been conceptualised as a strategy for individuals to achieve or move closer to the achievement of their goals (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Vohs & Baumeister, 2011). Within the different goals that might drive spending behaviours, the acquisition of a desired identity through the use of consumer products could be considered as a goal in itself, either explicitly or implicitly for the consumer. Nevertheless, the goal of expanding or transforming one's sense of self through the purchase of consumer products to achieve some hedonic gratification might be driven by other higher-level abstract goals, such as self-growth or the acquisition of an attractive appearance.

The “experiential recommendation”: Mediators

Several psychological processes have been found to mediate the relationship between purchase type (material or experiential) and well-being. Following Gilovich, Kumar & Jampol's (2015) classification, mediators involved in the relationship between material and experiential purchases and well-being are: (1) social connection, (2) comparisons and regrets, and (3) identity.

Social connection. Several studies have examined the social connection of material and experiential purchases by adopting the theoretical framework of self-determination theory (SDT), which states that the satisfaction of the need for relatedness has a positive impact on well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A few studies have examined social connection as a potential mediator between type of purchase and

well-being (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010), and several others have explored the differences in the social processes that enable interpersonal connections to emerge after a material or an experiential purchase has been made (Bastos & Brucks, 2017; Kumar, Mann, & Gilovich, 2014; Van Boven et al., 2010). Caprariello and Reis (2013) found that sharing purchases with others is a key aspect for associating happiness with consumer products and established that people preferred social experiences to social material purchases. Howell and Hill (2009) suggested that experiential purchases provide higher levels of well-being because they increase the function of relatedness and vitality and decrease social comparisons. Nevertheless, Thomas (2010) did not find that social connection was a significant mediator between the type of purchase bought (material or experiential) and the well-being that was associated with a spending choice. This study measured social connection with a three-item scale that was created for the study and included a rating on how much time was spent with another person in relation to the purchase, how much the purchase fostered a relationship with another person, and how much the purchase contributed to a conversation and/or discussion with others.

Another set of studies has found that the happiness associated with a consumer product was mediated by how often buyers talked about their purchase (Kumar & Gilovich, 2015). In addition, experiential purchases were found to have higher conversational value than material purchases (Bastos & Brucks, 2017). Moreover, it was also found that the type of purchase described in a conversation affected the likeability of the participants, as individuals who talked about their experiential purchases were liked more than people who shared their material purchases with others (Van Boven et al., 2010). In addition, people felt more connected to strangers who

bought the same experiential purchase than to individuals who bought the same material item (Kumar et al., 2014).

Purchase Comparisons and Regrets. The psychological processes of comparing and evaluating a material and an experiential purchase have also been examined as possible mediators of the experience recommendation. These studies start with the assumption that rumination processes and an excessive number of alternative choices are linked to purchase dissatisfaction (Schwartz, 2004). Carter and Gilovich (2010) found that participants spent significantly more time evaluating unchosen options when the purchase was material than when it was experiential. Furthermore, they found that material purchases generated higher concerns about having made the right decision than experiential purchases, and that rumination processes negatively influenced the happiness that participants associated with their purchase. Moreover, they also found that participants tended to use more maximising strategies (choosing the best option among purchases in the same category) when buying a material item but more satisficing strategies (choosing a purchase that met the minimum requirements) when buying an experience. In addition, Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2012) found in a series of studies that participants were more likely to have regrets of action (regrets about having done something) regarding material purchases and regrets of inaction (regrets about not having done something) when the purchase was experiential.

Identity. Several studies have directly examined the role of identity, understood as who we are (Vignoles, 2011), in the relationship between different spending choices and well-being (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Kim, Seto, Christy, & Hicks, 2016; Thomas, 2010) and other studies have looked at different aspects that are also related to the participant's sense of self (Dai, Chan, & Mogilner, 2014; Jiang & Sood, 2014; Kumar et al., 2014; Matz, Gladstone, & Stillwell, 2016).

Carter and Gilovich (2012) found that experiential purchases were reported to be more connected to the self when participants were asked to draw a self-relation diagram that consisted of a primary circle representing the self-concept and smaller ones representing different purchases. Moreover, in a subsequent study, participants were asked to write a short life-narrative integrating one or more experiential and material purchases previously recalled, and it was found that experiences were more frequently integrated in the story than material purchases. Thomas (2010) found that the impact on the self, measured using a 5-item composite measure that included the purchase's contribution to the self-concept, self-growth, and self-esteem as well as the purchase's importance and meaning, partially mediated the relationship between purchase type and happiness. Furthermore, Guevarra & Howell (2014) found that life experiences and experiential products provided the buyer with more identity expression than did material items. In addition, a recent study that approached identity as a self-discovery process (Kim, Seto, Christy, & Hicks, 2016) suggested that experiences provide higher levels of happiness as they help consumers in gaining a better insight into their true self. Moreover, a study on people's reliance on consumer reviews found that people were more sceptical about the extent to which other people's experiences would represent their own, indicating a perception that experiential purchases are more personal than material ones (Dai, Chan & Mogilner, 2014). Furthermore, it was found that for experiential purchases there were higher discrepancies in price between buyer and seller, enlarging the endowment effect. That is, experiences were valued more highly than material items by the seller if those purchases were already owned (Jiang & Sood, 2014). Finally, a recent set of studies exploring personality congruency and spending behaviours found that people spend more on products that match their personality, and those whose spending behaviours

were more congruent with their personalities reported higher life satisfaction (Matz et al., 2016).

“We are what we buy”: Spending money on the search for an identity

Outside the material and experiential consumption literature, the construction of an identity through the purchase of consumer products has been a fruitful research programme in social psychology from the early 1980s (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). This area of research suggests that individuals construct their identity through the use of symbolic meanings of consumer products (Aaker et al., 2001; Anderson, 2007; Belk, 1989; Dittmar, 1992, 1994, 2008; Dittmar et al., 1995; Dittmar et al., 2004; Richins, 1994, 2011). The symbolic meanings of purchases are assumed to be shaped by society as well as by individuals (Elliott, 1997), and, therefore, this area of research is grounded in the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, which proposes that people construct their reality through social interactions in which individuals are assumed to dynamically interpret the symbols displayed by others in their environment as well as to actively engage in behaviours based on the meanings given by society (Mead & Morris, 1967).

Furthermore, the area of research looking at identity is also founded on the assumption that our sense of self, or who we are, extends beyond our physical body and psychological traits to what we possess, where we live or visit and what we do (Belk, 1989; Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Dittmar, 2008, 2011; James, 1892; Vignoles, 2017). Therefore, the purchase of material possessions, such as clothes or consumer electronics, and consumer experiences, such as holidays or concerts, has been associated with the construction of the extended sense of self (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Dittmar et al., 2004; Richins, 2011; Shrum et al., 2014; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981). However, most research on identity and consumption has been focused on material

possessions and purchases (i.e. Dittmar, 2008; Richins, 2013) excluding experiential consumer products, such as holidays or music events that, as places that we visit and things that we do, also form part of our extended sense of self. Furthermore, the sense of self and identity construction processes have been repeatedly associated with well-being (Gregg, Sedikides, & Gebauer, 2011; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Vignoles, 2011; Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006). Nevertheless, no prior research has unpacked the processes of identity construction in consumption and their links to well-being. Therefore, this PhD was designed to explore the construction of identity using a broader set of spending choices and examine the impact of a purchase on the sense of self of the consumer, and how those changes might be associated with well-being.

Materialistic value orientations and well-being

Materialistic value orientations (MVOs) has often been measured as individual differences in how central material possessions are perceived to be in one's life, how prominent possessions are in one's pursuit of happiness, and how much a person thinks that wealth and possessions define one's success (Richins, 2004; Richins & Dawson, 1992). An extensive body of literature found that this construct is associated with lower well-being (Dittmar et al., 2014). Nevertheless, when MVO is examined in the applied setting of buying a material or an experiential purchase, most studies do not find that MVO moderates the relationship between spending choice and well-being (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Thomas, 2010; Zhang et al., 2014). Only one study has found that materialistic individuals gave higher scores to material purchases (Millar & Thomas, 2009). However, it is worth noting that most of the studies that have examined possible moderation by MVO of the differences between material and experiential purchases collected only retrospective hedonic evaluations (Millar & Thomas, 2009; Thomas,

2010; Zhang et al., 2014). Nonetheless, recent research has shown that highly materialistic consumers show hedonic elevation in product-evoked emotions before a material item is purchased but the emotional elevation disappears once the acquisition has been made (Richins, 2013). As a result, Richins (2013) concluded that highly materialistic individuals differ from low materialistic individuals in forecasting emotions attached to a material item, but that these differences disappear when the material purchase is evaluated retrospectively (experiential purchases were not considered in this study).

Overall aim of this thesis

The aim of the current research is to examine the psychological processes underlying the association between spending money on a consumer product (economic value) and the expected or perceived gain on individual well-being (hedonic value) attributed to that spending choice in consumer behaviours that go beyond covering basic needs. Therefore, this thesis will focus on *how* purchases might transform or enhance certain aspects of the extended sense of self of the buyer as well as *which* type of goal (extrinsic or intrinsic) might motivate spending behaviours. As a result, the present research aims to examine the attribution of well-being to a consumer product by looking at identity construction processes and motivation mechanisms that are involved in consumption. Finally, it is worth noting that the main focus of the present research will not be to examine *what* consumers spend their money on nor to look at possible individual differences in the perception of purchases as material or experiential.

Theoretical framework

Two complementary theoretical frameworks in social psychology, one involving the construction of the sense of self and one regarding motivation, provide a possible

expected association between consumer spending choices (material or experiential), identity and well-being.

Motivated Identity Construction Theory (MICT). The theoretical framework of MICT postulates that people are driven to undertake certain activities or engage in different behaviours, such as spending money on consumer products, that will help them to construct a positive way of seeing themselves (Vignoles, 2011). MICT suggests that individuals are drawn to feel competent and capable of influencing their environment (*self-efficacy* motive), distinguish themselves from others (*distinctiveness* motive), see themselves in a positive light (*self-esteem* motive), perceive their identity as being continuous over time (*continuity* motive), feel included and accepted within their social context (*belonging* motive), and perceive that their life is meaningful (*meaning* motive). MICT postulates that the satisfaction of these motives brings benefits to well-being. Therefore, MICT provides a theoretical framework for connecting the changes that purchases might bring to the buyers' extended sense of self with the associated enhancement in well-being linked to their spending choices. According to the postulates of MICT, the well-being linked to a particular purchase will depend on the extent to which the purchase helps the consumer to satisfy the different identity motives listed above. However, this theoretical framework has not been tested in a consumer applied setting. Can consumer products help the buyer to satisfy those identity motives? And if so, do variations in type of purchase (material or experiential) satisfy different identity motives? Will all motives be equally effective at providing an enhanced sense of well-being to the buyer or do purchases that satisfy certain motives lead to higher hedonic value than purchases that satisfy others motives?

In the consumer behaviour literature, the framework of identity-related functions (IRFs) from Dittmar (2011) emerged in parallel to MICT from extensive qualitative

work done in consumption (Anderson, 2007; Dittmar, 1989, 1991; Dittmar et al., 1996; Dittmar & Drury, 2000). This focused on the functions of *emotional regulation*, or buying as a way to enhance one's mood, *effectiveness*, or gaining autonomy, *distinctiveness*, or the acquisition of individuality, *self-esteem*, or moving closer to an ideal self, *continuity*, or connecting to the individual's past self and memories, and *relatedness*, or gaining affiliation with close others. MICT and IRFs show strong connections (see Dittmar, 2011, p. 750); in fact, IRFs constitute a helpful application of MICT to the consumption domain and, therefore, the framework of IRFs will be used here to measure the identity motives involved when spending money on consumer products.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, from the original framework presented in Dittmar (2011), the function of emotional regulation has not been included in the main analyses (although it was kept as a control variable). This function is conceptually different from the other identity-related functions in that it does not contribute to the construction of the identity of the buyer in itself, which is the main focus of study of this PhD. Furthermore, the function of *continuity* was also excluded from the set of empirical studies included in this thesis, as it has been shown to have little effect on well-being in a preliminary study (Moldes, 2014); it is possible that people acquire new purchases as a way of changing their perceived current sense of self, and, therefore, breaking with their past identity, or perhaps new purchases might not have enough memories attached to provide the buyer with a sense of continuity (as opposed to items that might have been possessed for a longer period of time).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT is an empirically derived theoretical framework of human motivation that contains five mini-theories that address different aspects of motivation in a social context (Deci & Ryan, 2012). In essence, SDT

postulates that humans are intrinsically motivated towards self-development and the satisfaction of the basic needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness that are necessary for healthy development and psychological well-being. Goal content theory, a mini-theory included within the framework of SDT, suggests that the pursuit of the extrinsic life goals of wealth, image and fame leads to lower well-being whereas seeking the intrinsic goals of personal growth, affiliation and belonging provides greater well-being, as intrinsic goals better satisfy basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). This motivational framework has often been used in the materialistic values literature to provide a theoretical explanation for the large number of studies that have found a negative association between MVO and well-being (see Dittmar et al., 2014). Moreover, Van Boven and colleagues (2003) and the follow-up studies that have looked at “the experience recommendation” have mentioned SDT as a possible explanation for their empirical results. Nevertheless, the link between extrinsic and intrinsic life goals and buying material and experiential consumer products has not been systematically examined, despite the fact that material items seem to be implicitly associated with money (Mann & Gilovich, 2016) whereas experiential purchases have been found to be better at providing social connection (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010). Therefore, the current PhD thesis will examine whether there is an association between material possessions and extrinsic goals, and experiential possessions and intrinsic goals. This might provide a theoretical explanation for the differences found between buying material and experiential purchases and well-being. Furthermore, the links between goals pursued in consumption and the satisfaction of certain identity motives has not been explored. However, it is possible that intrinsic or extrinsic goals might also drive the pursuit of certain identity motives. For example, we would expect that individuals who pursue intrinsic goals

might be more likely to buy consumer products that satisfy the belonging motive, whereas people who seek extrinsic goals, which have been linked to psychological insecurities (Kasser, 2002), might also pursue the satisfaction of the self-esteem motive through the purchase of consumer products.

Furthermore, SDT also suggests a possible negative association between the function of *projected identity*, or buying with the intention of displaying social status to others, and well-being, as the behaviour of conspicuous consumption represents the buyer's attempt to pursue the extrinsic goals of wealth and image.

Methodological approach

Previous research in the science of spending has used quantitative research methods such as experimental designs (e.g. Howell & Hill, 2009; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), in which participants were either asked to describe a past or future material or experiential purchase, or surveys that freely allow participants to select a past or future purchase of their choice (e.g. Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Nicolao et al., 2009). This latter procedure has classified spending choices either through the use of blinded-coders who allocate participants' purchases into a material or experiential typology (e.g. Kumar, Killingsworth & Gilovich, 2014) or by asking participants to rate their selected purchase using a scale going from "definitely a material" or "definitely an experience" (e.g. study 4 in Caprariello & Reis, 2013; study 2 in Nicolao et al., 2009). Generally, these studies also impose a few restrictions on the purchases that participants are allowed to select in order to eliminate small spending choices that might cover basic needs. For example, participants are instructed to describe a purchase with a value higher than \$100 (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), a purchase that is significant to them (Carter & Gilovich, 2012), or a purchase that has a value between a given amount such as \$10 and \$10,000 (Caprariello & Reis, 2013). Other studies have used a decision-

making procedure in which participants are presented with a choice between some material or experiential purchases (i.e. Capriello & Reis, 2013), or given a few concrete hypothetical purchases to rate (i.e. Pchelin & Howell, 2014), or provided with a hypothetical windfall scenario and either instructed to imagine that they are given a certain amount of money to spend in a purchase of their choice (i.e. Kumar & Gilovich, 2015), or framed a concrete purchase, such as a music box or a 3D TV, as either material or experiential (i.e. Carter & Gilovich, 2010, 2012; Mann & Gilovich, 2016; Rosenweig & Gilovich, 2012).

Furthermore, the general procedure in this area of research is to ask participants to estimate well-being associated with the described, presented or chosen purchase by asking them to rate their expected or perceived short-term positive emotions (i.e. Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), their purchase satisfaction (i.e. Nicolao et al., 2009) or their long-term hedonic value (i.e. Pchelin & Howell, 2014).

Most studies have used self-administered online questionnaires (i.e. Pchelin & Howell, 2014; Guevarra & Howell, 2014); however, some studies used a phone interview (i.e. Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), or were carried out in a laboratory setting (i.e. Nicolao et al., 2009). Other research collected bank statements from individuals with detailed data on purchase history (Matz et al., 2016).

Most samples included in this area of research were taken in the United States and included either a general population (Guevarra & Howell, 2014; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) or a student sample (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Howell & Hill, 2009), with the exception of Matz et al. (2016), who collected a UK-based sample.

The four empirical studies included in this PhD have used quantitative methods of collecting the data, in particular a self-administered experimental questionnaire that was given to participants in a paper format (study 1), a longitudinal online questionnaire

in which participants were free to select and describe a future consumer product (study 2), and two self-administered online experimental questionnaires in which a hypothetical windfall scenario was presented (studies 3 and 4). In studies 1 and 4 participants were from a general population, whereas in studies 2 and 3 participants were recruited from a student subject pool.

The measures included in this thesis, following previous research, have been Likert-type scales measuring type of purchase and well-being. For measuring the purchase type (experiential or material), the present research moved away from using a categorical classification to using a continuous variable after a preliminary screening of the data collected as part of study 1 and some preliminary analyses (see Appendix 1) indicated that a continuous variable was more suitable for capturing the wider variation of purchase types and consumer perceptions of their own spending choices. Furthermore, the current research employed the initial definition of material purchases (“spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a material possession”) and experiential purchases (“spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience”) taken from Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, p. 1194) in study 1 (paper 1), as participants were explicitly allocated to a material or experiential condition and then asked to describe a future or a past purchase and subsequently presented with the purchase-related questions and asked to rate their purchase using a continuous variable. However, in the subsequent studies participants were free to select and describe a future spending choice, so the second definition of material items (“something one purchases to have”) and experiential purchases (“something one purchases to do”) taken from Carter and Gilovich (2010, p. 156) were presented for rating their purchase in a continuous scale. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that neither the two distinct procedures (the display of the different definitions of material or experiential purchases

before or after the selection of the purchase) nor the diverse populations used (general and students) created significant differences in the main effects found across the four samples.

For measuring well-being associated with a purchase, two one-item measures of *happiness* (taken from Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) and *life satisfaction* (taken from Pchelin & Howell, 2014) were used across the four empirical studies in order to differentiate the affective and cognitive components of well-being in the applied setting of consumption.

Few studies have measured the construct of identity within the science of spending. One study (Thomas, 2010) used a measure designed by the author to assess the impact on the self that included items on how much the purchase contributed to participants' self-image, how important the purchase was to their self-growth, how important the purchase was to them as a person, how meaningful the behaviour was, and how the behaviour made them feel more positive or negative about themselves. Another study (Carter & Gilovich, 2012) investigated centrality to the self-concept by asking participants to draw a self-relation diagram that consisted of a primary circle representing the self-concept and smaller ones representing different purchases, and also measured the number of times that a purchase was mentioned in a life-narrative writing exercise. Kim et al. (2016) asked participants to rate the functionality of a set of purchases for knowing their true self with questions such as "After going to the beach vacation, to what extent do you think it would help you know who you really are?" Finally, an interesting omission was found in two sets of studies (Guevarra & Howell, 2014; Zhang et al., 2014), which reported that a measure on identity expression, aiming to measure "the true expression of who you are", was taken from Pchelin and Howell (2014), yet no measure on identity was found or described in the specified study.

Nevertheless, these studies either approached identity as a self-discovery process, mixed identity processes with the importance of the purchase and other affective states, or provided a limited examination of how the purchases actually contributed to enhance or modify the extended sense of self and identity of the buyer.

I believe that the study of identity in a consumption setting should adopt a constructivist approach, as opposed to a self-discovery perspective, because consumer products are external elements that individuals choose to incorporate into their internal sense of self. Furthermore, no in-depth examination of which aspects of the consumer's identity a spending choice enhances or maintains is provided by the measures previously used in the literature. Therefore, the current thesis introduced the measures of IRFs to the study of material and experiential purchases in order to examine the effects that consumer products have on the extended sense of self of the buyer and the associations of IRFs with well-being. Moreover, previous work on consumption outside the science of spending that has looked at the different aspects in which a purchase can expand or transform the identity of the buyer has used IRFs (Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Dittmar, Long & Bond, 2007). Nevertheless, in the current thesis the IRFs scale was adapted to fit the specific purchase described by the participants, as the original measures were initially developed to look at general consumption behaviours (i.e. from *"I want to buy things that make me feel more like the person I want to be"* to *"This purchase made me feel more like the person I want to be"*, or from *"I buy consumer goods that give me prestige"* to *"This purchase gave me prestige"*).

In addition, to isolate the effects of buying material or experiential purchases on the extended sense of self and the subsequent associations with the consumer's perceived gains in well-being, the present set of studies included the function of emotional regulation as a control variable in the statistical analyses made in papers 1

and 2. This measure was also taken from previous work in the consumption literature (Dittmar et al., 2007; Dittmar & Kapur, 2011) and adapted to fit the specific purchase (i.e. from “*I like to shop, not because I have to, but because I want to*” to “*I bought this not because I had to, but because I wanted to*”, or from “*I often buy things because it puts me in a better mood*” to “*This purchase put me in a better mood*”). Nevertheless, as paper 3 was looking at the differences between three different conditions, and thus participants were randomly allocated into one of the three manipulations, the randomisation procedure should have counterbalanced any possible differences in the satisfaction of the emotional regulation function. As a result, this function was not controlled for in the last empirical chapter included in this thesis.

Moreover, MVO was also measured and controlled for in the first paper included in this PhD. Nevertheless, as the second paper examines goals, including the extrinsic goal of wealth, which has been considered a measure of MVO in previous literature (Dittmar et al., 2014), and the third paper has a randomised allocation of participants to a condition, this construct was not included or controlled for.

Furthermore, a deductive approach was adopted to carry out this research due to the two theories (MICT and SDT) that were tested within a consumption setting. These two theoretical frameworks were used to be able to gain a deeper understanding of the empirical evidence previously found in the literature (“the experience recommendation”) as well as to expand the current knowledge of economic and consumer psychology by exploring the associations made by consumers between economic value and hedonic value. The first paper included in this thesis explores the links between the satisfaction of the different identity motives via the purchase of material and experiential consumer products and well-being associated with that purchase. Therefore, following the postulates of MICT, it was expected that the

satisfaction of the different parallel IRFs that a purchase provides to the buyer would be associated with an increase in well-being. Furthermore, the first paper also carried out an examination of possible differences in IRFs between past and future focus well-being judgements associated with their spending choices in order to gain a better understanding of the effect of time on the identity construction processes involved in spending behaviours and their associations with well-being. The second paper investigated the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic goals, taken from goal content theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1996), in the identity-related processes involved in the purchase of material and experiential consumer products and well-being. Therefore, following previous literature on the science of spending that had linked experiences with social connection and material items with money (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Mann & Gilovich, 2016; Thomas, 2010), it was expected that extrinsic goals would lead participants to spend money on material items and intrinsic goals to drive the purchase of experiences. The third paper explores the differences between the self-defining and self-expressing identity functions by taking an SDT approach to motivation that distinguishes between intrinsic motivation, in which individuals perform an activity for autonomous reasons, and extrinsic motivation, in which individuals seek a separate outcome such as social recognition (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). Therefore, it was expected that by manipulating the perceived source that provides meaning (external to the self or internal to the self) the differences in valence found in the preceding set of studies at predicting well-being could be explained.

Moreover, an ontological approach close to constructivism is also adopted, as I acknowledge that the reality aiming to be studied is socially constructed and interpreted by individuals and is in a continuous state of constant change. As a result, the aim is to find observable patterns of associations between the construct of money and happiness

while being aware that those elements are socially constructed measures of value (economic and hedonic). Therefore, it is acknowledged that individuals' associations between their spending choices, the IRFs that their purchases satisfied and the well-being perceived or expected might be influenced by the economic and cultural environment surrounding the subjects of study.

Finally, it is worth noting that the current research was designed to approach the study of the associations between spending money and well-being from a value-free position and, therefore, I approach the research by suspending my own judgement on whether happiness can be maximised or achieved by spending money. Therefore, the current set of studies was aiming to move away from previous research within the science of spending that has explicitly depicted a value-driven approach (e.g. “to get the most bang for your bucks” in Gilovich & Kumar, 2014) or assumed that “if money doesn't makes you happy, you probably aren't spending it right” (Dunn & Weidman, 2015). I believe that the philosophy of maximising individual outcomes, inherited from economic capitalistic thinking, as well as the assumption that spending money might be a way for attaining happiness and well-being, acquired from the current consumer culture, are contextually implied subjective beliefs that could influence or bias the research undertaken, and, thus, we should aim to suspend any preconceived contextual associations. Furthermore, I also aim to move away from a prescriptive approach that previous studies in the area of research in the science of spending have adopted, namely to find formulas for achieving happiness, as I also acknowledge that, as Sarah Ahmed pointed out in her book *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), when prescribing strategies for attaining something like happiness, the means prescribed can become the perceived source of happiness in the society. Therefore, if we consider that the psychological sense of happiness might be socially constructed, particularly when it is applied to a

consumption context, any identified strategies to spend money in order to be happy will turn into the perceived sources of happiness in consumption, thus becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Overview of research and empirical chapters

This thesis reports an investigation of the psychological factors involved in individual spending choices and their associations with the well-being judgements that consumers make regarding their purchases, paying particular attention to identity construction processes involved in consumption and the goals that motivate spending behaviours.

This thesis presents four quantitative empirical studies on this topic that have been written in the form of three journal articles. The first empirical paper contains two studies, one experimental survey and one longitudinal survey, aiming to examine the link between spending choices (material or experiential), identity construction processes and well-being using the theoretical framework of IRFs. The IRFs of *effectiveness* (gaining autonomy), *distinctiveness* (acquiring individuality), *self-esteem* (repairing a perceived identity deficit), *relatedness* (symbolic affiliation to close ones or social groups) and *projected identity* (displaying an identity to others) were measured and their associations with happiness and life satisfaction evaluations were evaluated using path analyses. Temporal changes in the relationships between IRFs and well-being were also explored.

The second empirical paper was designed to experimentally examine the role that goals play in the relationship between different spending choices (material or experiential), IRFs, and well-being judgements using the theoretical framework of goal content theory (from SDT).

The third empirical paper was designed to illuminate the differences between self-defining consumer behaviours, or purchases made with the intention of constructing one's own identity (such as *self-esteem* and *distinctiveness* functions), and self-communicating behaviours, or money spent with the intention of constructing an identity for others (*projected identity* function). The perceived source that provides symbolic meaning to a purchase was manipulated by asking participants to reflect on the identity that their purchase would project to others (self-communicating condition) or would provide to themselves (self-defining condition), or by not asking them to reflect on their purchase selection (control). The data was also analysed using path analyses

**PAPER 1: Spending Money on “My Sense of Self”: Identity-Related
Functions of Material and Experiential Purchases and their Associations with
Well-Being**

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Abstract

Recent research has determined that buying experiences, rather than material items, leads to higher levels of well-being, perhaps because experiences are more connected to the sense of self. However, little is known about which of the identity-related functions (IRFs) a purchase can serve – such as gaining autonomy (*effectiveness*), acquiring individuality (*distinctiveness*), repairing a perceived identity deficit (*self-esteem*), fostering symbolic affiliation to close ones or social groups (*relatedness*), or displaying an identity to others (*projected identity*) – might be driving the effects on well-being. Two studies, one experimental ($n = 329$) and one longitudinal ($n = 183$), confirmed that experiential purchases predicted higher levels of well-being and showed that IRFs mediated this effect. In both studies, the functions of *self-esteem* and *effectiveness* positively predicted life satisfaction while the function of *projected identity* negatively predicted participants' life satisfaction evaluations. However, IRFs-effects on happiness presented some variations across temporal conditions and data sets. In study 2, participants' judgements on *distinctiveness* and *relatedness* associated with their purchase increased over time suggesting some possible variations between past and future construction of the extended sense of self in consumption. We discuss the implications of these results for researchers, marketers and consumers.

Key words: experiential purchases; identity; consumption; well-being.

Introduction

Does money bring happiness? Research on the relationship between economic resources and individual well-being suggests that, after basic needs are satisfied, money appears to have little impact on subjective well-being (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). Indeed, one could argue that, as a social construction, money has virtually no value until it is exchanged for other goods or services. As a result, over the past decade, a rapidly growing area of research has explored the link between consumption and happiness, receiving the name of “the science of spending” (Dunn & Weidman, 2015). This research proposes that it may be how a person uses their money that has an impact on their well-being. In particular, buying *experiences*, defined as “events that one lives through”, might lead to greater happiness than does the purchase of *material items*, or “tangible objects that are kept in one’s possession” (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003, p. 1194).

That experiential purchases predict higher levels of well-being has been found consistently (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009; Thomas & Millar, 2013). Further investigations have indicated that experiences relate to higher happiness than material items due to the different psychological processes underlying their consumption. Compared to material purchases, experiences seem to enable social connection (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010), are less likely to be compared to unchosen alternatives and therefore create fewer purchasing regrets (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012), are more connected to the self, and have more influence on the consumer’s sense of identity (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Thomas, 2010). Nevertheless, the exploration of the role that identity processes play in consumption and its relation to well-being has been limited to the centrality and impact

that a purchase might have on the consumer's self-concept, providing little insight into which aspects of the consumer's identity a spending choice might help to enhance or maintain and how that change in the consumer's identity is associated with well-being.

Identity and consumption

From its earlier conceptualizations, the construct of identity in psychology has been thought to contain a wide variety of elements including the physical body, psychological traits, material objects, places, relationships, work and even one's bank account (James, 1892). Some of those identity elements that are external to the individual, such as material objects, other people or places, have been named the extended sense of self (Belk, 1989).

In consumer psychology, the construction of the extended sense of self has been repeatedly examined as a driver for purchasing (Anderson, 2007; Claxton & Murray, 1994; Dittmar, 1991, 1992, 2011; Dittmar, Long, & Meek, 2004; Shrum et al., 2013). Research suggests that people buy to a) transform their self-concept (or life) through the acquisition and use of a product (Richins, 2011), b) reduce deficiencies in their self-concept through symbolic self-completion (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981) and c) close the gap between their actual and ideal selves (Dittmar, 2008). Furthermore, extensive qualitative research, aiming to explore identity processes that purchases might influence, has identified the identity-related functions of: 1) *Effectiveness* (helping the consumer to gain a perceived sense of autonomy and independence); 2) *Distinctiveness* (allowing the expression of the self as a unique entity); 3) *Self-esteem* (moving the buyer closer to their ideal self and increasing their self-worth); and 4) *Relatedness* (symbolising an affiliation with close others or the belongingness to a social group) (Anderson, 2007; Dittmar, 1991; Dittmar, Beattie, & Friese, 1996; Dittmar & Drury, 2000; for a detailed account of identity functions see Dittmar, 2011).

Further quantitative research has used the framework of identity-related functions by aggregating all functions into one identity measure for investigating dysfunctional consumption patterns (Donnelly, Ksendzova, Howell, 2013). This work suggests that identity-related functions are associated with materialistic value orientations (MVO); “individual differences in people’s long-term endorsement of values, goals, and associated beliefs that centre on the importance of acquiring money and possessions that convey status” (Dittmar, Bond, Hurst, & Kasser, 2014, p. 880). In addition, the identity-related functions framework has also been used to understand variations in symbolic value and emotional attachment of material possessions (Vignoles, Dittmar, Langhorne, Wright & Anderson, 2010). Indeed, the framework of identity-related functions proposed by Dittmar (2011) is focused on changes that consumption might generate in the identity self-concept of the consumer and can be used to compare future and past focus purchases evaluations. This contrasts with Richins’ transformation expectations framework (2011), which examines expected future changes on appearance, enjoyment, efficacy and relationships only from future planned purchases.²

The identity-related functions framework from Dittmar (2011) is aligned with motivated identity construction theory (Vignoles, 2011), which suggests that individuals are drawn to certain identity states such as feeling competent and capable of influencing their environment (*self-efficacy* motive), distinguishing themselves from others (*distinctiveness* motive), seeing themselves in a positive light (*self-esteem* motive), and feeling included and accepted within their social context (*belonging* motive). Motivated identity construction theory postulates that people are drawn to engage in certain

² Donnelly, Ksendzova & Howell (2013) showed that an aggregated measure of identity-related functions from Dittmar (2011) correlated with an aggregated measure of the transformations expectations framework from Richins (2011) ($r = .45$) suggesting some shared variance between the two frameworks when all of their subscales are aggregated.

behaviours, which might include spending money on purchases that could help them to construct or maintain certain ways of seeing themselves. Motivated identity construction theory also predicts that the satisfaction of the motives will have positive benefits for well-being. Nevertheless, the relationship between the different identity-related functions that a spending choice might fulfil, and the perceived gain in well-being, has yet to be explored. To gain a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour and individual spending choices we need to explore the different identity processes that are involved in consumption and the possible benefits to well-being that consumers associate with each of the changes that a purchase might have on their extended sense of self. Consequently, the current research aims to examine the role that identity-related functions play in the perceived well-being associated with a spending choice in order to explore which identity processes could be driving the different effects on well-being between material and experiential purchases. Specifically, we aim to unpack the effects of buying material and experiential purchases on the extended sense of self and to explore how those changes are related to well-being.

Projected identity

Purchases can also be used as a way to create or communicate a desired social identity to others (Dittmar, 2011). The practice of spending money as a way to project an identity or display social status, commonly known as “conspicuous consumption” (Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Dittmar, 2008; Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012; Rochberg-Halton, 1984), was identified by Thorstein Veblen in 1899 (as cited in Ordabayeva & Chardo, 2010).

The function of *projected identity*, despite the fact that it was not originally included in the identity-related functions framework (see Dittmar 2011, p. 750), also relates to the consumer’s construction of identity because displaying an identity to

others through the use of consumer products is also a psychological process related to the consumer's sense of self. Therefore, the present study will incorporate the function of *projected identity* within the framework of identity-related functions described above, as other consumer studies have done in the past (Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Donnelly, Ksendzova, Howell, 2013), and because the function of identity projection has not been investigated in the context of buying material or experiential purchases. Nevertheless, we understand that the function of *projected identity* might be conceptually different from the other four identity-related functions previously introduced as the latter involve the construction of the extended sense for the consumer and might be described as self-defining identity processes, whereas the function of *projected identity* aims to construct an identity in the eyes of others being therefore a self-expressing identity process.

Time and the construction of identity in consumption

Research on consumer behaviour suggests that people make spending choices based on their expectations of future happiness as well as based on their memories from past experiences (Alba & Williams, 2013). Nevertheless, most of the studies investigating the relationship between consumers' spending choices and well-being have focused on retrospective evaluations of past purchases (Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Howell & Guevarra, 2013). However, buying is a continuous process (Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Howell & Guevarra, 2013; Richins, 2013) in which consumers can increase their psychological sense of well-being before they spend money by anticipating a specific purchase, enjoy the benefits of its consumption in real-time, and later on remember its effects and the impact it had on their lives. Therefore, it is important to determine when well-being associated with consumption is measured, as this relationship might vary over time (for a detailed review of the effects of time, see Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Howell & Guevarra, 2013). However, a study looking at

differences in well-being evaluations made before and after the consumption of material and experiential purchases concluded that there were no changes in well-being judgements made over time (Pchelin & Howell, 2014). Nevertheless, possible differences in the underlying psychological processes that consumers might have used to make their past and future hedonic evaluations were not explored, even though research on identity has described diverse mechanisms of constructing a sense of self depending on the temporal focus adopted. It seems that people tend to develop a narrative to make sense retrospectively of their past (McAdams, 2011); however, when projecting into the future, they play with various sets of possible positive and negative identities (Oyserman & James, 2011). As a result, the psychological processes involved in constructing one's own identity through buying material or experiential purchases might vary depending on whether one is looking back at their spending choices or looking forward. Therefore, the present research also provides a preliminary exploration of the effect of time on the construction of the extended sense of self through buying. A past versus future focus may affect the way in which individuals identify themselves with their purchases, as well as how these purchases relate to their well-being evaluations.

Buying beyond identity construction processes

The consumer psychology literature has also identified two other possible motives for spending money beyond identity seeking strategies. Buying has been conceptualised as a goal attainment strategy (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Vohs & Baumeister, 2011) and as a mechanism to regulate individual mood or escape aversive emotions (Dittmar, 2008, 2011; Donnelly, Ksendzova, Howell, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2016), both of which have been found to be related to dysfunctional consumption patterns (Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Donnelly, Ksendzova, Howell, 2013; Richins, 2011;

2013). Therefore, in order to achieve our aim of investigating the unique effects of different identity-related functions on well-being, we control for materialistic value orientation (which includes aspects of materialistic goals) and emotional regulation in our models.

The present research

The present research examines the role that identity processes play in the perceived well-being associated with a particular spending choice (material or experiential), as well as possible differences between future- and past-focused evaluations. We use the framework of identity-related functions of purchases – including *projected identity*, *distinctiveness*, *effectiveness*, *self-esteem* and *relatedness* (Dittmar, 2011) – in order to explore identity construction processes when buying different types of purchases and their links to well-being. In the present research we also differentiate the short-term positive emotions of happiness from the long term benefits to life satisfaction that spending money on a specific purchase might bring, as recent research has shown a need to differentiate emotional well-being or feelings experienced in everyday life, from life evaluations or thoughts that come to mind when evaluating life as a whole (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). Consequently, we will also examine possible differences in the associations of identity processes with happiness and life satisfaction purchase evaluations.

Study 1

The aim of study 1 was to unpack the effects of identity-related functions on well-being and to explore the links between the IRFs and different spending choices by asking participants to either describe a material or an experiential purchase. Moreover, to explore any possible differences between past and future focus on the construction of the extended sense of self in consumption, we asked participants to either describe

something that they bought in the past or were planning to buy in the future. Therefore, a possible mediation effect of the identity-related functions on the link between purchase type (material or experiential) and well-being will be tested, as well as a possible moderation of time-perspective on the mediation model tested by comparing past vs. future focus purchase's evaluations.

First, we expect that experiential purchases will predict higher levels of well-being, as previous literature has found before (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009; Thomas & Millar, 2013; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Second, drawing from existing evidence (Dittmar, 2008; Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012), we predict that the function of *projected identity*, or buying with the intention of displaying status, will be associated with material possessions (Dittmar, 2008; Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Third, drawing from Self-Determination Theory (SDT), we predict that *projected identity* will be negatively related to well-being, given that the pursuit of extrinsic goals, such as wealth or image, have a negative impact on well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Fourth, based on the experiential versus material literature (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010) we predict that experiences will be more associated with identity-related functions than will material items. Fifth, following the postulates of motivated identity construction theory (Vignoles, 2011), we would expect that purchases that satisfy the identity-related functions of *distinctiveness*, *effectiveness*, *self-esteem* and *relatedness* will be positively related to well-being. Sixth, due to the different mechanisms of identity construction processes described in the literature between past and future focus (McAdams, 2011; Oyserman & James, 2011), we expect asymmetries in the associations of identity-related functions and well-being between

participants that are looking ahead to future purchases or reflecting back on past purchases.

Method

Design

The present study had a 2 (type of purchase, material or experiential) x 2 (time frame, before vs. after buying a purchase) between-subjects experimental design.

Sample

Participants were approached on the local university campus and other areas of a British city (cafés/parks). The final sample consisted of 329 participants, after a number of people were removed from the original sample ($N = 447$) for not following the instructions of the study (e.g., reporting living expenses such as bills or daily commuting, selecting purchases that exceeded the recommended limit of £1000 cost by more than 50%, or purchases that were bought or planned to be bought more than a year away from the data collection date or having an incongruent response on the control questions of date and experiential rating for the condition assigned).³ Of the final sample, 60% ($n = 196$) were women. Ages ranged from 18 to 56 years ($M = 25.90$, $SD = 6.54$ years). Among respondents, 70% ($n = 229$) were British, 17% ($n = 56$) came from another European country and the remaining 13% ($n = 42$) came from one of 25 different countries. Moreover, 45% ($n = 148$) were students while 52% ($n = 171$) reported being currently in full-time employment and 3% ($n = 10$) were unemployed.

Experimental conditions

Four questionnaires were developed to examine two different temporal foci (forecasting or retrospective evaluation), and two distinct types of purchase (material or

³ 26.40% (118 participants) were excluded from the analysis. This exclusion ratio is in line with other studies published in the area of consumption and well-being. For example, in Guevarra & Howell (2014) their exclusion ratio was 25.77% in study 2 and 33.69% in study 3 and, Caprariello & Reis (2013) excluded 17.69% and 12.2% in their second and third study respectively.

experiential). Participants in the forecasting conditions were asked to think about and describe a purchase that they planned to make, preferably within the following month, for more than £50 and less than £1000.⁴ Participants in the retrospective condition were asked to think about and describe a purchase that they had recently made, preferably within the previous month, in the same price range. Participants in the material condition were asked to describe a purchase made with the primary intention of acquiring a material purchase, defined as “a tangible object that you obtain and keep in your possession”, whereas participants in the experiential condition were asked to describe a purchase made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience, defined as “an event or a series of events that you personally encounter or live through” (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003, p. 1194). Participants were instructed to avoid selecting purchases that were basic living expenses such as bills, groceries, or daily commuting expenses.

Measures⁵

Materialistic Value Scale. Materialistic value orientation was measured with the 9-item MVS from Richins (2004) in which participants indicate their agreement with statements such as, ‘*Things I own say a lot about how well I’m doing in life*’, on a scale from 1 to 5 ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .66$, $\alpha = .81$).

Control measures. Consistent with the previous research literature (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), respondents were asked to write down the cost of their purchase and rate its importance on a 9-point scale ranging from ‘not very important’ to ‘very

⁴ The lower limit of £50 was chosen to avoid everyday purchases and the upper limit of £1000 was chosen to avoid exceptional purchases.

⁵ The questionnaire included other psychological measures designed to tap into other variables not addressed in the present report. These included the Aspiration Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1993), life orientation test-revised (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010), and Emotion Consumption Set from Richins (1997).

important'. Participants were also asked to provide the date of their purchase to control for temporal distance effects.

Happiness from a purchase. A single item previously used in the literature (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) was adapted to the different temporal conditions. Thus, participants in the forecast condition were asked '*How happy will it make you?*' whereas participants in the retrospective condition were asked '*When you think about your purchase now, how happy does it make you?*' on a 9-point scale that ranges from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much).

Life satisfaction from a purchase. To measure long-term positive effects derived from the purchase, participants were asked to rate one item (taken from Pchelin & Howell, 2014) on a 9-point scale that ranges from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much): *How much do you think this purchase will increase (has increased) your overall life satisfaction?*

Identity-related functions from purchases. The identity functions of *projected identity, effectiveness, distinctiveness, self-esteem, and symbolic relatedness* were measured using 20 statements on a 6-point Likert-type scale adapted from Dittmar (2011) to fit the specific purchase (i.e. '*This purchase made me feel more independent*' or '*This purchase fits with who I am*'; see Appendix 3 for a detail account of all the items). Cronbach's α ranged from .74 to .86.

Emotional Regulation. A 4-item measure adapted from Dittmar and Kapur (2010) on the function of emotional regulation that the purchase provided (i.e. '*This purchase will help me to escape feeling bad*' or '*This purchase will put me in a better mood*') was collected to control for the effects of purchasing as a way to improve one's mood or escape from aversive emotions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .66$).

Experiential rating. Using a one-item measure developed by Carter and Gilovich (2010), participants were asked to rate their described purchase on a 7-point bipolar scale ranging from 1 = definitely a material possession to 7 = definitely an experience. Material possessions were defined as ‘something one purchases to *have*’ whereas experiential purchases were described as ‘something one purchases to *do*’ and these definitions were displayed for the participants (see Appendix 2 for a detail account of all measures included).

Demographics. Measures of gender, age, disposable income, and nationality were taken at the end of the questionnaire.

Procedure and ethical issues

Participants were invited to take part in a 15-minute paper-and-pencil survey in exchange for a chance to win one of three £25 Amazon vouchers. Anyone older than 18 years qualified for the study. Participants who accepted the invitation ($N = 447$) were randomly allocated to one of the four conditions (forecasting-material; forecasting-experiential; retrospective-material; retrospective-experiential) using a sequence of randomly generated numbers ranging from 1 to 4. All participants were given a pen and a paper questionnaire and were told that the questionnaires should be completed individually and were requested to alert the researcher, who was within sight, when they had finished or if they had any questions at any point during the study. The questionnaire presented all participants with a measure on materialistic values followed by the experimental condition. After they described a purchase in their randomly allocated condition (future/past and material/experiential), they were asked to provide the cost and date of their described purchase, the importance, and an estimation on happiness and life satisfaction associated with the spending choice described. Then, participants were presented with the measures on identity-related functions that were

adapted to their allocated temporal condition followed by the material-experiential rating. Finally, all participants were asked some demographic questions including age, gender, nationality, occupation, and their disposable income. After completing the questionnaire, respondents were debriefed, thanked, and offered a chocolate bar. The study was approved by the Sciences & Technology Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee from the University in where the study was carried out and was conducted according to BPS/APA ethical guidelines.

Results

Preliminary analyses

A 2 (type of purchase) x 2 (time frame) ANOVA testing whether participants differed in Materialistic Values revealed that there were no significant differences between participants in the two types of purchase conditions, $F(1, 352) = 1.098, p = .295$, or the two time groups, $F(1, 352) = .716, p = .398$; nor was the interaction between time and type significant, $F(1, 352) = .297, p = .586$.

When we scrutinised the participants' ratings of their purchase on the bipolar material-experiential scale, we were able to confirm that participants in the experiential condition rated their purchase as more experiential ($M = 5.92, SD = 1.53$) than did participants in the material condition ($M = 3.53, SD = 2.14$), with a significant mean difference of 2.40, BCa 95% CI [1.98, 2.81] $t(308) = 11.30, p < .001$. Thus, the described purchases were congruent with the condition assigned. Subsequent analysis revealed that, in comparison with the dichotomous purchase condition, the material-experiential rating was a more sensitive measure that predicted greater variability in the key outcome variables (see Appendix 1), and so this rating was selected as the key measure of purchase type in all subsequent analysis.

Descriptive statistics and correlations were calculated for all study variables, separately for the participants assigned to the future and past time frame conditions (see Table 1.1). The results revealed that the experiential rating variable positively correlated with happiness and life satisfaction in the future and past focus condition (r 's ranging from .32 to .43). Moreover, the identity-related functions were also positively correlated with happiness and life satisfaction (r 's ranging from .18 to .45) with the exception of projected identity. In addition, variables of happiness and life satisfaction were moderately correlated ($r = .58$ and $r = .49$ for the past and future focus conditions).

A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in the cost of the purchase described by participants between conditions, $F(3, 324) = 8.09, p < .001$. Games-Howell post hoc tests showed that participants in the experiential future condition reported significantly higher costs for their selected spending choice ($M = 437.33, SD = 302.53, ps < .05$) than participants in the other three conditions (material future: $M = 305.39, SD = 309.37$; material past: $M = 221.10, SD = 248.65$; experiential past: $M = 261.82, SD = 275.69$).

Model Development

To examine whether material and experiential purchases differ in the identity-related functions and associations with happiness and life satisfaction, a multi-group (past vs. future focus) mediation model was carried out in Mplus 6 (see Figure 1.1). All of the variables that were introduced in the model as predictors were mean-centred. Moreover, we used the maximum likelihood estimation method, controlled for emotional regulation, importance and MVO⁶ and requested 2000 bootstrapped

⁶ Preliminary hierarchical regression models predicting the output measures revealed that the variables of age, gender, cost or date distance (the distance between the date when the data was collected and date that the purchase was bought) did not significantly predict happiness or life satisfaction from a purchase. Consequently, none of those variables were added into the SEM models to achieve parsimony.

confidence intervals due to some observed deviations from normality on several variables used in the model.

Table 1.1: Study 1. Mean, standard deviations and correlations among the variables in the study. Future condition correlations on the top ($n = 177$); Past condition correlations on the bottom ($n = 152$).

	Past		Future		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	M	SD	M	SD														
1 Happiness	7.02	1.97	7.24	1.61	-	.49**	.54**	.31**	.32**	.04	-.06	.38**	.38**	.34**	.22**	.53**	.07	-.08
2. Life satisfaction	5.32	2.28	5.67	2.24	.58**	-	.59**	.26**	.39**	-.13	-.13	.18*	.45**	.34**	.24**	.37**	-.02	.05
3. Importance	6.21	2.18	6.11	2.08	.48**	.51**	-	.28**	.22**	-.02	-.06	.16*	.38**	.26**	.12	.28**	-.09	.01
4. Cost (£)	240.66	261.93	365.67	311.21	.13	.19*	.29**	-	.26**	.02	-.12	-.03	.26**	.04	.00	.07	.02	-.02
5. Experiential rating	4.43	2.16	4.71	2.28	.43**	.42**	.44**	.12	-	-.06	-.13	.02	.26**	.10	.31**	.34**	-.01	.04
6. MVO	2.65	.69	2.54	.60	.20*	.16	.17*	.21**	-.02	-	.44**	.17*	.04	.17*	.18*	.17*	-.04	-.24**
7. Projected Identity	2.64	1.18	2.44	1.19	-.03	.05	-.01	-.01	-.21*	.42**	-	.42**	.21**	.47**	.32**	.16*	-.11	-.17*
8. Distinctiveness	3.64	1.11	3.59	1.18	.44**	.35**	.17*	-.03	.12	.09	.49**	-	.39**	.76**	.32**	.59**	-.04	-.14
9. Effectiveness	3.35	1.12	3.34	1.17	.30**	.45**	.40**	.12	.33**	.27**	.35**	.40**	-	.59**	.39**	.61**	-.03	-.12
10. Self-Esteem	3.61	1.27	3.57	1.35	.33**	.37**	.27**	-.01	.20*	.31**	.53**	.75**	.57**	-	.45**	.68**	-.01	-.15
11. Relatedness	3.27	1.48	2.92	1.41	.37**	.34**	.31**	-.05	.36**	.15	.27**	.43**	.44**	.42**	-	.42**	-.12	-.16*
12. Emotional Regulation	4.01	.95	3.91	.98	.39**	.35**	.35**	.08	.29**	.25**	.24**	.47**	.62**	.62**	.43**	-	.09	-.19*
13. Gender	.59	.49	.65	.51	.04	.03	.06	-.14	.03	.01	-.11	-.08	-.04	-.07	.01	-.03	-	-.05
14. Age	26.76	8.53	25.34	6.19	-.07	-.08	-.05	.05	-.02	-.14	-.17*	-.11	-.06	-.11	-.24**	-.08	.25**	-

Correlation significance level (2-tailed): * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

An initial constrained model in which all the path coefficients were fixed to be equal between the past and future models capturing the hypothesized relationships between the variables was specified. The results from the constrained model indicated that there were significant differences between the past and future conditions, $\chi^2(38) = 54.806, p = .038$. Subsequently, an unconstrained model in which all paths were allowed to vary between the past and future conditions was created. Then, equality constraints on the path coefficients displayed in Figure 1 were sequentially imposed path by path in order to identify which paths in the model were significantly different between the past and the future conditions. Therefore, a series of 37 different models were specified. The results from the models revealed that two paths were significantly different between the past and future condition⁷, as indicated by significant chi-square change tests between the unconstrained and constrained models: 1) the path between the identity-related function of distinctiveness and happiness and, 2) the path between the motive of projected identity from a purchase and happiness. As a result, a final model was created with all of the paths displayed in Figure 1.1 constrained to be equal between the groups with the exception of the paths previously identified. The fit indices of the final model indicated excellent fit: CFI = 1; RMSEA = .03; $\chi^2 = 39.12$; $df = 33$ $p = .214$.

Differences in identity functions between material and experiential purchases. The results from the final model indicated that the experiential rating variable significantly predicted projected identity, distinctiveness, and relatedness (see Table 1.2), indicating that purchases perceived as more material were associated with higher levels of projected identity and distinctiveness. However, the motive of relatedness was associated with items rated as more experiential.

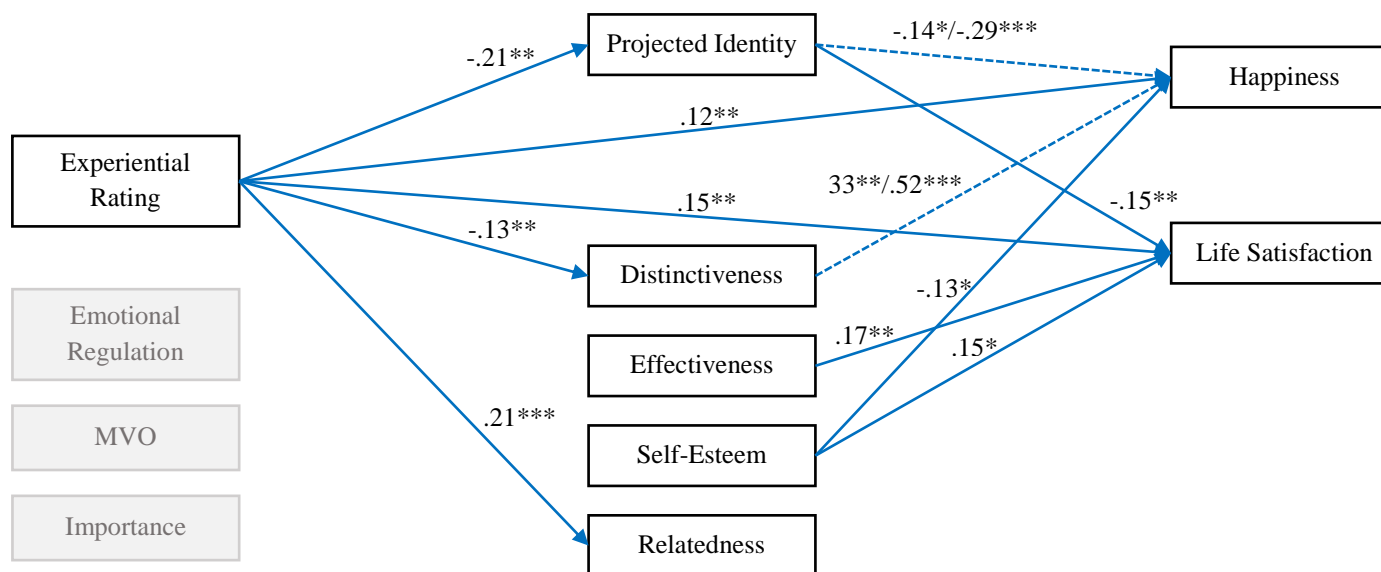
⁷ Two other paths from the control variable of MVO to the two dependent variables were also found to be significantly different between the past and future focus models and therefore, they were allowed to vary in the final model.

Happiness from a purchase. Happiness from a purchase was positively predicted by the experiential rating variable and *distinctiveness* (this effect was significantly stronger in the past model). Moreover, happiness from a purchase was negatively predicted by *projected identity* functions (this effect was significantly stronger in the past model) and *self-esteem*. However, the bootstrapped CI on the effect of self-esteem on happiness crossed zero and therefore it should be interpreted with caution.

Life satisfaction from a purchase. Life satisfaction from a purchase was positively predicted by the experiential rating variable, *effectiveness* and *self-esteem* and negatively predicted by the *projected identity* function.

Indirect effects. A test for mediation effects revealed a significant positive indirect effect of the experiential rating variable on happiness via *projected identity* and a negative indirect effect via *distinctiveness*. Moreover, there was a positive direct effect of the rating variable on happiness. Moreover, there was a positive indirect effect of the experiential rating variable on life satisfaction via *projected identity* and a direct positive effect of the rating variable on life satisfaction.

Figure 1.1: Study 1. Mediation model constrained. Future ($n = 177$)/ Past ($n = 152$). The variables of importance, emotional regulation and MVO were controlled by allowing them to predict each variable in the model (not shown to aid clarity). Standardized estimates are reported, only significant paths are displayed, and dotted paths significantly differ between past and future conditions.



CFI = 1; RMSEA = .03; $\chi^2 = 39.12$; $df = 33$; $p = .214$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 1.2: Study 1. Unstandardized, standardized, significance levels and bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals for model reported in Figure 1.1 (standard errors in parenthesis; Future $n = 176$ / Past $n = 149$). Only significant or marginally significant paths and effects have been reported.

Parameter estimate	Unstandardized	Standardized	<i>p</i>	Bootstrapped 95% CI
Experiential Rating → Projected Identity	-.11 (.03)	-.21	<.001	-.17, -.05
Experiential Rating → Distinctiveness	-.07 (.03)	-.13	.013	-.13, -.01
Experiential Rating → Relatedness	.14 (.04)	.21	<.001	.07, .21
Experiential Rating → Happiness	.15 (.04)	.12	.008	.03, .21
Experiential Rating → Life Satisfaction	.17 (.05)	.15	.002	.06, .27
Projected Identity → Happiness	-.18 (.09)/ -.52 (.13)	-.14/-.29	.038/ <.001	-.43, -.01/-.80, -.28
Distinctiveness → Happiness	.46 (.11)/ .93 (.17)	.33/.52	<.001	.26, .68/.60, 1.26
Self-Esteem → Happiness	-.21 (.10)	-.13	.046	-.40, .01
Projected Identity → Life Satisfaction	-.31 (.13)	-.15	.013	-.58, -.07
Effectiveness → Life Satisfaction	.36 (.12)	.17	.003	.12, .60
Self-Esteem → Life Satisfaction	.28 (.14)	.15	.040	.00, .55
Indirect effects				
FUTURE: Experiential Rating → Distinctiveness → Happiness	-.03 (.02)	-.05	.041	-.07, -.01
FUTURE: Experiential Rating → Projected Identity → Happiness	.03 (.02)	.02	.062	.00, .05
PAST: Experiential Rating → Distinctiveness → Happiness	-.07 (.03)	-.07	.017	-.13, -.02
PAST: Experiential Rating → Projected Identity → Happiness	.06 (.02)	.06	.007	.03, .11
Experiential Rating → Projected Identity → Life Satisfaction	.04 (.02)	.03	.033	.01, .08

Discussion

The results from study 1 showed clear associations between identity processes in consumption and well-being linked to purchases, even after controlling for other factors, including the type of purchase (material or experiential), the materialistic goals and values of the buyer, the extent to which the purchase was bought with the intention of regulating the buyer's emotions, and the importance of the purchase. As expected, experiential purchases were associated with higher levels of both happiness and life satisfaction replicating previous findings in the literature. However, these associations were found to be at least partly mediated by some of the IRFs explored. For example, material purchases were linked to projecting identity, which mediated the relationship between the type of purchase and well-being. This suggests that material purchases provide lower happiness and life satisfaction compared to experiences because they are related to identity projection. Moreover, contrary to our predictions, the motive of *distinctiveness* was also associated with material items but was strongly and positively related to happiness, especially when purchases were evaluated retrospectively. In addition, the functions of *self-esteem* and *effectiveness* were not associated with either material or experiential purchases but positively predicted life satisfaction. This suggests that purchases that help consumers to gain a sense of autonomy and to move closer to their ideal sense of self are associated with higher levels of well-being regardless of whether they are material or experiential. Moreover, and contrary to our predictions, only the IRFs of *relatedness* was positively associated with experiential purchases. However, this function was not found to be associated with the well-being measures.

Furthermore, the associations of the identity-related functions of *projected identity* and *distinctiveness* with happiness were found to be stronger for consumers who

reflected on a past spending choice than for those who were asked to judge a future choice, suggesting that time-perspective might moderate the relationship between identity and the positive emotions that consumers link to a particular spending choice. Nevertheless, global evaluations of life satisfaction gained from a purchase were found to maintain a consistent association with the identity-related functions examined across time conditions. However, the cross-sectional nature of this research limits the interpretation of the temporal findings. Consequently, we ran a second study with repeated measures to explore possible individual changes in the construction of the extended sense of self in consumption and its relationship with well-being over time.

Finally, the results from study 1 showed that the identity processes explored were differently associated with happiness and life satisfaction judgements suggesting that the two well-being measures are independent constructs in the mind of the consumers.

Study 2

Study 2 aims to gain a better understanding of identity construction mechanisms involved in consumption over time. Therefore, possible temporal changes in the relationships between different types of purchases, identity-related functions and well-being evaluations associated with buying before and after a purchase is made or consumed will be explored with a longitudinal design. In addition, we will test the mediation model specified in study 1 with a free-recall procedure. That is, no specific material or experiential purchase conditions will be assigned to avoid possible social desirability biases due to the implicit association of material purchases to materialism and the negative stereotypes of the latter (Van Boven, Campbell & Gilovich, 2010).

If people engage in buying behaviours with the expectation of transforming their sense of self and identity (Dittmar, 2011; Richins, 2011; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981),

do they achieve the identity changes desired after they have made their planned purchases? And if so, are there any changes in the relationship between well-being that consumers associate with their purchase and the identity-related functions over time?

Based on previous literature (Pechelin & Howell, 2014), we expect no differences on well-being evaluations between past and future purchases. However, changes in the identity-related functions that a purchase might provide to the consumer or asymmetries in the relationship between the functions and well-being, as found in Study 1, might be expected.

Method

Design

Study 2 had a longitudinal design for collecting measures before and after a consumer product was bought. Participants that completed the first questionnaire were presented with a measure on materialistic values. Then, they were asked to freely describe a future planned purchase and answer several future focus purchases-related measures. In the second questionnaire, if the purchase described in the first questionnaire was bought, they were presented with the same purchase-related questions as in the first questionnaire but adapted to fit the past temporal focus.

Sample

Time 1 questionnaire. A final sample of 370 participants was used for the analysis after removing 30 respondents from the sample who did not provide a description of a purchase, described more than one item, included a present bought for someone else or described purchases outside the given instructions (i.e. living expenses). The final sample was 75.8% female, and ranged in age from 18 to 57 ($M = 21.55$, $SD = 5.26$). Among respondents, 72.3% were British, 14.8% from another European country, 1.3% from North America, 5.3% from Asia, 2.5% from the Middle

East and 3.6% from South America. Moreover, 94.1% were students while 4.8% reported to be currently full-time employed.

Time 2 questionnaire. A sample of 183 participants out of the 283 people who completed the second part of the study (attrition rate of 22.89%) indicated that they made the purchase described in the Time 1 questionnaire and therefore were able to access the follow-up questions regarding their purchase. The final sample was 74.6% female, and their ages ranged from 18 to 53 ($M = 22.11$, $SD = 5.43$). The nationalities and occupation ratio remained fairly equal across questionnaires.

Attrition analysis. A MANOVA was carried out to compare the scores of participants who only took part in the Time 1 questionnaire against participants who completed both questionnaires, using all of the variables involved in the subsequent set of analyses. This revealed significant differences between the groups $V = .09$, $F(11, 357) = 3.36$, $p < .001$. Examination of the univariate ANOVAs showed significant differences on: MVO, $F(1, 367) = 6.77$, $p = .010$; importance of the purchase, $F(1, 367) = 16.01$, $p < .001$; and the experiential rating variable, $F(1, 367) = 4.19$, $p = .041$. Participants who completed both questionnaires were less materialistic ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .76$), rated their purchase as more important ($M = 6.37$, $SD = 1.87$) and more experiential ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 2.60$) than participants who only completed questionnaire 1 ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .76$; $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.98$; $M = 3.78$, $SD = 2.49$ respectively). Nevertheless, there were no significant differences in their happiness and life satisfaction ratings from their future purchases or any of the identity-related functions examined.

Measures⁸

Time 1 questionnaire included the same measures and were administered in the same order than in the future condition of study 1. The questionnaire included the measures of Materialistic Value Scale ($\alpha = .85$), an estimation on happiness and life satisfaction from the described purchase, the identity-related functions (α ranged from .77 to .89), the experiential rating, and other control variables such as emotional regulation function ($\alpha = .74$), purchase importance, the estimated date of the purchase and other demographics. Time 2 questionnaire included the same measures related to the participant's purchase used in the past condition of study 1 and were presented in the same order. Time 2 measures included an estimation of well-being from their described purchase, the identity-related items (α ranged from .82 to .91), the experiential rating, and the same control measures used in the first part of study 2 and in study 1 (see Appendix 2 & 3).

Procedure and ethical issues

Four hundred participants were approached on campus or by email and were invited to take part in a two-part online survey in exchange for a chance to win 1 of 2 £50 Amazon Vouchers or 4 course credits if they were eligible. Anyone older than 18 years old qualified for the study. Questionnaire 1 was accessed by a link provided through an email or a flyer that addressed participants to an online survey that could be completed at any time through any personal device with internet access. After completing the psychological measure of MVO, participants were asked to think and describe a future purchase that they were planning to do, preferably within the next month, using the same instructions given to participants in Study 1. Responses were

⁸ As in study 1, other psychological measures including life orientation test-revised (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010), life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985) and Emotion Consumption Set from Richins (1997) were collected; however, they will not be discussed further in this paper.

anonymous but were linked by a memorable unique identifier code question that requested participants to provide the last 4 digits of their phone number following the procedure of previous similar studies (Richins, 2013).

Three to four weeks after completion of the first part of the questionnaire, participants received an email with a link to the second part of the study. To access questionnaire 2, they had to enter their unique identifier code, which was linked to the dataset containing their initial answer to the purchase description from the first part of the questionnaire. As a result, the purchase described in part 1 was retrieved and displayed by the system followed by a question that required the participant to indicate whether 1) they had made the proposed purchase; 2) they had not yet, but were planning to do so in the near future or 3) they had not bought the item and were not planning to do so in the near future. If the participant selected option 3, they were sent to a debrief page, where they were thanked for their participation in the study, but no further data were collected. If they indicated that they were going to buy the purchase but had not done it yet, they were instructed to save the link and to complete the second part of the study after their described purchase had been made. However, participants that did not buy their described purchase and completed the full questionnaire at time 2 within the 6 weeks that were given were not included in the T2 sample. If the participant indicated that they had bought their described purchase in part 1, they were able to access questionnaire 2. Study 2 was also approved by the Research Ethics Committee from the University in where the study was carried out and followed BPS/APA ethical guidelines.

Results

Preliminary analysis

The experiential rating question was used to assess the distribution of the purchases described in order to assess whether there was a reasonably equal split between material and experiential purchases across the sample. The analysis revealed that 43.24% participants rated their purchase on the material end of the scale, 12.16% rated their purchase in the middle as “*both*” material and experiential and, 44.59% people rated their purchase in the experiential side of the scale. The distribution of the purchases remained consistent in questionnaire 2, despite attrition (39.34% material, 14.21% both and, 43.72% experiential).

To determine any differences on MVO between participants describing a material item (rated 1 to 3), participants describing an experience (rated 5 to 7), and participants rating their purchase as both (4), a one-way ANOVA with three levels and MVO as a dependent variable was carried out. This revealed that there were significant differences between participants in MVO, $F(2, 177) = 4.20, p = .017$. Bonferroni post hoc tests revealed that participants who described a material item were more materialistic ($M = 3.07, SD = .78$) than participants who rated their purchase as both ($M = 2.76, SD = .83$) or described an experience ($M = 2.73, SD = .69$), $p = .018$. Therefore, MVO was controlled for on the subsequent analyses.

Correlations between all the variables subject to study were carried out for the data collected at time 1 and at time 2 (see Table 1.3). The results from the analysis showed high correlations between time 1 and time 2 outcome variables (r 's $> .64$), identity-related functions (r 's $> .69$) and, the rating variable ($r = .87$) indicating a high level of consistency on the measures. Moreover, the experiential rating variable positively correlated with happiness and life satisfaction at T1 and T2 (r 's ranging

from .35 to .45). In addition, the IRFs were also positively correlated with happiness and life satisfaction (r 's ranging from .18 to .45) with the exception of projected identity and life satisfaction at T2.

Data analyses

The effect of time on well-being evaluations. To test if there were any changes in happiness and life satisfaction evaluations between time 1 and time 2, two one-way repeated measures ANCOVAs were carried out, with the experiential rating and MVO variables centred and as covariates in the model. The results from the multivariate test revealed non-significant differences between Time 1 and Time 2 scores for happiness, $F(1, 180) = 1.31, p = .254$, and life satisfaction, $F(1, 180) = 1.09, p = .299$. There were also non-significant interactions between time and the covariates for both of the outcome variables ($p > .05$). Nevertheless, the between-subjects test revealed a significant effect of the covariates for both output measures and, as a result, MVO was controlled for in the subsequent analysis (detailed results can be obtained from the corresponding author).

The effect of time on identity-related functions. To test if there were any changes between the measures taken at time 1 and time 2, a series of paired samples t -tests were carried out. The results from the analysis revealed that there were significant differences between the identity-related function of distinctiveness at time 1 ($M = 3.94$; $SD = 1.49$) and time 2 ($M = 4.06$; $SD = 1.50$), $t(178) = -2.31, p = .022$, and between relatedness at time 1 ($M = 3.60$; $SD = 1.62$) and time 2 ($M = 3.87$; $SD = 1.65$), $t(178) = -3.32, p = .001$, indicating that participants rated their purchases slightly higher in distinctiveness and relatedness once the purchase was bought.

Table 1.3: Study 2. Mean, standard deviations and correlations among the variables in the model collected at Time 1 ($n = 370$) and at Time 2 ($n = 183$).

	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1. Happiness T1	7.11	1.65	.64**	.56**	.45**	.52**	.51**	.21**	.20**	.35**	.41**	.14**	.16**	.15*	.32**	.38**	.27**	.32**	.34**	.34**	.42**	.41**	.55**	.45**	.12*	-.12*
2. Happiness T2	7.00	1.69	-	.56**	.66**	.51**	.61**	.27**	.27**	.40**	.45**	.18*	.18*	.15*	.28**	.38**	.33**	.42**	.31**	.40**	.42**	.45**	.49**	.49**	.16*	-.16*
3. Life Satisfaction T1	5.13	2.33		-	.69**	.57**	.58**	.27**	.26**	.41**	.41**	.12*	.18**	.23**	.37**	.42**	.48**	.53**	.44**	.46**	.48**	.47**	.44**	.41**	.02	-.02
4. Life Satisfaction T2	5.09	2.31			-	.45**	.61**	.28**	.30**	.36**	.44**	.14	.14	.13	.29**	.33**	.40**	.46**	.38**	.42**	.38**	.37**	.41**	.36**	.13	-.08
5. Importance T1	5.98	1.97				-	.66**	.13*	.21**	.35**	.41**	.00	.05	.07	.23**	.43**	.32**	.39**	.25**	.36**	.38**	.45**	.24**	.36**	.01	.03
6. Importance T1	6.53	1.88					-	.21**	.26**	.39**	.41**	.07	.13	.11	.27**	.36**	.34**	.34**	.27**	.33**	.37**	.41**	.31**	.29**	.18*	-.03
7. Cost T1	244.48	253.21						-	.78**	.14**	.15*	.06	.09	-.06	.14**	.07	.24**	.12	.11*	.03	.13**	.01	.19**	.05	.00	-.05
8. Cost T2	198.17	219.86							-	.08	.11	.02	.03	-.09	.07	-.06	.21**	.07	.04	-.04	.08	-.04	.22**	.08	.13	-.05
9. Experiential Rating T1	4.06	2.56								-	.87**	-.22**	-.08	-.08	.14**	.17*	.19**	.21**	.10*	.05	.54**	.52**	.33**	.25**	-.03	.11*
10. Experiential Rating T2	4.20	2.53									-	-.21**	-.06	-.07	.09	.18*	.20**	.25**	.07	.09	.54**	.57**	.37**	.29**	.09	.08
11. MVO	2.97	.77										-	.44**	.41**	.23**	.19**	.15**	.19**	.29**	.39**	.07	.05	.20**	.34**	.09	-.22**
12. Projected Identity T1	2.94	1.44											-	.74**	.49**	.31**	.43**	.37**	.63**	.54**	.34**	.26**	.29**	.33**	.01	-.15**
13. Projected Identity T2	2.99	1.44												-	.38**	.48**	.35**	.44**	.54**	.66**	.31**	.40**	.28**	.41**	-.04	-.20**
14. Distinctiveness T1	3.94	1.42													-	.71**	.53**	.51**	.73**	.60**	.46**	.38**	.53**	.45**	.01	-.03
15. Distinctiveness T2	4.06	1.50														-	.45**	.60**	.58**	.76**	.42**	.55**	.46**	.60**	-.03	-.08
16. Effectiveness T1	3.66	1.52															-	.69**	.65**	.56**	.46**	.39**	.46**	.41**	.01	-.14**
17. Effectiveness T2	3.69	1.57																-	.56**	.70**	.49**	.55**	.47**	.52**	-.11	-.24**
18. Self-Esteem T1	3.82	1.60																	-	.73**	.45**	.39**	.52**	.48**	.08	-.14**
19. Self-Esteem T2	3.97	1.69																		-	.42**	.54**	.48**	.64**	.00	-.17*
20. Relatedness T1	3.55	1.58																			-	.78**	.48**	.39**	.04	-.03
21. Relatedness T2	3.87	1.65																				-	.46**	.51**	.03	.00

Table 1.3: ...continued.

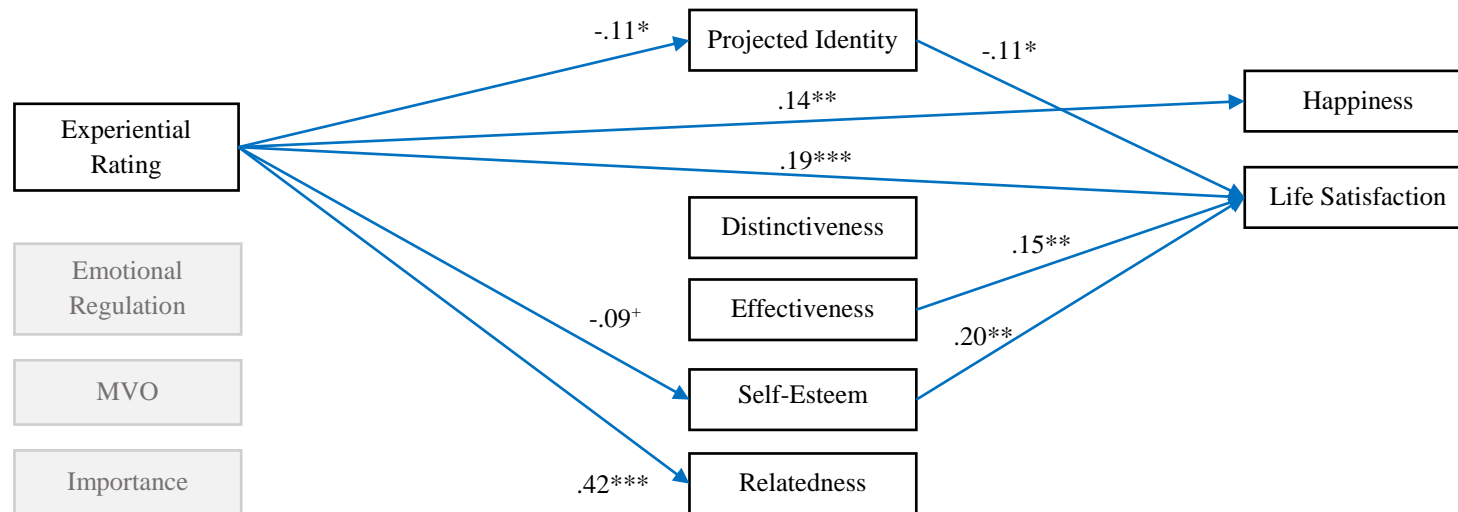
	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
22. Emotional Regulation T1	4.85	1.27																					-	.70**	.12*	-.11*
23. Emotional Regulation T2	4.70	1.18																						-	.06	-.16*
24. Gender	1.78	.43																							-	-.13**
25. Age	21.61	5.32																								

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

The moderation of time on the mediation of identity-related functions. To assess possible temporal changes in the relationship between IRFs and well-being evaluations, we conducted a path analysis using the maximum likelihood estimation with bootstrapped confidence intervals (with 2000 resamples) in Mplus 6. We specified a path model that included MVO, the importance of the purchase, and the function of emotional regulation⁹ as covariates. The experiential rating measure at T1 and T2 was averaged due to its high correlation ($r = .87$) and to increase reliability and simplify the path analyses. The T1 - T2 aggregated experiential rating variable was added as a predictor of each of the IRFs at T1, which then predicted happiness and life satisfaction at T1. We then specified the same path model for the T2 measures, and integrated both into a single model comprising both time points. Fit indices suggested the model had adequate fit (CFI = .96; RMSEA = .07). Subsequently, to determine if there were significant differences between time 1 and time 2 paths, a series of models sequentially fixing two parallel paths from T1 and T2 were specified (e.g. Experiential rating → Distinctiveness T1 and Experiential rating → Distinctiveness T2; Distinctiveness T1 → Happiness T1 and Distinctiveness T2 → Happiness T2). The chi-square obtained from each of the models with two paths fixed to be equal was tested against a chi-square distribution using a log-likelihood test of model fit. If the paths were not found to significantly differ between time 1 and time 2, they were kept fixed in the model to achieve parsimony (see Figure 1.2).

⁹ Alternative models controlling for age and gender were also tested. However, no significant changes were found between models controlling for those variables and therefore, age and gender were removed from the model reported to achieve parsimony.

Figure 1.2: Study 2. Mediation model ($n = 370$ at Time 1; $n = 183$ at Time 2). Fix paths between T1 and T2 are displayed as only one path in the figure. The variables of importance, emotional regulation and MVO were controlled by allowing them to predict each variable in the model (not shown to aid clarity). Standardized estimates reported. Only significant paths are displayed.



CFI = .96; RMSEA = .06; $\chi^2 = 209.43$; $df = 85$; $p < .001$.

$^+ > .08$ $^* p < .05$; $^{**} p < .01$; $^{***} p < .001$.

Table 1.4: Study 2. Unstandardized, standardized, significance levels and bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals for model reported in Figure 1.2 (standard errors in parenthesis; $n = 370$ at time 1; $n = 183$ at time 2). Only significant paths have been reported.

Parameter estimate	Unstandardized	Standardized	<i>p</i>	Bootstrapped 95% CI
Experiential rating → Projected Identity T1 & T2	-.06 (.03)	-.11	.036	-.12, -.01
Experiential rating → Self-Esteem T1 & T2	-.06 (.03)	-.09	.070	-.12, .00
Experiential rating → Relatedness T1 & T2	.26 (.03)	.42	<.001	.21, .32
Experiential rating → Happiness T1 & T2	.09 (.03)	.14	.004	.03, .15
Experiential rating → Life Satisfaction T1 & T2	.18 (.04)	.19	<.001	.10, .27
Projected Identity → Life Satisfaction T1 & T2	-.17 (.07)	-.11	.020	-.32, -.04
Effectiveness → Life Satisfaction T1 & T2	.23 (.07)	.15	.001	.09, .36
Self-esteem → Life Satisfaction T1 & T2	.29 (.09)	.20	.002	.12, .48
Indirect effects				
Experiential rating → Projected Identity → Life Satisfaction T1 & T2	.01	.01	.137	.00, .03
Experiential rating → Self-Esteem → Life Satisfaction T1 & T2	-.02	-.02	.118	-.05, -.00

Differences in identity functions between material and experiential purchases.

The results from the final mediation model (CFI = .96; RMSEA = .06; see Table 1.4) revealed that the experiential rating variable was negatively associated with *projected identity* and positively with *relatedness* and *self-esteem* (albeit marginally).

Happiness from a purchase. Reported happiness from a purchase was predicted only by the experiential rating variable.

Life satisfaction from a purchase. Life satisfaction was positively predicted by the identity functions of *effectiveness* and *self-esteem* and negatively by *projected identity*. No significant indirect effects were found; however, 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals suggested a small indirect effect via *projected identity* and *self-esteem* as the confidence intervals of the indirect effect did not cross zero.

Moderation of time on the mediation of IRFs. The results from the analyses revealed no significant differences between time 1 and time 2 paths in the model predicting happiness and life satisfaction.

Discussion

The results from the mediation model of identity-related functions on the link between type of purchase (material or experiential) and well-being replicated the findings for life satisfaction from study 1, but using a free-recall procedure, showing a consistent positive effect of the identity-related functions of *effectiveness* and *self-esteem*, as well as a negative link with the function of *projected identity* on the perceived gain in life satisfaction associated with a purchase. However, the dependent measure of happiness was only predicted by the variable of type of purchase suggesting that perhaps there might be other factors that could cause individual variation in happiness estimations from a purchase and therefore, study 2 was not able to find a general trend within the sample analysed.

The results from the longitudinal study revealed that there were some temporal changes in the identity-related functions that consumers associated with their purchases depending on whether they were evaluating past or future purchases. The results suggest that the functions of *distinctiveness* and *relatedness* are more strongly associated with a purchase that has been made rather than a future purchase. Nevertheless, the possible moderation of time in the mediation of identity-related functions on the link between type of purchase and well-being suggested in study 1 was not supported. In addition, the results from the analyses revealed that, after controlling for other psychological processes involved in consumption (such as emotional regulation functions, MVO and the importance of the item to the buyer), the levels of well-being that people associated with their purchase was similar for future and past purchases, confirming previous results found in the literature (Pchelin & Howell, 2014) but with a larger sample taken in the UK. However, it is worth noting that the repeated measures design could have influenced the results as previous research on consumer psychology has suggested that the expectations for a product in the pre-consumption phase can affect post-consumption evaluations (Patrick, MacInnis & Park, 2007; Richins, 2013). Therefore, it is possible that by asking participants to consciously reflect on their purchases and report well-being associated with them, the post-consumption scores could have been altered or adjusted. Moreover, the temporal distance between the two data collection points (3 to 6 weeks between questionnaire 1 and 2) could have favoured high-level construal representations (Trope & Liberman, 2012) that focus on abstract and invariant properties of the purchase, which may decrease any differences between past and future purchases in the relationships we measured.

General discussion

Despite the central role that identity construction strategies play in consumer behavior (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Dittmar, 2008; Dittmar, Long, & Meek, 2004; Richins, 2011; Shrum et al., 2014; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981), and the importance of future hedonic expectations and past experiences on consumer choices (Alba & Williams, 2013; Richins, 2011), little research has systematically examined the associations between identity-related functions from purchases and estimations on well-being made by consumers before and after a purchase is bought. Therefore, the present research contributes to the existing literature by unpacking the effects of identity processes involved in consumption and identifying the links between the different IRFs that a purchase provides to the consumer and the distinct affective and cognitive perceived gains in well-being associated with that purchase.

The results from two separate studies replicated once more the finding that experiential purchases are associated with higher levels of well-being than material purchases (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009; Thomas & Millar, 2013; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). However, the results from both studies suggested that the IRFs of *effectiveness*, *self-esteem* and *projected identity* are as strong predictors of well-being associated with the purchase as whether purchase is experiential or material. In fact, the function of *projected identity* was consistently found to mediate the relationship between material - experiential purchases and life satisfaction estimations, supporting self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which postulates that pursuing for extrinsic motives (such as wealth or appearance) leads to lower well-being. The positive associations between the functions of *effectiveness* and *self-esteem* are aligned to motivated identity construction theory that proposes that the satisfaction of identity motives has positive implications for well-

being (Vignoles, 2011). These results also provide support for SDT, which suggests that investing money in purchases that increase competence (*effectiveness*) and foster personal self-growth by tackling perceived deficiencies in the self-concept (*self-esteem*), have positive benefits for well-being. Nevertheless, and contrary to previous studies (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010), the motive of *relatedness* was not linked to higher levels of well-being. However, it is worth noting that the present set of studies measured symbolic relatedness, or the extent to which a purchase helped the consumer to feel a symbolic affiliation with other people (i.e. “*This purchase expresses which group or groups of people I belong to*”), rather than how the purchase could actually help the consumer to foster social connections. Therefore, our results suggest that the perceived influence that a purchase might have on the consumer’s individual sense of well-being varies depending on the identity functions that the purchase helps to satisfy.

Nevertheless, the results from the two studies did not find temporal effects on well-being, replicating previous findings (Pchelin & Howell, 2014), nor a moderation of time on the mediation of IRFs. However, our results suggest some possible differences in the construction of the extended sense of self in consumption between future and past focus evaluations, as the IRFs of *distinctiveness* and *relatedness* were found to mildly increase once a purchase was completed. However, as noted in the discussion of the longitudinal study, it is difficult to investigate a moderation of time in consumer judgements with a repeated measures design without the answers given by participants at time 1 influencing the second and subsequent set of responses.

Furthermore, the well-being construct of happiness was found to be differentially predicted by the IRFs examined across past and future temporal focus conditions in study 1 and, between study 1 and 2 samples. In study 1, happiness was

found to be negatively predicted by the function of *projected identity* and positively predicted by *distinctiveness*, with stronger effects in past focus evaluations. However, in study 2, none of the IRFs were associated with happiness. These results suggest that perhaps the effects of identity on happiness might be less consistent across consumers than cognitive well-being evaluations in life satisfaction. In addition, the results from both studies also confirm that happiness and life satisfaction estimations are distinct well-being constructs in the mind of the consumers, supporting previous findings that differentiate the affective and cognitive aspects of well-being (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010), and that have suggested that the construct of happiness might be a malleable concept that varies with age and across cultures (Mogilner, Aaker, & Kamvar, 2012; Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006).

These findings entail several implications for consumer psychology researchers as they highlight the benefits of making a clear distinction between the different identity-related functions that purchases might provide to the consumer, in comparison to merging all functions into a single composite (i.e. Donnelly, Ksendzova, Howell, 2013). Our findings also emphasized the need to acknowledge the distinct identity functions that a purchase might have on the consumer's extended sense of self when exploring well-being evaluations (i.e. Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Thomas, 2010). Moreover, our results have implications for identity researchers, as they show that self-defining identity functions, that is consumer behaviours that construct ones' own identity, seem to have positive associations with well-being (i.e. *self-esteem* or *effectiveness*), whereas self-expressing functions (*identity projection*) have negative effects on well-being.

The present research also has implications for marketers because advertising campaigns often use the construct of happiness for promoting their products (i.e. the

campaigns of “Open a Coke, open happiness” or “Get in, get happy” by Volkswagen). However, our results suggest that the construct of life satisfaction might show less individual variation and is more consistently linked to the identity functions of repairing a perceived identity deficit (*self-esteem*) and gaining autonomy (*effectiveness*), which are often key selling points for consumers.

Furthermore, the current research serves to outline some recommendations to consumers as it shows that buying with the intention of displaying a certain image or social status is not linked to an increase in well-being. However, spending money on purchases that provide consumers with an enhanced sense of autonomy or control as well as items or experiences that help them to move closer to their ideal sense of self seem to be associated with higher levels of life satisfaction.

Limitations and further research

Several limitations to the studies need to be acknowledged. First, they collected self-reported measures on all variables, and these may be subject to social desirability biases due to the negative stereotypes and stigmatization of materialistic buyers and material purchases (Van Boven et al, 2010) that might influence self-perceptions and well-being associations. Furthermore, these studies compared forecasted well-being (i.e., “*How happy do you think it will make you?*”) to evaluations experienced in the present moment from a past purchase (i.e., “*When you think about your purchase now, how happy does it make you?*”), mirroring previous temporal conditions used in the experiential vs. material literature (e.g., Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Pchelin & Howell, 2014; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). However, the differences between well-being experienced in the present moment from a future purchase or the remembered past evaluations were not investigated. Future research therefore needs to explore possible differences between forecasted, remembered past, and *present* emotions for purchases.

Moreover, the current research, following the distinction between private and public meanings of possession from Richins (1994), dealt with the creation of identity through purchasing for the individual; that is, the private meaning of purchases rather than the public meaning, or meaning as perceived by others. However, as identity research has suggested, the sense of self can be also constructed at a relational level as well as at a collective level and include goals, values and beliefs that are shared by groups (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). Consequently, further research may fruitfully investigate how the construction of identity through buying might also be the result of relational and collective identities. For example, people may spend money to construct their social group identity rather their personal identity.

Finally, and due to the different associations we found between the IRFs and happiness across samples, further research should explore possible individual differences in other domains such as goals, beliefs or values that might help to explain the variations found between identity-related functions and short-term positive emotions, because the present research only accounted for individual differences on materialistic value orientations. However, MVO might only help to explain spending choices that are made with the intention of displaying financial success and status, whereas buying might also be motivated by repairing or transforming one's identity or appearance (Anderson, 2007; Dittmar, 1991, 1992, 2008, 2011; Richins, 2011; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981) or pursuing social connection (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010). Therefore, a broader approach to goals is needed to capture the diversity of buying. If people spend their money to autonomously achieve their goals (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Vohs & Baumeister, 2011), perhaps the extent to which a purchase helps someone to achieve a personal goal might help to explain individual differences in happiness that is associated with a spending choice.

PAPER 2: Spending choices and anticipated well-being: The role of goal orientations and identity-related functions

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Abstract

Purchases of experiences (e.g., holidays, music concerts), in comparison to purchases of material products (e.g., clothes, gadgets) have been found to be associated with higher levels of well-being. Nevertheless, the roles played in this association by high-level goals (such as seeking personal growth or an attractive appearance) and identity-related functions (such as projecting a desired identity, or increasing one's sense of self-esteem) have not been adequately established. A sample of university students ($N = 201$) completed an experimental manipulation designed to elicit either an intrinsic or an extrinsic goal focus presenting a hypothetical windfall scenario in which respondents imagined spending money on a purchase. Although the manipulation did not systematically change participants' goal orientations, there was substantial variation in the levels of extrinsic and intrinsic goals within the sample. Path analyses revealed that intrinsically oriented participants selected more experiential purchases whereas extrinsically-oriented individuals chose more materialistic purchases. Moreover, goal orientations had an indirect effect on well-being via the spending choice and the identity functions satisfied by the purchase. In line with goal content theory, higher extrinsic goal orientations predicted lower well-being via the purchase of material items that projected image and wealth to others. Limitations and directions for further research collecting retrospective evaluations or longitudinal data are discussed.

Key words: goals; experiential purchases; identity; consumption; well-being.

Introduction

The content of the goals that people pursue plays an important role in individual well-being (Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004). Goal content theory postulates that seeking extrinsic goals (such as financial success, attractive appearance or social popularity) leads to lower well-being because it distracts individuals from pursuing intrinsic goals (such as self-acceptance, affiliation or community feeling) that satisfy basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Consumption has been conceptualised as a strategy to attain personal goals, as people spend money to autonomously achieve or move closer to the achievement of their objectives (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Vohs & Baumeister, 2011). However, despite the rapidly growing area of research looking at the association between spending money and well-being, recently named the “science of spending” (Dunn & Weidman, 2015), the role that the pursuit of intrinsic or extrinsic goals might have in consumption and its possible links to well-being have not been adequately examined. As a result, we aim to address the following three questions: Do goals guide spending choices? If so, would the goals pursued influence the gain in well-being linked to a purchase? If identity construction processes have been found to play an important goal in well-being associated with a spending choice, what are the links between goals and identity-related functions in consumption?

Research in consumer psychology suggests that what people buy or the consumer choices that individuals make, can have an impact on their happiness (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). This claim has been supported by a significant number of studies that found that people associated higher levels of well-being with the purchase of experiences, understood as “something one purchases to *do*” (Carter & Gilovich, 2010, p. 156), as opposed to buying material items, defined as “something one purchases to *have*” (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Kumar, Killingsworth, & Gilovich, 2014; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009; Thomas & Millar,

2013; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Moreover, consumers who have a general preference for spending money on experiences were found to be happier and more satisfied with their life (Howell, Pchelin, & Iyer, 2012).

A closer examination of the differences between material and experiential purchases reveals that experiences are typically linked to social connection and relatedness functions (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010) whereas material purchases have an implicit association with money (Mann & Gilovich, 2016) and are often linked to the function of displaying social and financial status (Moldes, Banerjee, Easterbrook, Harris, & Dittmar, 2017). These studies provide some initial evidence of a possible association of experiential purchases with intrinsic goals and material purchases with extrinsic goals, which could help to explain the differences in well-being previously found in the literature. However, a connection between the buyer's life goals (*intrinsic* or *extrinsic*) and their spending choices (*material* or *experiential*) has yet to be established. If individual goals drive consumption, and money is often a limited resource to be allocated, goal content theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) might provide a theoretical explanation for understanding how tendencies to make material versus experiential purchases can at least partially drive the effects of goals on well-being.

Furthermore, a set of studies found that, when an external observer was asked to form an impression of someone else based on their spending choices, materialistic buyers and material purchases were assumed to be more extrinsically motivated than were experiential buyers and experiential purchases (Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010). However, the motivation of the buyer was not explored. As a result, and in order to gain a better understanding of why some spending choices might provide higher well-being, a further examination of the underlying mechanisms that could be

driving consumption and its relationship with well-being is needed. It may not be what people buy, or the material or experiential nature of the purchase that influences well-being, but the type of goals that motivate the purchase that might determine the effects of the purchase on well-being.

Goals in consumption

People often have conflicting, unconscious or complex goals that might lead to suboptimal or incoherent consumer decisions (Richins, 2005). One attempt to explain the messy motivational processes involved in consumption has presented a three-tier hierarchy of consumers' goals (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999) comprising: *superordinate goals*, which are higher level abstractions concerning why the focal goal might be pursued (e.g. to live longer or look and feel good); *focal goals*, which are concrete and determine what the consumer seeks to achieve by the purchase (e.g., to lose weight); and *subordinate goals*, which are the ways in which the focal goals can be attained (e.g. buying a gym membership or dietary products). This hierarchical model is conceptualised as a cognitive structure of how individuals might reason about their goals and spending behaviours. A second, complementary, hierarchical model of consumer goals (Huffman, Ratneshwar & Mick, 2000) has identified six categories, ranging from life themes and values (higher-abstract goals, such as being healthy), to life projects, current concerns, or consumption intentions (desires driving concrete product consumptions, such as buying a gym membership), to benefits sought and "feature" preferences (tangible concrete characteristics of a product, such as subscribing to a gym that has a swimming pool). Both hierarchical models assume an association between high-level abstract goals held by consumers and low-level concrete goals, regardless of whether this connection is conscious and explicit or unconscious and implicit to the buyer.

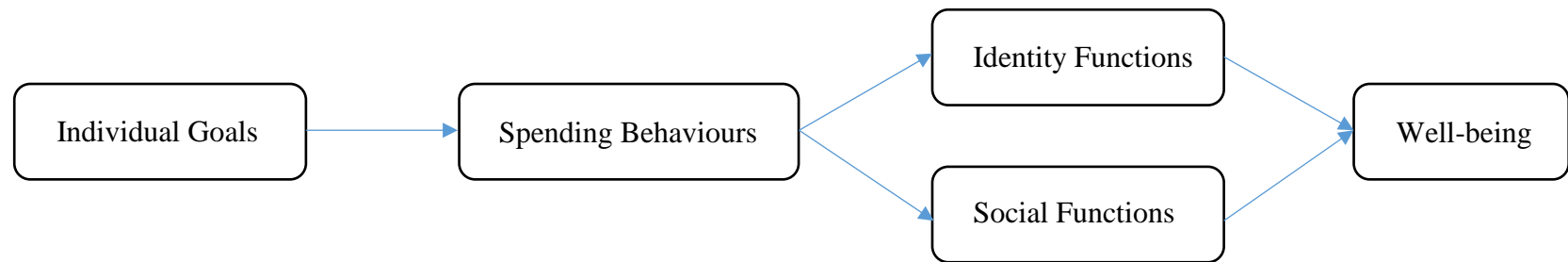
Within these hierarchical goal frameworks, both the extrinsic life goals of financial success, appearance and popularity, and the intrinsic goals of self-acceptance, affiliation and community feeling would be considered high-level abstract goals or superordinate goals, as they are desired ideal states that guide or motivate specific focal goals, such as losing weight. Spending money on dietary products, exercise equipment or a gym membership would represent subordinate or low-level goals involving concrete ways in which consumers might go about attaining their focal goals. However, no prior research has systematically examined whether the content of high-level abstract goals is linked to low-level purchase outcomes and the possible impact of this on well-being. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to investigate the connection between high-level abstract goals (*extrinsic* or *intrinsic*) and concrete buying behaviours (*material* or *experiential* purchases) and their possible links to perceived well-being. If goals influence spending behaviours, it is possible that individuals' goals have an effect on well-being via the type of purchases that consumers buy.

Goals and well-being in consumption

In the research literature relevant to the material versus experiential consumption distinction, several authors have looked at the role that the extrinsic goal of financial success (measured by materialistic value orientations) plays in hedonic consumption, providing some mixed results. The construct of materialistic value orientations (MVOs), understood as “individual differences in people’s long-term endorsement of values, goals and beliefs that are centered on the importance of acquiring money and possessions that convey status” (Dittmar, Bond, Hurst, & Kasser, 2014, p. 880), has been found by a substantial number of studies to be negatively associated with individual well-being. However, when the influence of MVO was examined in the context of experiential or material purchases, some studies found that more materialistic

individuals reported higher positive emotions when buying a material item than when spending money on experiences (Millar & Thomas, 2009), whereas other studies did not find that MVO influenced consumers' well-being evaluations related to their purchases (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Thomas, 2010; Zhang, Howell, Caprariello, & Guevarra, 2014). However, buying could be motivated by different types of goals such as repairing or transforming one's identity or appearance (Anderson, 2007; Dittmar, 1991, 1992, 2008, 2011; Richins, 2011; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981), by seeking individuality (Lynn & Snyder, 2002) or by pursuing social connection (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010). Therefore, materialistic goals might be the driver of spending choices that are only made with the intention of displaying financial success. As a result, it is possible that the mixed results found when the association between goals and well-being has been previously examined might be due to the limitations of the goals measured. As a result, a broader approach to goals is needed in order to capture the diversity of buying motivations and to determine the role that high-level goals might play in consumption. Consequently, the current study will also include the extrinsic goals of attractive appearance and social popularity along with financial success, as well as the intrinsic goals of self-acceptance, affiliation and community feeling, in order to explore a possible connection between the goals pursued by the buyer and the well-being associated with their purchase.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual model tested.



Goals, identity and social functions of purchases and well-being

Buying has been often conceptualised as an identity-seeking strategy (Dittmar, Long, & Meek, 2004; Richins, 2011; Shrum et al., 2013; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981), and the extent to which a purchase enhances the identity of the buyer seems to be related to the well-being that individuals link to their purchases (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Moldes, Banerjee, et al., 2017; Thomas, 2010). A closer examination of the identity processes involved in consumption found that different identity-related functions (IRFs) that purchases might help to satisfy, such as acquiring individuality (*distinctiveness*), repairing a perceived identity deficit (*self-esteem*), or displaying an identity to others (*projected identity*), have differentiated effects on the perceived gain in well-being that consumers associate with their purchases (Moldes, Banerjee, et al., 2017). For example, the IRFs of distinctiveness and self-esteem positively predicted well-being whereas the function of projecting identity negatively predicted well-being.

The framework of IRFs emerged from extensive qualitative research that, through the use of interviews and focus groups, gathered the identity-related motivation and explicit reasons provided by participants to justify their buying behaviours and their selection of consumer products (Anderson, 2007; Dittmar, 1991; Dittmar, Beattie, & Friese, 1996; Dittmar & Drury, 2000). Therefore, following Bagozzi and Dholakia's hierarchy of goals (1999), IRFs could be considered focal goals as they are concrete objectives that individuals seek when buying consumer products. Furthermore, transforming one's sense of self through consumer products might be driven by intrinsic or extrinsic goals. For example, a purchase aiming to modify one's sense of self could be motivated by the extrinsic goals of pursuing an attractive appearance, but also by the intrinsic goal of self-growth, depending on whether the purchase modifies the external

aesthetics of the buyer or other internal aspects such as skills or expertise. As a result, it is possible that the gains in well-being from a purchase that satisfies certain IRFs might be influenced by the type of goal that the buyer is pursuing (see Figure 1.1). However, no prior research has explored the possible links between high-level goals, IRFs and well-being. Moreover, it is also possible that certain types of goals (intrinsic or extrinsic) might be associated with pursuing the satisfaction of specific IRFs through the purchase of consumer products. As a result, in exploring the influence of high-level goals on well-being in consumption, the incorporation of the framework of IRFs as mediators in the relationship between both might help to gain some further insight into the mixed results previously found in the literature when the links between goals, measured by MVO, and well-being have been examined; it is possible that high-level goals influence well-being only to the extent that a purchase satisfies certain identity functions.

In addition, when the links between the IRFs and well-being have been investigated in previous studies, the results have revealed different associations for the affective measure of happiness and for the cognitive measure of life satisfaction (Moldes, Banerjee, et al., 2017). While the associations between IRFs and life satisfaction were found to be consistent across studies, the links between the IRFs and happiness presented some differences across samples.

Nevertheless, goal-directed behaviours have been thought to have a direct effect on emotions (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2000) and therefore, perhaps the examination of goals might help to explain the variations found across samples in the associations between IRFs and the affective well-being measure of happiness.

Moreover, the function of social connection has also been found to be positively associated with well-being in consumption (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009; Thomas, 2010) and will be expected to be driven by the intrinsic goals of affiliation and/or belonging. As a result, the current study will also explore the links between the abstract superordinate goals held by consumers and the social and identity functions that a purchase satisfies, in order to gain further insights into the influence of individual goals on spending choices, identity and social functions of consumer products, and well-being.

The present study

The current research was designed to examine the role that personal life goals play in consumer spending choices and the well-being that consumers associate with their purchases in the context of a hypothetical windfall scenario, in order gain a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms that might drive consumption and its relationship to well-being.

We hypothesise that individual goals drive consumer spending choices and, therefore we would expect to find a link between extrinsic goals and material purchases and intrinsic goals and experiential purchases. To examine the role that goals might play in the relationship between consumer spending choices (*material* or *experiential* purchases) and the expected well-being that consumers associate with that purchase (distinguishing between happiness and life satisfaction), we will use the extrinsic goals of financial success, attractive appearance and social popularity, and the intrinsic goals of self-acceptance, affiliation and community feeling taken from goal content theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Moreover, the identity-related functions framework of *projected identity* (conspicuous consumption), *self-esteem* (identity repairing functions) and *distinctiveness* (the acquisition of individuality), adopted by

previous literature (Dittmar & Kapur, 2011; Moldes, Banerjee, et al., 2017), will be used for testing a possible mediation of IRFs on the link between high-level goals and well-being.¹⁰ In addition, as the function of *social connection* has been found to be a significant mediator between the type of purchase bought and the well-being associated with the purchase (Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell & Hill, 2009), this function will also be examined as a possible mediator between high-level goals and well-being.¹¹

Goals can function consciously and unconsciously and, when certain goals are activated, can affect a person's information processing (Huang & Bargh, 2014). Therefore, the present study will manipulate the activation of *extrinsic* versus *intrinsic* goals in order to examine the effect of making certain goals more salient on spending choices, identity and social functions, and the well-being evaluations that consumers assign to a selected purchase. Specifically, participants in the extrinsic condition will be primed with the goals of money, appearance, and social popularity, whereas those in the implicit condition will be primed with the goals of self-acceptance, affiliation and community feeling.

Finally, to discourage participants from describing consumer choices or allocations of money that were made before the *extrinsic* versus *intrinsic* induction, the current study will present a hypothetical windfall scenario in which an unexpected sum of money is given and they can freely allocate it to a new purchase of their choice.

¹⁰ The identity-related function of effectiveness, or gaining control over one's environment, was not included in the questionnaire, as only the IRFs that were hypothesised to be directly related to the extrinsic goals of financial success, attractive appearance and social popularity or the intrinsic goals of self-acceptance, affiliation or community feeling were added. Moreover, this function was not associated with material or experiential purchases in previous studies (Moldes, Banerjee, et al., 2017).

¹¹ The motive of symbolic interrelatedness was replaced by a measure of social connection because of the limited role that symbolic interrelatedness has shown play in well-being in previous studies (Moldes, Banerjee, et al., 2017).

Method

Design

Participants were randomly allocated to one of two conditions (intrinsic versus extrinsic prime) and presented with a questionnaire that included several psychological measures, a hypothetical windfall scenario and other demographic and control questions.

Sample

The final sample consisted of 201 participants after removing 10 participants from the original sample ($N = 211$) because of missing data on either the manipulation questions or the purchase description, or because they described a spending choice outside the given instructions (e.g. more than one item was described). The final sample consisted of 82.1% women ($n = 165$), with ages ranging from 18 to 56 ($M = 21.48$, $SD = 6.53$). Among respondents, 70.6% were British ($n = 142$), 15.42% came from another European country ($n = 31$), and 7.46% came from one of 13 different countries ($n = 15$). Moreover, 92.5% of the sample were students ($n = 186$) and 6% were full-time employees ($n = 12$).

Experimental conditions

Extrinsic priming. Participants allocated to the extrinsic condition were asked to think about and describe how they felt in three situations in which money, appearance and popularity played an important role in their life (see Appendix 6).

Intrinsic priming. Participants in the intrinsic condition were asked to think about and describe how they felt in three particular situations in which learning a new skill, helping or supporting others and close personal relationships played an important role in their life.

Measures

Subjective well-being. A 5-item scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) was used to measure the general well-being of participants (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$).

Aspiration Index. An 18-item scale (Kasser & Ryan, 1993) was used to measure the degree to which participants valued extrinsic goals (financial success, attractive appearance and social popularity) and intrinsic goals (self-acceptance, affiliation and community feeling) on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (very important). The statements from each of the six extrinsic and intrinsic life domains were averaged separately (extrinsic Cronbach $\alpha = .87$; intrinsic Cronbach $\alpha = .81$). A single score was calculated by subtracting the intrinsic items from the extrinsic score following procedures from previous studies using this measure (Sheldon & Kasser, 2008) in order to calculate the relative importance that participants pay to extrinsic goals (RE: Relative extrinsic; see Appendix 5).

Control measures. Participants were also asked to provide an estimation of the cost and the importance of the purchase described.

Expected happiness from a purchase. A single item (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) adapted to the hypothetical scenario was used to measure forecasted short-term positive emotions on a 9-point scale that ranged from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much): *“How happy do you think the purchase you would buy will make you?”*.

Expected life satisfaction from a purchase. A single item (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) was used to measure expected long-term positive effects from the future purchase on a 9-point scale that ranged from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much): *“How much do you think this purchase will increase your overall life satisfaction?”*.

Identity-related functions. The identity related functions of projected identity, distinctiveness and self-esteem were measured using 12 statements on a 6-point Likert-type scale. The items were adapted from Dittmar (2011) to fit the specific purchase (i.e.

“This purchase will give me prestige” or *“This purchase fits with who I am”* or *“This purchase will make me feel closer to my ideal self”*). Cronbach’s α ranged from .79 to .84.

Social connection. Three items, taken from Thomas and Millar (2013), were adapted to fit within the hypothetical scenario presented to measure interpersonal relationships. Participants were asked to rate on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (no time) to 9 (very much) how much time would be spent with another person in relation to the purchase, how much the purchase would foster a relationship with another person and how much the purchase would contribute to a conversation or a discussion with others (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$).

Emotional regulation. A 4-item measure of the function of emotional regulation that the purchase provided (i.e. *“This purchase will help me to escape feeling bad”* or *“This purchase will put me in a better mood”*) was administered in order to control for the effects of purchasing as a way to improve one’s mood or escape from aversive emotions (adapted from Dittmar & Kapur, 2011). Cronbach’s $\alpha = .66$.

Experiential rating. Using a one-item measure developed by Carter and Gilovich (2010), participants rated their described purchase on a 7-point bipolar scale ranging from 1 (definitely a material possession) to 7 (definitely an experience). In the question displayed to participants, material possessions were defined as “something one purchases to *have*” and experiential purchases as “something one purchases to *do*”.

Demographics. Measures of gender, age, socioeconomic status, disposable income, and nationality were taken at the end of the questionnaire.

Procedure and ethical issues

Participants were approached on campus or invited by email to take part in a 20-minute study involving a questionnaire in exchange for course credits (if they were

eligible) or a chance to win a £25 Amazon voucher. The online questionnaire was accessed by a link provided and could be completed from any device with internet access. All participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (*intrinsic* or *extrinsic*) by the survey host Qualtrics. After the priming task was completed, all participants were asked to fill in the psychological measures of subjective well-being and the aspiration index, and then were presented with a hypothetical windfall scenario. This procedure was chosen to allow participants to freely allocate an unexpected sum of money to minimise pre-conceived motivations of past purchase choices or previously planned ones. Participants were asked to imagine that they had won £300 that they could freely spend on one purchase. Participants were instructed to avoid choosing everyday expenses such as groceries, bills or commuting or saving the money (see Appendix 7). Then, the questions on well-being evaluations regarding their described purchase were presented along with the identity and social functions items. Finally, participants were asked the demographic questions, thanked and debriefed.

The study was approved by the Sciences & Technology Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee from the University in which the study was carried out and was conducted according to BPS/APA ethical guidelines.

Results

Manipulation check

To determine if the *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* manipulation (extrinsic $n = 94$; intrinsic $n = 107$) had any effect we carried out a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) comparing participants' scores on all variables collected in the study. This revealed no significant differences between the groups, $V = .07$, $F(18, 169) = .674$, $p = .833$. Follow-up univariate tests also indicated that there were no significant differences in subjective well-being (SWB), intrinsic or extrinsic goal orientations, the computed

variable of RE or any of the subscales from the aspiration index (which included personal growth, community, relationships, wealth, image and fame), the experiential rating variable, the identity or social functions tested (which included distinctiveness, self-esteem, projected identity and social connection), the control variable of emotional regulation, or in the dependent variables of happiness or life satisfaction (all $ps > .05$). Thus, the manipulation did not create any significant difference between conditions in any of the variables collected. However, we found substantial variation in the level of pre-existing extrinsic and intrinsic goals, and therefore analysed associations that these differences had with other variables, treating data from all respondents as a single group. The manipulation condition was always included as a control variable.

Preliminary analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlations were calculated for all study variables (see Table 2.1). The results showed that the variable measuring relative importance of extrinsic goals over intrinsic ones (RE) was negatively associated with both subjective well-being ($r = -.15$) and the experiential rating variable ($r = -.27$) but not with the variables measuring estimations of forecasted happiness or life satisfaction from the described purchase. Moreover, the measure of subjective well-being was not significantly associated with the happiness or life satisfaction that consumers linked to their purchases, suggesting that baseline well-being did not influence estimations of the purchase's well-being.

Table 2.1: Mean, standard deviations and correlations among the variables in the model collected ($n = 201$).

	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. SWB	5.65	1.29	.06	-.12	-.15*	.01	-.08	-.10	-.17*	-.11	.12	.00	-.01	.04	-.04	.04	-.04
2. Intrinsic	5.69	.69	-	.28**	-.35**	.06	.20**	.02	.10	-.03	.09	.19*	.08	.07	.15*	.18*	.13
3. Extrinsic	3.37	1.07		-	.80**	-.26**	.16*	.24**	.16*	.47**	-.10	.06	.13	.00	.22**	.05	-.12
4. Relative Extrinsic	-2.32	1.10			-	-.27**	.03	.22**	.10	.47**	-.16*	-.06	.08	-.04	.11	-.07	-.20**
5. Experiential Rating	4.97	2.37				-	.30**	.12	.23**	-.24**	.59**	.30**	.47**	.18**	.26**	.08	.11
6. Emotional Regulation	5.52	1.01					-	.54**	.64**	.19**	.28**	.53**	.55**	.10	.36**	.20**	-.06
7. Distinctiveness	4.41	1.35						-	.72**	.45**	.15*	.39**	.47**	.03	.34**	.05	.02
8. Self-Esteem	4.35	1.48							-	.39**	.16*	.34**	.53**	.07	.38**	.09	.01
9. Projected Identity	2.84	1.38								-	-.06	-.04	.06	-.05	.01	-.02	-.07
10. Relatedness	6.13	2.37									-	.35**	.36**	.17*	.31**	.10	.03
11. Expected Happiness	7.48	1.55										-	.62**	.16*	.63**	.19**	-.06
12. Expected Life Satisfaction	5.65	2.30											-	.10	.64**	.15*	-.21**
13. Cost	259.03	120.25												-	.08	.07	.02
14. Importance	5.79	2.33													-	.17*	-.11
15. Gender	1.84	.39														-	-.15*
16. Age	21.48	6.53															-

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

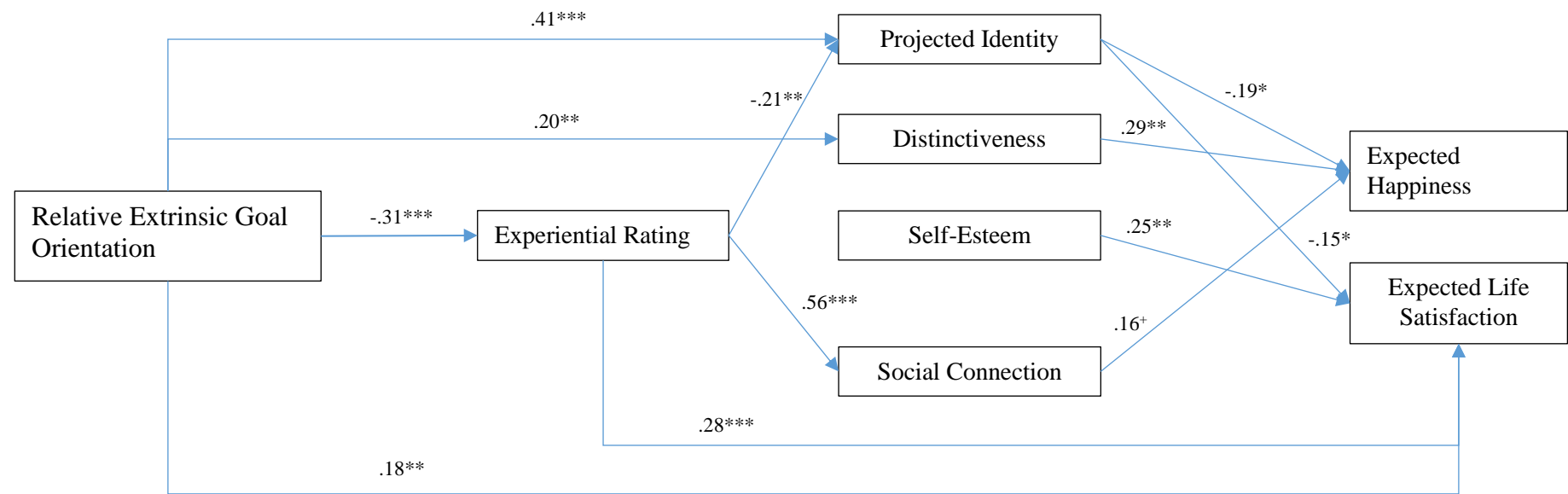
Data analyses

To examine the links between goal orientations and well-being evaluations from consumer choices, a path analysis model with the variables of expected happiness and life satisfaction as the dependent variables was carried out (see Figure 2.2). The model was built in Mplus 6 using the maximum likelihood estimation method. All of the predictor variables were centered before entering them in the model to aid the interpretation of the coefficients. The manipulation variable was covaried with all of the variables in the model to completely partial out any possible differences between the two conditions.¹² The function of emotional regulation was introduced as a control variable by allowing it to predict all variables in the model. We calculated 2,000 bootstrapped confidence intervals due to observed deviation from normality on some of the variables used in the model.

Goal orientations. The variable of (RE) negatively predicted the experiential rating variable, suggesting that more extrinsically goal-oriented participants selected purchases that were rated on the material side of the scale whereas more intrinsically goal-oriented participants selected purchases that were rated as more experiential (see Table 2.2). Moreover, RE positively predicted the identity-related functions of projected identity and distinctiveness, but was not significantly linked to self-esteem or social connection. In addition, RE positively predicted life satisfaction evaluations but was not related to happiness.

¹² We tested an alternative model, without the manipulation variable added as a covariate of the other variables. This revealed no variation in the significance of the paths tested.

Figure 2.2: Model tested from hypothetical windfall scenario ($n = 201$). Only significant paths are reported. The variable of emotional regulation was controlled by allowing them to predict each variable in the model and the manipulation variable was covariated to all variables in the model (not shown to aid clarity).



⁺ $p < .06$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.2: Unstandardized, standardized, significance levels and bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals for model reported in Figure 2.2 (standard errors in parenthesis; $n = 201$). Only significant or marginally significant paths and effects have been reported.

Parameter estimate	Unstandardized	Standardized	<i>p</i>	Bootstrapped 95% CI
RE → Experiential Rating	-.66 (.13)	-.31	<.001	-.91, -.40
RE → Projected Identity	.52 (.09)	.41	<.001	.34, .68
RE → Distinctiveness	.25 (.08)	.20	.002	.10, .42
RE → Expected Life Satisfaction	.38 (.13)	.18	.003	.12, .64
Experiential Rating → Projected Identity	-.12 (.05)	-.21	.006	-.22, -.04
Experiential Rating → Social Connection	.56 (.05)	.56	<.001	.45, .66
Experiential Rating → Expected Life Satisfaction	.27 (.07)	.28	<.001	.13, .41
Projected Identity → Expected Happiness	-.22 (.09)	-.19	.016	-.39, -.04
Distinctiveness → Expected Happiness	.33 (.10)	.29	.001	.11, .53
Social Connection → Expected Happiness	.11 (.06)	.16	.059	-.00, .22
Projected Identity → Expected Life Satisfaction	-.24 (.12)	-.15	.041	-.48, -.01
Self-Esteem → Expected Life Satisfaction	.49 (.13)	.25	.004	.13, .66
Indirect effects				
Experiential Rating → Projected Identity → Expected Happiness	.03 (.01)	.04	.062	.01, .06
Experiential Rating → Social Connection → Expected Happiness	.06 (.03)	.09	.067	.00, .13
RE → Distinctiveness → Expected Happiness	.08 (.04)	.06	.030	.03, .19
RE → Projected Identity → Expected Happiness	-.11 (.05)	-.08	.031	-.23, -.02
RE → Experiential Rating → Expected Life Satisfaction	-.18 (.06)	-.09	.003	-.32, -.08
RE → Projected Identity → Expected Life Satisfaction	-.13 (.06)	-.06	.050	-.26, -.01
RE → Experiential Rating → Projected Identity → Expected Happiness	-.02 (.01)	-.01	.088	-.05, -.01

Expected Happiness. Expected happiness from a purchase was positively predicted by the function of distinctiveness and negatively predicted by projected identity. Moreover, the function of social connection marginally predicted happiness evaluations. Two indirect effects were found from RE to happiness, via distinctiveness and projected identity, suggesting a full mediation of the buying motives concerning the link between RE and happiness, as there was no significant direct effect between the two variables. Higher RE predicted both IRFs of distinctiveness and projected identity, but distinctiveness positively predicted well-being, whereas projected identity negatively predicted well-being. Moreover, two marginally significant positive indirect effects were found from the experiential rating variable to happiness, via projected identity and social connection ($p = .062$ and $p = .067$ respectively), although neither of the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals crossed zero. Furthermore, there was a marginally significant negative indirect effect from RE to happiness via experiential rating and projected identity ($p = .088$), albeit the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals did not cross zero (see Table 2.2).¹³

Expected Life satisfaction. Expected life satisfaction from a purchase was positively predicted by self-esteem and negatively predicted by the function of projected identity. Moreover, life satisfaction was positively linked to the experiential rating variable and RE. However, the positive direct effect of RE on life satisfaction was almost suppressed by the two negative indirect effects found via experiential rating and the projected identity function, suggesting an inconsistent mediation (MacKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz, 2007).

¹³ Due to the observed deviation from normality in the variables of projected identity and social connection, the bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals are prioritised over the p value obtained from the sample for interpreting the effects of those functions in the outcome variable of happiness.

Discussion

The results from the analyses showed that an individual's goal orientations predicted consumer spending choices, providing empirical evidence confirming an association between high-level abstract goals and concrete individual consumer behaviours (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Huffman, Ratneshwar & Mick, 2000). Participants who placed greater importance on intrinsic goals selected purchases that were more experiential in nature, whereas participants favouring extrinsic goals selected more materialistic purchases. This association provides a theoretical explanation for previous findings that have suggested that consumer spending choices have an impact on well-being (e.g. Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Howell et al., 2012; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), as it shows that the selection of material or experiential purchases might be a consequence of the buyer's goals. Goal content theory postulates that the pursuit of the extrinsic goals of financial success, attractive appearance and social popularity leads to lower well-being because it might take away the resources needed to pursue the intrinsic goals of self-acceptance, affiliation or belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Therefore, if money is generally a limited resource, it is possible that the allocation of economic assets to material purchases might lessen the available resources to seek experiences, which have been found to better satisfy basic psychological needs (Howell & Hill, 2009).

Moreover, the link between goal orientations and well-being was fully mediated by the IRFs of distinctiveness and projected identity for happiness, whereas the direct effect of RE on life satisfaction was almost suppressed due to the inconsistent mediations found through the function of projected identity and the experiential-material rating of the purchase. When looking at the predictors of happiness, it is worth noting that both distinctiveness and projected identity were positively related to RE, suggesting that

more extrinsically-oriented individuals may seek purchases that satisfy the functions of displaying status and acquiring individuality. Nevertheless, each function had an opposite association with happiness as distinctiveness positively predicted happiness, whereas projected identity negatively predicted happiness and life satisfaction. These asymmetries in valence at predicting well-being between distinctiveness and projected identity might be explained by the differences in the identity construction processes provided by both functions. The function of projected identity is self-expressive as it measures the construction of an identity in the eyes of others (Dittmar, 2008) and thus involves seeking the external reward of social acceptance and status recognition. In contrast, distinctiveness is a self-defining function as it measures the extent to which a purchase provides individuality to the buyer, therefore brings internal meaning. As a result, drawing on self-determination theory (SDT) that distinguishes between extrinsic motivation, which seeks a separate outcome or reward from the behaviour, and intrinsic motivation, in which individuals act for autonomous reasons (Ryan & Deci, 2000), it is possible that the source that is intended to provide meaning to a purchase (self versus others) might influence the relationship between the identity provided by a purchase and the well-being gained.

Nevertheless, ironically, our results showed that extrinsically-oriented individuals expected higher well-being from their consumer products, as shown in previous results in the literature (see Millar & Thomas, 2009; Richins, 2013). There was a positive association between goal orientations and life satisfaction, indicating that more extrinsically-oriented individuals perceived higher gains on life satisfaction from their purchases. However, this effect was suppressed by the two indirect negative mediations found through the experiential rating and the projected identity function, suggesting that more extrinsically-oriented individuals were also more likely to buy

material items and purchases that satisfied the function of displaying wealth and status to others, and both behaviours had a negative impact on life satisfaction estimations. Therefore, this finding is consistent with the postulates of SDT that seeking extrinsic goals leads to lower well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

Likewise, the indirect effect found from goal orientations to happiness via the experiential rating variable and through the function of projected identity suggests that more extrinsically-oriented individuals gain less happiness from their purchases, as they tend to select material items that satisfy the function of projecting financial success and status. This indirect effect confirms again the postulates of goal content theory that the pursuit of financial and material goals leads to lower well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Overall, these mediation effects highlight the importance that the IRFs that a purchase provides to the buyer has for predicting well-being, supporting previous findings in the literature (Moldes, Banerjee, et al., 2017), as well as the importance that IRFs have in explaining the effect of goal orientations on well-being.

In addition, the results from the study replicated previous findings in the literature that suggest that the purchase of experiences leads to higher well-being (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), as experiential ratings were associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. However, the effect of experiential purchases on happiness was fully mediated by the identity and social functions that the purchase provided, highlighting once more the importance of the purchase identity and social functions to understand well-being in consumption. As expected, and replicating previous findings, material items were related to the function of projected identity whereas experiential purchases were associated with social connection and both functions fully mediated the relationship between what consumers intended to purchase (material or experiential items) and their happiness evaluations. Furthermore, the results from the analyses

reinforce the argument for a clear distinction between happiness and life satisfaction (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010), as each construct showed a different association with the IRFs and goal orientations, suggesting that they are independent constructs in the mind of individuals.

Limitations and further research

To sum up, the current study showed an association between goal orientations, consumer choices, identity-related functions and well-being, suggesting that spending money on material items (as opposed to experiential ones) may lead to lower levels of well-being as these purchases might be more likely to fulfil extrinsic goals that do not satisfy basic psychological needs. Notwithstanding these advances, future work in this area needs to address a number of limitations in the present methodology.

Unfortunately, the manipulation performed in this study did not prime an extrinsic versus intrinsic goal focus. This might be due to the design of the manipulation as participants were free to describe three experiences where either extrinsic goals - of financial success, attractive appearance or social popularity - or intrinsic ones - of self-acceptance, affiliation or community feeling - played an important role in their lives, giving them flexibility in the selection and interpretation of their life experiences. A preliminary content screening of the participants' responses revealed that some participants described situations in which money, appearance or social admiration enabled them to connect, belong or develop self-acceptance (e.g. money used to travel with a partner; a work uniform that promoted the feeling of being part of a team; friends praising the respondent personality and supportive nature). This type of manipulation was selected to ensure that participants engage with the task because the study was delivered online and, therefore the researcher had limited control over the conditions in which the study was completed. Nevertheless, other studies had successfully primed an

intrinsic vs. extrinsic goal orientation in a controlled environment by making participants read different texts (i.e. Ku & Zaroff, 2014) suggesting that different procedures should be used in future research. Moreover, we also acknowledge that the act of purchasing might be motivated by both *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* goals at the same time (e.g. a gym membership can be bought to fulfil *extrinsic* goals such as improving oneself appearance and, at the same time, to satisfy *intrinsic* goals such as developing one's sports abilities or meeting and relating to other people). Therefore, further research should investigate whether individuals have a relatively fixed predisposition to focus on certain types of goals over others when reflecting on their life experiences and spending behaviours or if there is some flexibility to frame a particular purchase (and life experience) in terms of helping them to achieve intrinsic or extrinsic goals and the effect that this framing might have on the possible subsequent perceived gains in well-being.

Furthermore, the current research examined the effect of individual goal orientations on the hypothetical allocation of money to a future material or experiential purchase, but it did not look at the specific goals that participants had in mind when they selected their purchase (e.g. "I will buy a smartphone to look cool" or "I will buy a smartphone to be connected to my friends and family") or whether their selected spending choices helped them to achieve, or move closer to the achievement, of their goals. Moreover, we acknowledge that the nature of the windfall experiment might not reflect natural allocations of money as the hypothetical scenario might be perceived as a gain and, therefore, "the pain of paying" has been removed (Carter & Gilovich, 2014) and that the outcome of the purchase, whether it turned as expected or not, has an important effect on the perceived well-being gained from a consumer product (Nicolao et al., 2009). Therefore, further research should use a longitudinal design to investigate

the effects of individual's concrete goals in the consumption of a specific consumer product and the perceived gains in well-being that are associated with their purchase following previous research on goals and well-being (e.g. Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004) in an applied consumer setting.

Along these lines, different types of high-level goals may not be uniformly attainable through consumption. For example, it may be the case that only certain goals can be achieved through spending money on consumer products (e.g. acquiring an attractive appearance by spending money on cosmetic surgery, a tanning treatment or fashionable clothing), and that other goals, such as personal growth, affiliation or belonging, might require an additional active engagement or the use of supplementary resources. For example, money might provide the necessary time or space to pursue intrinsic goals, such as a holiday with friends and family or the fees to enrol on a learning programme, but the purchase of the experience might not fulfil the goals of affiliation or self-development in itself. As a result, we wonder if it is not only the goal that is being pursued (*intrinsic* or *extrinsic*) that accounts for the individual differences in well-being, but whether the strategies used to achieve personal goals (e.g. spending money on consumer products, spending time or putting personal effort into the task) might also play a role in the relationship between goals and well-being. Perhaps individuals who pursue goals primarily by using money might not attain their desired outcomes and, therefore, their well-being might even decrease due to their frustration at not attaining its goal.

As a result, further research could look at how the strategies that people use to achieve a goal might moderate the relationship between the type of goal pursued and individual well-being. Further research could also investigate the influence of spending money on the attainment of different types of goals and whether the allocation of

economic resources could also serve as a motivating force for the individual to work towards the goal.

PAPER 3: Exploring the Link between Identity and Well-being: Self-defining versus Self-expressive Functions from Purchases

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Abstract

Buying can be a self-defining and self-expressive behaviour, as symbolic meanings of consumer products allow individuals to construct their extended sense of self as well as serve to communicate an identity to others. Past research into consumption has found that self-defining functions positively predict the well-being associated with a purchase, whereas self-expressive functions negatively predict well-being. These findings perhaps suggest that the need for external reward or recognition of self-expressive identity functions, as opposed to the internal motivation of self-defining purchases, might be driving the effects on well-being. Nevertheless, no prior research has manipulated the source that provides meaning to a purchase (*self* vs. *others*) to explore the link between identity construction processes and the hedonic value associated with a spending choice. The results from an experimental survey ($n = 296$), aiming to manipulate the perceived source that provides symbolic meaning to a purchase (self, others and control), suggested that when buyers explicitly reflected on the identity that a spending choice provided, their well-being estimations increased as the perceived satisfaction of the identity-related function of *self-esteem* was heightened. However, no differences between the source that provides meaning to a purchase (*self* vs. *others*) were found. Implications for future research on symbolic meaning and identity in consumption are discussed.

Key words: identity; consumption; well-being, self-defining function; self-expressive function

Introduction

The idea that “we are what we buy” is the basis of an extensive area of consumer psychology that grounds its research on the assumption that individuals actively engage in buying behaviours to transform, restore or expand their identity (Anderson, 2007; Claxton & Murray, 1994; Dittmar, 1991, 1992, 2011; Dittmar, Long, & Meek, 2004; Richins, 2011; Shrum et al., 2013). Consumers spend their money not only to meet their basic needs, but also to construct and express their identity through the uses of symbolic meanings associated with purchases (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001; Belk, 1989; Dittmar, 2008b; Elliott, 1997; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Richins, 1994; Schau & Gilly, 2003). The symbolic meanings of consumer products have been described as a source of value beyond practical utility or market demands because they communicate information about their owners and their social relationships and help them to construct their own identity (Richins, 1994). Moreover, marketers and advertisers make use of these symbolic meanings strategically to promote their brands and products and therefore create value for their consumers (Elliott, 1997; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998).

Nevertheless, individual spending behaviours and uses of symbolic meanings take place within social and cultural environments that shape meaning and significance to consumers through social cues. Therefore, symbolic meanings derived from consumer products have been conceptualised as being defined from two sources: self-symbolism, or private meaning, and social symbolism, or the creation of public meanings (Elliott, 1997; Richins, 1994). As a result, the act of buying has been described both as a self-defining and as a self-expressive behaviour (Schau & Gilly, 2003) because individuals can use products to construct and define their extended sense of self (Belk, 1989) and to communicate their identity to others (Dittmar, 2008). Therefore,

when exploring identity construction via consumption, we need to differentiate between buying as a *self-defining* behaviour, in which the aim of consumption is to construct or transform the internal sense of self of the buyer, and as a *self-expressing* behaviour, in which the aim is to construct or transform the identity the buyer presents to others.

Self-defining identity functions. Extensive qualitative research on identity and consumption has found several functions that a purchase can have in relation to the consumer's sense of self, including *distinctiveness*, conceptualised as the differentiation of the self as a unique entity, and *self-esteem*, or the attempt of the buyers to move closer to their ideal self and increase their self-worth (Anderson, 2007; Dittmar, 1989, 1991; Dittmar, Beattie, & Friese, 1996; Dittmar & Drury, 2000).¹⁴¹⁵ Both of these identity functions aim to transform the internal sense of identity and provide private meaning to the buyer.

Self-expressive identity functions. The self-expressive value of consumer products has often been linked in consumer psychology to “conspicuous consumption” or the function of displaying financial and social status through purchases (Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Dittmar, 2008a; Rochberg-Halton, 1984). Nevertheless, consumer products can not only project economic status, but they can also serve to communicate a desired identity to external observers (Dittmar, 2011). The identity-related function of *projected identity*, conceptualised by Dittmar (2008), measures the extent to which a purchase has been bought with the intention of constructing an image, displaying status and expressing symbolic meanings to external observers through consumer products.

¹⁴ The identity-related functions framework from Dittmar (2011) also includes the functions of effectiveness and relatedness. However, they have not been included in the current analyses as both functions involve active engagement of the buyer with the environment and, therefore, they might require external cues to provide meaning to the buyer (e.g. “This purchase helped me to gain control over my environment” or “Buying this made me think of people who I feel very close to”).

¹⁵ The function of distinctiveness has also been described as actual identity and the function of self-esteem as ideal identity functions in the original framework of identity-related functions from Dittmar (2011, p. 750).

Identity-related functions and well-being

A recent set of studies investigating the relationships between different spending choices, the identity-related functions (IRFs) that those purchases satisfied for the buyer, and the well-being associated with the purchase, has found that purchases bought with the intention of constructing an image in the eyes of others (*projected identity*) negatively predicted well-being (Moldes, Banerjee, Easterbrook, Harris, & Dittmar 2017; Moldes, Harris, Easterbrook, & Banerjee, 2017). However, purchases bought with the intention of self-defining the identity of the buyer (*distinctiveness* and *self-esteem*) positively predicted well-being. Furthermore, both functions of *distinctiveness* and *projected identity* were found to be more prominent among extrinsically-oriented individuals, who are orientated towards the goals of financial success, attractive appearance and social popularity rather than towards the intrinsic goals of self-acceptance, affiliation or community feeling. The authors of these studies suggested that the asymmetries found in valence between the self-defining and self-expressive identity functions when predicting well-being might be due to the source or agent that is intended to interpret or provide symbolic meaning to the purchase: self-expressive purchases or buying to communicate an identity to others might need an external observer to provide or validate the meaning, whereas purchasing with the intention of defining one's own identity, or self-defining buying, will provide internal meaning to the buyer without an external observer. Therefore, drawing on self-determination theory, which has conceptualised motivation as *intrinsic*, in which individuals perform an activity for internal an autonomous reason, or *extrinsic*, in which the acting behaviour is performed to attain a separable outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71), the authors hypothesised that lower well-being associated with self-expressive functions might be due to the extrinsic nature of the motivation to purchase. Nevertheless, a direct

manipulation of the source that provides meaning to a purchase (*self* vs. *other*) and its subsequent possible consequences on well-being were not explored. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of identity processes involved in consumption, a further exploration of self-defining and self-expressing identity processes and their possible effects on well-being is needed.

The present research

The present research aims to experimentally examine the differences found in well-being between self-defining and self-expressive identity-related functions to determine whether the source that provides meaning to a purchase might help explain the observed differences in well-being associated with purchases bought for self-expressive compared to self-defining reasons. Therefore, the present study aims to experimentally manipulate the source from which the meaning of a purchase would be primarily derived (*self* vs. *others*) without altering the typology or nature of a purchase. This will allow us to connect any possible changes in well-being with the perceived source that provides meaning and not to the selected spending choice. As a result, participants will be asked to freely select and describe a purchase before the manipulation and the subsequent questions related to their described spending choice are presented.

We expect that participants in the self-expressing condition, who will be asked to think about the identity that their selected purchase might project to an external observer, will provide lower estimations of well-being associated with their spending choice than participants in the control condition or the self-expressing condition, because the perceived source that provides meaning to the purchase is external to the buyer. On the other hand, we expect that participants in the self-defining condition, who have been asked to think about how a purchase will help them to define their own

identity, will provide higher levels of well-being associated with their selected purchase than will the participants in the other two conditions (control and self-expressing), as the perceived source that provides meaning to their spending choice will be internal.

Method

Design

The current online experiment first presented all participants with two psychological measures of life goals and subjective well-being followed by a hypothetical windfall scenario in which they were asked to think and describe one purchase to spend their extra money on. Subsequently, participants were randomly allocated to one of three conditions (self-defining, self-expressing or control) before completing several purchase-related measures and answering other demographic and control questions.

Sample

The final sample consisted of 296 participants, after removing 54 participants (15.43%) from the original sample ($N = 350$) because they described a spending choice outside the given instructions (e.g. more than one item was described, random words were typed in the space provided such as “fantastic”, or unspecific answers were given such as “on my children”). The final sample consisted of 76% women ($n = 225$); ages ranged from 18 to 88 ($M = 34.36$, $SD = 10.23$). Among respondents, 93.2% were British ($n = 275$), 4.1% came from another European country ($n = 12$), 2.7% came from one of four other countries ($n = 8$), and one participant typed his/her race in the space provided to write their nationality. Moreover, 43.2% of the sample were full-time employees ($n = 128$), 19.3% were part-time employees ($n = 57$), 9.5% were students ($n = 28$) and 31.1% selected the option of “other” and further described themselves as unemployed ($n = 19$), housewives ($n = 17$), retired ($n = 7$) or chronically ill or disabled ($n = 7$).

Experimental conditions

Buying as a self-defining behaviour. Participants ($n = 102$) allocated to the self-defining condition were asked to reflect upon, and write about, how their selected purchase might help them to understand or appreciate who they are and to describe how their choice might define who they are (see Appendix 8).

Buying as a self-expressive behaviour. Participants ($n = 93$) allocated to the self-expressive condition were asked to reflect upon, and write about, how their selected purchase might help other people to construct an image of who they are and to describe what that image might be.

Control. ($n = 101$) Participants in the control condition skipped to the purchase-related questions after the windfall scenario without any further reflections on their purchase choice.

Measures

Subjective well-being. Five items on a 7-point Likert-type scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) were used to measure the general well-being from participants (e.g. “*In most ways my life is close to my ideal*” or “*I am satisfied with my life*”; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$).

Aspiration Index. An 18-item scale (Kasser & Ryan, 1993) was used to measure the degree to which participants valued extrinsic goals (financial success, attractive appearance and social popularity) and intrinsic goals (self-acceptance, affiliation and community feeling) on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (very important) (see Appendix 5). The statements from each of the six extrinsic and intrinsic life domains were averaged separately (extrinsic Cronbach $\alpha = .86$; intrinsic Cronbach $\alpha = .77$). A single score was calculated by subtracting the intrinsic items from the extrinsic score, following procedures from previous studies that

have used this measure (Sheldon & Kasser, 2008), in order to calculate the relative importance of extrinsic goals (RE).

Control measure. Participants were asked to provide an estimation of the importance of the purchase described on a 9-point scale.

Expected happiness from a purchase. A single item (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) adapted to the hypothetical scenario was used to measure forecasted short-term positive emotions on a 9-point scale that ranged from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much): “*How happy do you think the purchase you would buy will make you?*”.

Expected life satisfaction from a purchase. A single item (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) was used to measure long-term positive effects from the future purchase on a 9-point scale that ranged from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much): “*How much do you think this purchase will increase your overall life satisfaction?*”.

Identity-related functions. The identity-related functions of *projected identity*, *distinctiveness* and *self-esteem* were measured by 12 statements on a 6-point Likert-type scale. The items were adapted from Dittmar (2011) to fit the specific purchase (e.g. “*I bought this purchase thinking about how others will see me*” or “*This purchase fits with who I am*”). Cronbach’s α ranged from .72 to .89.

Experiential rating. Using a one-item measure developed by Carter and Gilovich (2010), we asked participants to rate their described purchase on a 7-point bipolar scale ranging from 1 = “definitely a material possession” to 7 = “definitely an experience”. In the question displayed to participants, material possessions were defined as “something one purchases to *have*” and experiential purchases as “something one purchases to *do*”.

Demographics. Measures of gender, age, socioeconomic status, disposable income and nationality were taken at the end of the questionnaire.

Procedure and ethical issues

Participants were recruited through Prolific Academic, an online subject pool used by researchers for recruiting participants for online studies. The participation was limited to individuals over 18 years old and resident in the United Kingdom.

Participants were able to access the online survey hosted by Qualtrics, a survey host platform, through a link that was provided to them after they signed up for taking part through Prolific Academic in exchange for a small payment (£0.85). All participants were first presented with the psychological measures on subjective well-being and the aspirations index. Then, they were presented with a windfall scenario and were asked to imagine that they had won £300, which they could freely spend on one purchase. Participants were instructed to avoid choosing everyday expenses such as groceries, bills or commuting expenses or saving the money (see Appendix 7). After they described a particular purchase in which they would spend the fictitiously won money, they were randomly allocated to one of three conditions (*self-defining*, *self-expressive* or *control*). Then, the questions on happiness and life satisfaction estimations were presented along with the identity functions items related to their described purchase. Finally, participants were asked some demographic questions, thanked and debriefed.

The study was approved by the Sciences & Technology Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee from the University in which the study was carried out and was conducted according to BPS/APA ethical guidelines.

Results

Preliminary analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlations were calculated for all study variables collected in the study (see Table 3.1). The results revealed that the variable of relative extrinsic goal orientation (RE) was negatively associated with the experiential rating (r

= -.21) suggesting that participants who were more extrinsically-oriented selected purchases that were more material in nature. Moreover, the experiential rating variable was positively associated with the expected happiness and life satisfaction that participants estimated from their purchases ($r = .25$ and $r = .31$, respectively), suggesting that experiential purchases were associated with higher ratings on both well-being measures.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) testing whether participants differed in the psychological measures of RE and SWB that were collected before the manipulation revealed that there were no significant differences between the 3 conditions, $V = .94$, $F(4, 586) = 1.93$, $p = .105$. Separate univariate ANOVAs also indicated that there were no significant differences between the groups, $F(2, 293) = 2.17$, $p = .116$ for RE and $F(2, 293) = 1.77$, $p = .171$ for SWB.

A second MANOVA testing whether the different manipulations had an effect on the experiential rating and importance of the purchase revealed that there were significant differences between the three groups, $V = .04$, $F(4, 586) = 2.98$, $p = .024$. However, separate univariate ANOVAs on the dependent variables revealed no significant differences between the groups, $F(2, 293) = 2.54$, $p = .081$ for the experiential rating variable and $F(2, 293) = 2.17$, $p = .116$ for the variable measuring the importance of the purchase.

Table 3.1: Study 1. Mean, standard deviations and correlations among the variables in the study ($N = 296$).

	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Expected Happiness	7.79	1.35	.57**	.52**	.25**	-.13*	.12*	.43**	.46**	.31**	.50**	-.03	.15**
2. Expected Life satisfaction	6.59	1.98	-	.62**	.31**	-.06	.14*	.41**	.56**	.35**	.42**	.00	.09
3. Importance	6.49	1.86		-	.17**	-.02	.07	.36**	.42**	.23**	.37**	.09	.14*
4. Experiential Rating	4.86	2.25			-	-.21**	-.08	.19**	.29**	.58**	.29**	-.15**	.12*
5. RE	-2.43	1.20				-	.43**	.10	.07	-.01	-.02	-.13*	-.13*
6. Projected Identity	2.89	1.47					-	.46**	.47**	.12*	.25**	-.21**	-.03
7. Distinctiveness	4.53	1.20						-	.75**	.27**	.56**	-.07	.01
8. Self-esteem	4.63	1.55							-	.26**	.60**	-.11	.10
9. Social Connection	6.24	2.43								-	.34**	-.17**	.08
10. Emotional Regulation	5.57	1.00									-	-.06	.12*
11. Age	34.36	10.23										-	.00
12. Gender	1.76	.43											-

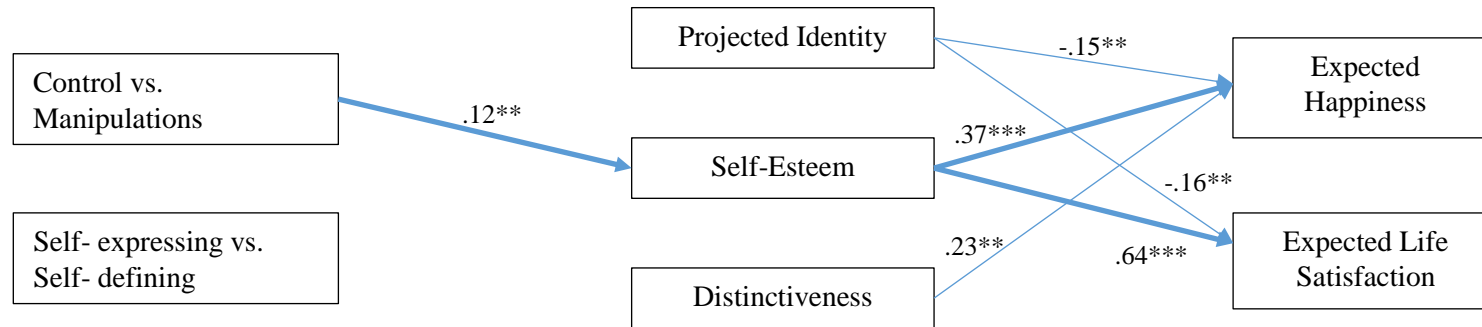
**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Data analysis

In order to test whether there were any differences between self-defining, self-expressive and control conditions in identity-related functions (IRFs) and the expected well-being associated with the described purchase (henceforth labelled as “well-being”), a path analysis was specified in Mplus 6 using the maximum likelihood estimation method.¹⁶ The variables of projected identity, self-esteem and distinctiveness were centred before entering them in the model to aid the interpretation of the coefficients. We also computed 2,000 bootstrapped confidence intervals due to observed deviation from normality on some of the variables used in the model. To be able to compare the scores given by participants on IRFs and well-being between the three conditions, two contrasts were computed and included as independent predictors in the model. The first contrast compared participants in the control condition with participants in the other two conditions. Participants in the control condition were assigned a value of -2, whereas a value of +1 was assigned to all participants completing one of the two manipulations. A second contrast variable was coded to compare the self-defining and self-expressing conditions against each other. Consequently, participants in the self-defining condition were assigned a value of -1, participants in the self-expressive condition a value of +1 and participants in the control condition a value of 0 (see Figure 3.1 and Table 3.2).

¹⁶ An alternative model controlling for the experiential rating and purchase importance were carried out. However, there were no significant differences in predicting the outcome variables and, therefore, the variables of experiential rating and importance were removed from the final analyses to increase the power of the sample and achieve parsimony.

Figure 3.1: Self-expressing, self-defining and control condition comparisons ($n = 296$). Standardized estimates are reported. Only significant paths are displayed.



* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3.2: Unstandardized, standardized, significance levels and bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals for model reported in Figure 3.1 (standard errors in parenthesis; $n = 296$). Only significant or marginally significant paths and effects have been reported.

Parameter estimate	Unstandardized	Standardized	<i>p</i>	Bootstrapped 95% CI
Control vs. Manipulation → Self-esteem	.14 (.06)	.13	.033	.02, .27
Projected Identity → Expected Happiness	-.14 (.05)	-.15	.004	-.24, -.05
Self-esteem → Expected Happiness	.32 (.07)	.37	>.001	.18, .47
Distinctiveness → Expected Happiness	.26 (.09)	.23	.006	.07, .44
Projected Identity → Expected Life Satisfaction	-.22 (.07)	-.16	.002	-.36, -.08
Self-esteem → Expected Life Satisfaction	.81 (.11)	.64	>.001	.58, 1.02
Indirect effects				
Control vs. Manipulation → Self-esteem → Expected Happiness	.04 (.02)	.05	.054	.00, .01
Control vs. Manipulation → Self-esteem → Expected Life Satisfaction	.11 (.06)	.08	.042	.02, .23

Identity-related functions. The results from the path analysis showed that only the function of self-esteem was positively predicted by the first dummy variable, suggesting that participants who reflected on their purchase reported higher levels of self-esteem associated with their spending choice compared to those in the control condition.

Expected happiness from a purchase. The IRFs of self-esteem and distinctiveness positively predicted the dependent variable of happiness, whereas the function of projected identity negatively predicted happiness.

Expected life satisfaction from a purchase. Life satisfaction was positively predicted by the identity function of self-esteem and negatively by projected identity.

Indirect effects. There was a significant indirect effect from the contrast variable comparing the control against the two manipulations to the dependent variable of expected happiness via self-esteem. Moreover, there was also a significant indirect effect from the same contrast variable to the dependent variable of expected life satisfaction via self-esteem.

Discussion

Past literature on symbolic meanings of consumer products has made a distinction between private and public symbolic meanings and between self-defining and self-expressing buying behaviours (Elliot, 1997; Richins, 1994; Schau & Gilly, 2003). Moreover, recent research has found that self-expressing and self-defining identity functions are differentially related to levels of well-being associated with purchases (Moldes, Banerjee et al., 2017; Moldes, Harris et al., 2017). However, no previous studies have experimentally manipulated the perceived source that provides meaning to a purchase (*self* vs. *others*), or its possible effects on the hedonic value that consumers associate with their spending choices.

The results from the analyses suggest that participants' scores on well-being were not affected by whether the perceived source that provided meaning to their selected purchase was external or internal. Nevertheless, the act of reflecting on the meaning and identity that their prospective purchase provided them increased their perception of the satisfaction of the identity-related function of self-esteem: participants in both the self-expressive and self-defining conditions reported higher levels of self-esteem than participants in the control condition. These results suggest that explicitly reflecting on the identity that a purchase might provide leads to an increase in the perception that the spending choice will help the buyer to achieve their desired identity, which is ultimately positively associated with the expected well-being from the purchase. Therefore, this finding confirms the link between identity and well-being judgements in consumption suggested by previous literature (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Guevarra & Howell, 2014; Thomas, 2010). Moreover, it also confirms that the symbolic meaning of a purchase is a source of value to the buyer (Richins, 1994) because reflecting on the identity-related meaning of the selected purchase was ultimately associated with higher hedonic value linked to the spending choice because the perception of the satisfaction of the identity motive of self-esteem increased.

In addition, the results from the study also replicated the finding that the function of *projected identity* negatively predicts the well-being associated with a purchase whereas the identity functions of *self-esteem* and *distinctiveness* positively predict well-being (Moldes, Banerjee et al., 2017; Moldes, Harris et al., 2017). Nevertheless, there were no differences between the intended manipulation of the self-expressive and self-defining functions that was done by making salient the perceived source that provides meaning to a selected spending choice (*self* vs. *other*).

Overall, these results confirm a link between identity and well-being as when individuals were asked to explicitly reflect on the identity that a spending choice would provide them they enhanced the satisfaction of the identity motive of self-esteem that was also positively associated with higher expected well-being.

Limitations and further research

In this study, we attempted to manipulate the function that a purchase provides to the buyer as either self-defining or self-expressing by making salient the source that would provide meaning to the consumer (*self* vs. *others*). We did not manipulate the intended function of the purchase because we wanted to control for the nature or type of purchase (material or experiential). However, it is possible that the functions of self-defining and self-expressing might be inherently bound up with certain types of consumer products and, therefore, might not be easily manipulated by shifting the perceived source that provides meaning. For example, entertainment products, such as personal music or a one-player video game, are generally consumed in most cases exclusively by the buyer and thus might not explicitly display their identity to others. On the other hand, clothes, jewellery or other fashion accessories might be more prone to be bought with a self-presentation intention in mind. As a result, future research could explore whether there are differences in the type of purchase described when participants are specifically asked to spend money either to self-define or to self-express their identity.

Moreover, it is possible that the identity that consumers think others will infer from their spending choices might be the same or very similar to the identity that they would infer themselves (e.g. “buying sports equipment will make me perceive myself as more athletic and healthy” vs. “buying sports equipment will make other people see me as an athletic and healthy individual”). Hence, it is possible that, for new prospective

purchases that have no memories attached to them or that do not relate to other prior events or personal relationships, the private symbolic meaning associated with the purchase might be very similar to the consumer's perceived public symbolic meaning. As a result, further research could explore whether private symbolic meanings of consumer products differ from perceived public or social meanings.

Furthermore, who we are, or our own sense of self, is formed through the interactions that we have with other people (Srivastava, 2012). Other people's impressions of oneself will affect our own self-representation and, at the same time, our own self-representation would lead to self-present ourselves to others in certain ways. Therefore, self-presenting acts might also be self-defining behaviours in nature, and vice versa. As a result, perhaps the identity processes of self-defining and self-presenting cannot be easily disentangled and might work in a constant feedback loop being intrinsically linked to one another. Future research could explore how self-defining and self-expressing identity functions are related to each other or might work in parallel.

In summary, the present study revealed that reflecting on the identity that a consumer product provides led to an enhancement in the perception that the purchase will move the buyer closer to a desired identity and, as a result, this increased the well-being expected to be obtained from the purchase.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary of the findings

The present set of studies was designed to investigate the psychological processes involved in everyday consumer behaviours by evaluating hypotheses about the perceived gain in well-being associated with or attached to a material or experiential purchase. The programme of empirical work focused in particular on several identity- and goal-related factors involved in consumption. Four empirical studies provided evidence that the construction of the extended sense of self (paper 1), individual goal orientations (paper 2) and reflections on the meaning of a purchase (paper 3) play an important role in consumers' well-being judgements associated with spending choices.

The first study (paper 1) of this PhD thesis suggests that the transformation that purchases bring to the extended sense of self mediates the relationship between the type of consumer product that is bought (material or experiential) and the well-being associated with the product. The second study (paper 1) confirmed this mediation and revealed that the associations between the type of purchase bought, the identity-related function (IRF) that the purchase satisfied and well-being are largely stable over time. In both studies the IRFs of projected identity, self-esteem and effectiveness were found to be important predictors of well-being associated with a purchase. However, the second study also revealed that the qualities of distinctiveness and relatedness that a purchase provides to the buyer were found to be especially important when looking back on a past spending choice, suggesting that the construction of identity through consumer products might differ between future-focused (forecasting) and past-focused (retrospective) judgements.

The third study (paper 2) supported the model tested in the first two studies: specifically, the functions of projected identity and self-esteem were confirmed to be

significant predictors of well-being. It also demonstrated the relevance of goal orientations as a predictor of both spending choices and IRFs. The results suggested that extrinsically-oriented individuals are more likely to select material purchases and to make spending choices that provide a higher satisfaction of the IRFs of projected identity and distinctiveness. This opens the possibility to provide a theoretically-driven explanation for previous results within the science of spending literature, suggesting that that goal orientations may drive spending choices and influence the IRFs that individuals seek to satisfy when they spend money. Nevertheless, the unsuccessful manipulation of goal orientations lessened the power to establish a causal relationship between goal orientations and spending behaviours and suggested that further experimental research should explore this link further.

Finally, the fourth study (paper 3) revealed that reflecting on the identity that a spending choice might provide to the buyer enhances the well-being that consumers associate with that purchase. However, this effect was mediated by the IRF of self-esteem, suggesting that when consumers think about how a purchase might contribute to their identity, they heighten how their spending choice will contribute to the attainment of a desired identity rather than how it might reflect their current identity.

Overall theoretical significance

Examples of discourse in popular culture such as the American Dream (e.g. Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996) and other well-known “rags-to-riches” tales hold an implicit positive association between money and happiness. This in turn is likely to promote aspirations to increase wealth as a way to improve individual well-being. However, an extensive body of literature on materialistic values suggests that holding a belief that wealth and possessions define success and provide happiness is associated with lower well-being (Dittmar, Bond, et al., 2014). Moreover, in the current western

consumer culture, marketing and advertising messages promise the delivery of happiness in the form of consumer products promoting the idea of spending money in exchange for well-being. Nevertheless, recent empirical studies have suggested that some spending choices might bring more happiness than others and have in particular favoured spending money on experiences (as opposed to material items) to increase or maximise one's well-being (Nicolao et al., 2009; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

The current research, drawing on previous literature on materialistic values and well-being, as well as on consumer spending choices and happiness, has examined the attribution of hedonic value to consumer products by exploring identity and motivation processes that are involved in consumption. The topic was approached through two complementary theoretical frameworks, motivated identity construction theory (MICT) and self-determination theory (SDT). MICT suggests that the satisfaction of identity motives, including self-esteem, distinctiveness or effectiveness, enhances individual well-being (Vignoles, 2011), whereas SDT postulates that pursuing extrinsic goals leads to lower well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The current thesis suggests that it might not be so much what consumers buy (material or experiential purchases), but how the consumer products are thought to transform or enhance one's extended sense of self (IRFs) as well as individuals' goal orientations (intrinsic or extrinsic goals) that helps to predict the well-being estimations that consumers associate with their purchase. As a result, the present thesis contributes to the literature on material and experiential consumption by providing a theoretically-driven explanation for the differences in well-being found between the two purchase types in previous studies. Specifically, the results suggest that identity processes mediate this relationship and that goal orientations predict both those identity processes and the initial choice of spending behaviour (i.e. selecting a material versus an experiential purchase).

Moreover, the current set of empirical studies provides a preliminary further behavioural explanation for the extended body of literature that has found a negative relationship between extrinsic goals, often measured by materialistic value orientations, and well-being (e.g. Dittmar, Bond et al., 2014) by highlighting the possible role that the allocation of individual resources, in this case spending choices, might be playing in this relationship. Notably, it fills in the gap between high-level abstract goals and values and variations in individual well-being by suggesting that extrinsically-oriented individuals might be less happy than intrinsically oriented people at least partly because they are more likely to spend their money on material items that satisfy the status-related identity function of projected identity. In fact, this function of projected identity was consistently found to be a significant mediator in the relationship between the type of purchase bought (material or experiential) and the well-being estimated by the consumer, with evidence that material items are more likely to be bought for projecting a certain image and status to others and, consequently, material purchases provide less hedonic value to the buyer. This function was also found to be more prominent in individuals who were more extrinsically oriented in general, suggesting that personal goals and values could motivate the search for the satisfaction of certain identity motives over others in consumption. These results support and add explanatory value to the postulates of SDT that claim that the pursuit of the extrinsic goals of wealth, fame and image lead to lower well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

In contrast, the function of making gains in self-esteem, by moving closer to an ideal self, was also a consistent and prominent predictor of life satisfaction associated with a purchase across the four studies included in this thesis. In fact, this function was found to increase when participants were explicitly asked to reflect on the identity that their purchase would provide for them. In turn, this led to an enhancement of the

expected well-being gained from the consumer product, thus revealing the influence of such reflections on well-being via the function of self-esteem. This finding suggests that when people think about the identity that a prospect purchase will provide them, they seem to reflect on how their spending choice would move them closer to their idealised identity, or “who they want to be”, rather than on how their purchase might reflect their actual identity, or “who they are”. Furthermore, the association between the function of self-esteem and life satisfaction (studies 1, 2 and 3) as well as the path from self-esteem to both measures of well-being (study 4) confirms the postulates of MICT that the satisfaction of the identity motive of self-esteem brings positive benefits for well-being (Vignoles, 2011), as well as propositions within SDT that seeking self-growth or self-development enhances perceived well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Finally, the function of effectiveness positively predicted life satisfaction in the two studies it was included in, and the function of distinctiveness positively predicted the affective measure of happiness in three of the four studies included in this PhD. These positive associations also support the postulates of MICT, suggesting that the satisfaction of identity motives has positive benefits for well-being (Vignoles, 2011). Moreover, the positive association between the IRF of effectiveness and life satisfaction suggests that a perceived enhancement of the sense of competence that a purchase provides to the buyer is associated with expected gains in life satisfaction. This finding also confirms the postulates of SDT that the basic psychological need for competence, which leads people to seek the maintenance and enhancement of a sense of confidence and effectiveness in the interactions with their environment, is associated with well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Furthermore, past research in consumer behaviour has highlighted the need for seeking uniqueness as an important factor for understanding consumer choices (Lynn & Harris, 1997). Uniqueness theory postulates that individuals

seek to perceive themselves as having an optimal level of distinctiveness from others (not too highly similar or dissimilar from other people) for obtaining emotional gratification because high or low levels of distinctiveness might actually arouse negative emotions (Lynn & Snyder, 2002, p. 396). Therefore, the variability found across the studies included in this thesis in the relationship between the IRF of distinctiveness and happiness could suggest that it is possible that the level of satisfaction of this function might moderate the relationships between distinctiveness and happiness.

Specific theoretical implications

The results from the current set of studies present several implications for our conceptualisations and theoretical understanding of consumer behaviour and motivation. First, the empirical chapters included in this thesis unpacked the different aspects of the buyer's identity that consumer products enhance or modify (e.g. distinctiveness, self-esteem or effectiveness) and its different associations with happiness and life satisfaction. Therefore, the results highlight the importance of distinguishing which parts of the extended sense of self of the buyer are being examined as each identity function had different links to happiness and life satisfaction. As a result, future theoretical approaches to consumption should approach identity by unfolding its different elements as opposed to current approaches that have aggregated several components (e.g. Donnelly et al., 2013) or have measured only one unified construct (e.g. Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Guevarra & Howell, 2014; Kim, Seto, Christy, & Hicks, 2016; Thomas, 2010). Separating the IRFs that a consumer product might satisfy will provide a better insight into processes such as decision making or attitude formation.

Moreover, the results from the second study showed changes over time in the IRFs that a purchase satisfied, in particular highlighting variations in the roles played by distinctiveness (acquiring individuality) and relatedness (symbolising an affiliation with close others or the belongingness to a social group). These results suggest that future theoretical approaches to identity and well-being in consumption should also examine forecasted identity construction processes to gain a deeper understanding of the identity processes involved in consumption because past research has been limited to retrospective identity construction processes (Carter & Gilovich, 2012).

Furthermore, the current research suggests that goal orientations may play a key role in consumer spending choices. These results suggest that conceptual frameworks concerning consumer behaviour should incorporate the buyer's motivation when exploring decision-making processes in consumption and well-being. This would represent a substantial step forward from previous research that has been limited to the examination of the links between consumer behaviours and well-being outcomes (e.g. Van Boven, 2003). At the same time, domain-general theoretical work on goals, values and well-being (e.g. Dittmar, et al., 2014; Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004) is likely to benefit from an incorporation of concrete behaviours concerning the allocation of individual resources (i.e. spending money on certain products or spending time on certain activities), because the present results demonstrate that such behaviours serve as a mediator in the relationship between goals pursued, values held and well-being experienced.

Extending this theoretical work even further, the present results indicated that individual differences in goal orientations predicted variations in the satisfaction of the IRFs associated with consumer products, suggesting that different goals and values might lead to distinctive needs in the satisfaction of identity motives. Therefore, future

theoretical expansions of MICT could look at possible links between goals and values as this might help deliver a deeper understanding of the individual differences in motive strength and satisfaction previously found in the identity motives literature (Vignoles, 2011). MICT suggests that identity motives might be the result of cultural adaptations to human concerns about social organisation and/or the meaning of existence (Vignoles, 2011, p. 405), thus acknowledging a socially constructed component as the origin of the identity motives. The current results suggest that certain goals and values might be associated with certain ways of seeing oneself, and hence lead individuals to pursue the satisfaction of specific identity motives over others through particular behaviours, such as spending money on consumer products. For example, the results from the analyses included in paper 2 suggested that extrinsically-oriented individuals were more likely to select purchases that satisfy the identity motive of distinctiveness. Therefore, the present empirical findings suggest that it is possible that the internalisation of social goals and values might be the source that drives individuals to the satisfaction of certain identity motives through specific behaviours.

In addition, the construct of identity has been conceptualised as the answer that individuals give to the question who are you? (Vignoles, in press). Nevertheless, the results from the current set of studies highlighted the way in which the function of self-esteem, understood as how the purchase helps the consumer to move closer to a desired identity, has a prominent role in predicting well-being from consumer products. Therefore, perhaps in the applied setting of consumption, identity should be examined as the answer that individuals give to the question who do you want to be? Evidently, idealised identities might be more relevant at motivating spending behaviours than actual or current identities. As a result, it is possible that when the construct of identity

is applied to a specific context, in this case consumption, its conceptualisation might shift from the general understanding of identity.

Furthermore, the results from the final study suggest that the identity-related meaning of a consumer product plays an important role in the well-being associated with a purchase. Therefore, it was found that reflecting on the identity-related meaning that a spending choice provides enhances the perceived well-being associated with a purchase, suggesting a causal link between identity-related meaning and well-being. Moreover, symbolic meanings of consumer purchases have been conceptualised as a source of value to consumers (i.e. Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001; Elliott, 1997; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Richins, 1994). Nevertheless, the identity motive of meaning, listed in MICT (Vignoles, 2011) is not currently included in the applied IRFs framework (Dittmar, 2011). Therefore, the role of this motive should be examined further in future approaches to identity, consumption and well-being as the current results suggest a link between meaning and expected well-being from a consumer product.

Finally, the results from the four empirical studies included in this thesis suggest a need to distinguish between the well-being construct of happiness (as a measure of positive emotions associated with a purchase) and life satisfaction (as a cognitive evaluation of how a purchase might improve one's life in general) in the context of consumer behaviour. Different identity motives and goals had a different relationship with each of the two measures. For example, the IRF of self-esteem was a consistent significant predictor of life satisfaction, whereas the IRF of distinctiveness predicted happiness. These findings support previous literature that advocates a distinction between cognitive and affective measures when examining well-being (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). As a result, future

theoretical approaches should differentiate affective and cognitive components when measuring well-being in consumption as opposed to current approaches that have aggregated happiness and life satisfaction as one well-being construct (i.e. Millar & Thomas, 2009; Nicolao et al., 2009).

Practical implications

Previous work within the science of spending has highlighted the practical applications of the work at the individual level by prescribing recommendations derived from their results to consumers to maximise their happiness (e.g. buy experiences instead of material items or spend money on others as opposed to spending it on oneself). In contrast, rather than making a prescriptive set of recommendations for consumers, the current set of studies provides more emphasis on the goals, values and IRFs that play a role in the attributions of well-being to consumer products. Therefore, the practical implications from this research programme come from reflective exercises and possible interventions on consumer spending behaviours, goals pursued and identity motives aimed to be satisfied by buyers rather than on a fixed set of prescriptive recommendations for consumers for maximising their well-being through consumption. As a result, practical applications from the current set of studies might be best developed in the form of seminars or workshops for the general population for inducing introspective reflections on buying behaviours and spending choices in order to gain a deeper understanding of their personal goals and identity motives pursued in consumption. Furthermore, the current research could also be used for the development of interventions such as cognitive-behavioural therapy used in the treatment of compulsive buying disorders (see, e.g. Mueller, Mueller et al., 2008; Kellett & Bolton, 2009).

Limitations of the empirical studies

There are a number of limitations to the present research that need to be acknowledged, beyond those already mentioned in the previous empirical chapters. First, the current set of studies used explicit measures of well-being associated with a purchase. Nevertheless, it is possible that explicit questions regarding well-being expected or perceived from a purchase might be an implicit measure of subjective beliefs about the attainment of well-being through consumption. Therefore, further research should explore the development of alternative implicit measures of well-being in consumption, such as behavioural measures, or specific outcomes on health, social or self-development obtained from a purchase that might be reported and/or observed (e.g. time spent on exercise after buying a gym membership or sports equipment; improvement in social and personal relationships after purchasing a mobile phone; development of skills or learning after the purchase of a computer device). The adoption of implicit measures in the study of consumer choices and preferences has been already implemented in well-being and consumption research. For example, Mogilner, Aaker and Kamvar (2012) presented participants at the end of an experiment with the choice of having an exciting or a calming tea as a reward for their participation when examining the relationship between temporal focus and happiness associations with the feelings of excitement or calmness. Furthermore, a preliminary study on IRFs and well-being in consumption gave participants the choice at the end of a survey of entering in a prize draw for either a voucher from an online retailer of consumer goods or a voucher for the same amount to be spent on restaurants and entertainment activities in the city in which the research was conducted to measure experiential or material purchases preferences (Moldes, 2014). Nevertheless, no implicit measures of well-being associated with a

purchase have been developed to replace the explicit questions on happiness or life satisfaction used within the science of spending literature.

Furthermore, as mentioned in previous chapters, the current set of studies collected either well-being evaluations in the present moment from a past purchase (studies 1 and 2) (“When you think about your purchase now, how happy does it make you?”) or forecasted well-being judgements (“How happy do you think it will make you?”) (studies 1, 2, 3 and 4). Nevertheless, buying is a continuous process (Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Howell & Guevarra, 2013) and previous research collecting measures at more than one point in time has found that emotions evoked by a purchase as well as satisfaction with a product can change in complex ways over time (Nicolao et al., 2009; Richins, 2013). Therefore, further research could explore alternative ways of collecting well-being measures associated with a purchase at different points in time, such as using diaries or smartphone applications, consistent with studies of emotions and well-being in other domains (e.g. Killingsworth & Gilber, 2010; Miron-Shatz, Stone & Kahneman, 2009).

Moreover, the quantitative measure of projected identity included in the previous set of studies was found to have a mean below the midpoint of the 7-point Likert-type scale that went from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. This suggests that the scale might be measuring disagreement with the statements rather than agreement. In addition, the four items measuring this construct captured not only the construction of identity in the eyes of others (“I will buy this purchase thinking about how others will see me” and “I will buy this purchase to impress other people”) but also the extent to which the purchase displayed status (“This purchase will give me prestige” and “Buying this purchase gave me great social status”). Nevertheless, it is possible that the aim of constructing an image in the eyes of others might work independently from

displaying status through consumer products. As a result, future research could explore alternative ways of measuring projected identity by splitting the two components of the measure and/or providing open questions about identity such as “what image do you think that your spending choice might display to others?”

Furthermore, the current research collected a quantitative measure of the IRFs before and after a purchase was made (paper 1), rather than exploring differences in how individuals might integrate consumer products within their sense of self over time. For instance, if individuals construct their future identity by considering different sets of positive and negative identities (Oyserman & James, 2011), it is possible that when a future purchase is being evaluated consumers might contemplate how the future spending choice might contribute to self-defined or self-expressed positive or negative identities. Nevertheless, past research on identity and consumption has only looked at retrospective identity evaluations (Carter & Gilovich, 2012) following current theoretical approaches that suggest that individuals construct their identity by creating a narrative to incorporate past events (McAdams, 2011). Therefore, further research could look at possible differences in the processes of integrating a spending choice within the consumer’s sense of self between past and future purchases.

In addition, the current research was not able to successfully manipulate goal orientations before a purchase was selected. However, previous studies have successfully framed the outcomes of a particular behaviour as extrinsic or intrinsic (e.g. Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). Therefore, future research could look at framing the benefits of a purchase as intrinsic or extrinsic by making certain attributes or outcomes salient over others. For example, framing the benefits of a purchase as extrinsic could be: “This purchase will make you look more attractive”; as opposed to an intrinsic frame: “This purchase will help you to self-develop your potential”. Another example to frame a

specific purchase such as a mobile phone as extrinsic could be: “This phone will help you to be informed about the latest trends and gain popularity in the online media”; as opposed to an intrinsic frame: “This phone will help you to be connected to your loved ones and feel part of the online community”. An extrinsic versus an intrinsic framing design would help to assess causality and therefore, to explore the effects of goal orientation on well-being expected from a purchase.

Furthermore, the current research programme looked at associations between spending choices, the IRFs satisfied by the purchase, and the perceived or expected well-being obtained. However, the IRFs that a purchase might satisfy were not manipulated and, therefore, causality between the IRFs and well-being was not inferred. Indeed, the results from the studies found that some IRFs were linked to certain spending choices. For example, the IRF of projected identity was better satisfied by material items and the IRF of relatedness by experiential purchases. Therefore, by attempting to alter the IRFs it is likely that the purchase selection might also have been affected (e.g. if participants are asked to describe a spending choice that provided them with relatedness they will be more likely to describe an experience). However, further research should examine alternative designs allowing the exploration of causality between the satisfaction of IRFs and the well-being associated with a purchase by, for example, framing a concrete purchase as either providing self-esteem or not (e.g. “This purchase will move you closer to your ideal self” versus “This purchase will move you further from your ideal self”). Nevertheless, the results from the fourth study included in this thesis demonstrated that manipulating identity in a consumer setting is a complex task and, therefore, limited results might be obtained.

Finally, there are a number of variables that were not collected or examined that could have affected the relationships found in this set of empirical studies. For example,

Thomas (2010) found socioeconomic status (SES) moderated the relationship between purchase type (material or experiential) and happiness, as participants in the lower bounds of SES reported higher levels of happiness for material items than for experiential purchases, whereas the pattern for participants in the higher bounds of SES was reversed. However, the present research did not examine the effect of SES on the relationships between goals, spending choices, IRFs and well-being. Furthermore, if the desire to construct an idealised identity is influenced by the media (Dittmar, 2008), it is possible that individual differences in exposure to advertisements and/or social media might increase the need to satisfy certain IRFs, such as self-esteem, through consumption, or it is possible that the well-being expected to be obtained from consumer products might be also heightened. As a result, further research should look at the effects of economic and social environments on the identity construction processes explored in this research.

Other limitations and further implications

One of the issues repeatedly mentioned in the literature has been the problematic distinction between material and experiential purchases (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Guevarra & Howell, 2015). As stated in the introduction and paper 1, the current set of studies used a continuous variable to measure the type of purchase that participants selected, moving away from a dichotomous variable previously used in the literature (e.g. Van Boven, 2003). This decision was made due to preliminary analyses that revealed that the continuous variable predicted more variability in well-being than the dichotomous one (see Appendix 1). However, other approaches to materialistic consumption have divided further consumer products by specific categories (e.g. electronics, clothing, home appliances; see Dittmar, 2008; Richins, 2013) in order to explore and control for possible differences between consumer

products (experiential items were not included in the cited studies). For example, product categories such as clothes were found to be better at satisfying the IRFs of self-esteem and distinctiveness than body care products (Dittmar, 2008). Nevertheless, the division of consumer products into specific categories does not capture the buyer's material–experiential perception or uses of the purchase. For example, a musical instrument can be bought to be played, thus providing an experience to the buyer, or displayed as a collected material item. And these differences in the perception and uses of a purchase as “more material” or “more experiential” have been found to be associated with different levels of well-being (Guevarra & Howell, 2015). An attempt to combine both approaches in the current set of studies was unsuccessful because, in the questionnaires and research designs used, participants were allowed to freely select a spending choice (mirroring previous literature within the science of spending). Therefore, preliminary analyses revealed a high number of categories of purchases and, therefore, the product-category distinction lacked statistical power to explore further significant differences between the categories (see Appendix 4). Nevertheless, the main focus of the present research was not on examining the differences between categories of products or the links between what consumers spend their money on and their gain in well-being, but on how their spending choices are associated with an enhancement of their well-being through the perceived changes that their purchase causes in certain aspects of their extended sense of self, as well as on why people are motivated to make a spending behaviour. However, further approaches to well-being, identity or goals in consumer behaviour might benefit from exploring the use of product categories combined with material–experiential perceptions in order to both include the uses of purchases and also control for possible differences in identity or goals satisfied by different product categories.

Moreover, the function of emotional regulation, described as the use of purchasing as a mechanism to regulate or enhance the consumer's mood (Dittmar, 2011, p. 751), was used as a control variable in the current set of studies. The exclusion of this function from the original IRFs framework presented in Dittmar (2011) was done because the main focus of the current set of studies was to explore exclusively the role of identity in consumption. Moreover, the function of emotional regulation is conceptually understood as the engagement in consumption with the intention of boosting one's mood (Dittmar, 2011). Therefore, as the outcome variables included in this research programme were affective and cognitive measures of well-being, and previous research has found this function to be highly associated with identity buying motives (Donnelly et al., 2013) and to be more prominent with certain self-expressive types of goods (Dittmar, 2008), this function could have been a confounding factor within the tested models. As a result, by controlling for the effects of this function on the variables included in this research, the effects of the IRFs on well-being were isolated. However, preliminary analyses of the data, as well as previous research (Moldes, 2014), found that this function was better satisfied by experiential purchases than by material ones. Nevertheless, past research into dysfunctional buying that has used this function as an important predictor of compulsive buying has only examined material purchases (Dittmar, 2008; Richins, 2011). Therefore, future conceptualisations of dysfunctional buying should expand the range of spending behaviours examined to include experiential purchases as well.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the exclusion rate of the current set of empirical studies (26.40% in study 1; 7.5% in study 2; 5.21% in study 3; and 15.43% in study 4), which was higher in the general population samples (studies 1 and 4) than in the student samples (studies 2 and 3). The exclusion of data was due to participants describing

purchases outside the given instructions (e.g. reporting living expenses such as bills or daily commuting, describing more than one item or writing unspecific spending choices such as “on my children”). Nevertheless, although this exclusion rate is in line with previous studies in the literature (i.e. 25.77% in study 2 and 33.69% in study 3 in Guevarra & Howell, 2014; 17.69% in study 1 and 12.2% in study 2 in Caprariello & Reis, 2013), further improvements in the methodology and design might need to be implemented. For example, questionnaires could be administered by phone (Van Boven, 2003) or face-to-face in order to guide participants that might require further clarifications on the instructions given. Moreover, if the questionnaires are delivered online or by post, a set of following-up questions after the purchase selection or open-ended questions at the end of the survey might help to reduce the number of excluded participants (e.g. “Was the spending choice selected covering basic needs?”; “Did you encounter any problems for selecting a spending choice within the giving instructions? If yes, please explain”).

Future directions

Beyond addressing the limitations above and evaluating the key theoretical issues highlighted in the previous sections of this discussion, several directions for future research emerged during the development of this thesis.

First, an identified area for future research concerns the effects of adopting a new identity on spending behaviours. It is possible that if consumers buy to transform or modify their extended sense of self and achieve an ideal identity, as suggested by the results of the current set of studies, they might also engage in spending behaviours to self-define and self-express a newly adopted identity or role. For example, people might purchase new clothes to change their appearance after embracing a new label such as a LGBTQ identity to feel more symbolically interrelated with their new community or

might spend beyond covering the basic needs to feel more competent when embracing a new role such as parenthood, when getting a new job or a promotion, or taking up a new sport or hobby. Nevertheless, little research has looked at the relationship between adopting a new identity and spending behaviours. In fact, most studies in consumption and well-being, including the current thesis, have explored the role of identity as a mediator between spending choices and well-being (e.g. Thomas, 2010). Nevertheless, the desire to acquire a new or idealised identity could also function as a motivator for spending behaviours. Therefore, further examinations of MICT could look at the consumer behaviours that individuals engage in to satisfy certain identity motives when embracing a new identity by looking at people who might be undergoing an identity change (e.g. new parents, people who recently adopted a new hobby or sport, newly identified LGBTQ individuals).

In addition, future research also needs to be directed to the strategic use of material or experiential purchases for self-presentational gains (e.g. impression management). With the development of new technologies and the adoption of internet-based social networks, self-presentation strategies are not exclusively carried out in real life or require physical interaction but have also been extended to other digital environments (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Indeed, the studies included in this thesis found that material purchases were better at satisfying the IRF of projected identity. Nevertheless, the current thesis did not explore the uses of online social networks for self-presentation. Therefore, it is possible that the association between the function of projected identity and material purchases might be because material possessions (such as clothes, cars or consumer electronics) are more easily accessible than experiential purchases to an external observer for the formation of an opinion or image of someone based on their observable consumption habits. Nevertheless, it has become increasingly

possible and accessible for consumers to display their purchases to others through posting pictures or comments on the internet about their intangible expending habits such as on holidays or music events. As a result, future research could look at the uses of online-based spaces for displaying material and experiential spending behaviours for self-presentation purposes.

Finally, further research could investigate the effect of social and cultural discourses on well-being on the construction of individuals' own sense of happiness and life satisfaction. Previous research has shown that when people are presented with the question of whether or not they are in a committed relationship before they are asked about their well-being, their answer affects their subsequent estimations of well-being (Kahneman et al., 2006). In addition, current researchers in sociology and media have suggested that emotions, including happiness, are strongly influenced by culture and social discourses, and hence are "outside-in" processes, suggesting that affective and cognitive well-being might be socially constructed (Ahmed, 2004, 2010). Furthermore, recent research looking at factors that make a person happy (e.g. being married, being social etc.) suggested that the archetype of a happy person is Kim Kardashian, a celebrity who is often depicted by the media, as she embodies all of the factors that were found to provide happiness in an empirical study (Samson, 2017). Nevertheless, despite the fact that Samson stated that his research was not intended to suggest that media celebrities are role models to follow for attaining well-being, the results could imply a relationship between social discourses and internalised conceptualisations of well-being. Therefore, further research in psychology should look at the representation of happiness and life satisfaction in a given society, in the media, in individual beliefs about what well-being is and how it can be achieved, as well as in the gap between ideal states of happiness and current situations. Previous research in psychology, such as

identity and body image research, has measured the gap between people's idealised identity or body image and their current situation (Dittmar, 2008). As a result, further approaches to happiness and well-being could draw on self-discrepancy theory, which postulates that the gap between current and ideal representations of the self evoke emotional discomfort (Higgins, 1997), to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological processes that might influence individuals in making a judgement about their well-being. Moreover, drawing on sociology and media research, further studies in psychology should examine the effect social discourses have on well-being and people's understanding of happiness and life satisfaction, for example, by using content analysis of the media that individuals are exposed to and qualitative methods to capture their understanding of well-being to examine the influence of social discourses and their own conceptualisations of well-being.

Concluding remarks

My PhD investigated the relationship between spending money on material or experiential purchases and the hedonic value attributed to consumer products by examining identity and motivation processes involved in consumption. Four empirical studies suggested that money acquires hedonic value for individuals when it is spent on purchases that help the buyers to construct their own sense of self and move them closer to their desired identity. Moreover, the present research showed that goals and values also play a role in the consumption process, possibly motivating individuals to seek the satisfaction of certain identity motives in consumption. Therefore, the current thesis highlights the psychological complexities of attributing well-being to money that is spent on consumer products, concluding that the construction of the self and the goals pursued in consumption play an important role.

I started this thesis with a quote from a well-known worldwide celebrity whose fairy tale had a tragic ending: the life story of Marilyn Monroe represents a popular parable of someone who spent her entire life constructing a socially desired identity, acquiring wealth and fame, yet ultimately not achieving well-being. She went from being the unknown brunette and foster child Norma Jean who lived on the verge of poverty to being the glamorous blond and sophisticated movie star Marilyn Monroe who slept in expensive silk sheets doused in costly perfume. Nevertheless, her efforts at achieving her ideal self and fulfilling the American Dream of acquiring money and fame did not end the psychological suffering that she experienced throughout most of her life.¹⁷ Therefore, I would like to close this thesis by questioning whether happiness and life satisfaction can actually be achieved by spending money on external material commodities or experiential life events and challenging the current discourse embedded in the present western culture that promotes the pursuit of psychological well-being through consumption. Perhaps only a mindful reflection upon the idealised identities and goals promoted by society and pursued by individuals, as well as on the strategies that are being encouraged to achieve those identities and goals, might lead us closer to a healthier psychological existence than any possible attempts to attain well-being through spending money.

¹⁷ I based my statement that she suffered mental health problems throughout her life on her own description of her life portrayed in *My Story* by Ben Hecht and Marilyn Monroe (2006) as well as other biographies such as *The Secret Life of Marilyn Monroe* by J. Randy Taraborrelli (2010), or episode 8 from the podcast “You Must Remember This” (<http://www.youmustrememberthispodcast.com/episodes/2017/3/20/marilyn-monroe-the-end-dead-blondes-episode-8>)

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APPENDIX 1

Paper 1: Study 1

Hierarchical Regression Tests: Type of purchase as a dichotomous or continuous variable.

Due to concerns expressed in the experiential vs. material purchasing literature about the use of a dichotomous variable to classify a wide range of purchases (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Dunn & Weidman, 2015; Guevarra & Howell, 2015), a preliminary screening of the purchase descriptions combined with the material-experiential rating provided was carried out. There was some individual variation in judgements about material or experiential characteristics for similar purchases (i.e., comparable items such as sports equipment or consumer electronics were given different ratings on the material-experiential scale). As a result, a series of hierarchical regressions with the two outcome measures and split by the different time conditions were carried out in order to determine whether the dichotomous variable of purchase condition explained more variability in the data than the material-experiential rating (see Appendix 1, Table A). At step 1 of the analysis the control variable of importance was entered, then the dichotomous variable of purchase condition at step 2, and finally the experiential-material rating at step 3. Results revealed that the material-experiential rating variable typically explained more variability in more models than the binary variable of purchase condition (the dichotomous variable was not significant after the rating variable was introduced in the models on step 2). As a result, and in order to achieve consistency throughout the analysis and to capture the wider variety of purchase types and consumer perceptions regarding their own purchases, the material-experiential rating variable was used for all of the subsequent sets of analyses.

APPENDIX 1: Table A 1: Hierarchical Regression Tests: B's, SE B, β Coefficients and, Bootstrapped 95% CI ($n = 329$).

Step 1	Happiness				Life Satisfaction			
	Past		Future		Past		Future	
	B	SE B	β	Bootstrapped 95% CI	B	SE B	β	Bootstrapped 95% CI
Constant	4.28	.42		3.44, 5.11	4.53	.34		3.86, 5.20
Importance	.44	.07	.49***	.32, .57	.43	.05	.54***	.33, .54
R ²			.24				.29	
F for Change in R ²			46.89***				65.36***	
Step 2								
Constant	4.77	.49		3.80, 5.74	5.07	.38		4.33, 5.81
Importance	.41	.07	.46***	.28, .54	.40	.05	.50***	.29, .50
Type	-.57	.29	-.15*	-1.14, -.00	-.65	.21	-.20**	-1.07, -.23
ΔR			.02				.04	
F for Change in R ²			3.92*				9.37**	
Step 3								
Constant	3.98	.55		2.89, 5.07	4.54	.48		3.59, 5.49
Importance	.34	.07	.38***	.20, .48	.39	.05	.48***	.28, .49
Type	-.18	.31	-.05	-.81, .43	-.40	.26	-.12	-.91, .11
Material - Experiential rating	.22	.08	.24**	.06, .38	.10	.06	.14	-.01, .21
ΔR			.04				.01	
F for Change in R ²			8.09*				2.97	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire measures: Paper 1, studies 1 and 2.

Materialistic Value Scale from Richins (2004)

1. Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree or disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life					
Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure					
I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things					
I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes					
I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned					
My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have					
I like to own things that impress people					
I like a lot of luxury in my life					
It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like					

Future Condition – Material Purchase Description Question

2. We would like you take a moment and think about a **material purchase** that you plan to make for more than £50 and less than £1000, ideally within the next month. Material purchases are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a material possession: a tangible object that you obtain and keep in your possession.

We would like you to exclude purchases that are considered necessary to carry on with your everyday life such as groceries, stationary items or items that fulfil

basic needs.

Please, describe your future purchase in detail the in space provided below:

Future Condition – Experiential Purchase Description Question

2. We would like you take a moment and think about an experiential purchase that you plan to make for more than £50 and less than £1000 ideally within the next month. Experiential purchases are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience: an event or a series of events that you personally encounter or live through.

We would like you to exclude purchases that are considered necessary to carry on with your everyday life such as paying bills, groceries or regular commute expenses.

Please, describe your future purchase in detail the in space provided below:

Past Condition – Material Purchase Description Question

2. We would like you take a moment and think about a recent material purchase that you have made recently (preferably within the last month) for more than £50 and less than £1000. Material purchases are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a material possession: a tangible object that you obtain and keep in your possession.

We would like you to exclude purchases that are considered necessary to carry on with your everyday life such as groceries, stationary items or items that fulfil basic needs.

Please, describe your purchase in detail the in space provided below:

Past Condition – Experiential Purchase Description Question

2. We would like you take a moment and think about a recent experiential purchase that you have made recently (preferably within the last month) for more than £50 and less than £1000. Experiential purchases are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience: an event or a series of events that you personally encounter or live through.

We would like you to exclude purchases that are considered necessary to carry on with your everyday life such as paying bills, groceries or regular commute expenses

Please, describe your purchase in detail the in space provided below:

Control Questions

3. Please, indicated the approximate cost in pounds of the purchase described above.

£

4. Please, indicate the approximate date of the purchase described above:

(DD-MM-YYYY)

Future Condition Well-Being & Importance Questions

5. Please, indicate in a scale of 1 to 9 the importance for you of your future purchase (Give a rating from 1 to 9, being 1 = not very important; 5 = moderately important; 9 = very important)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. How happy do you think that it will make you? (Give a rating from 1 to 9, being 1 = not happy; 5 = moderately happy; and 9 = extremely happy)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7. How much do you think this purchase will increase your overall life satisfaction? (Give a rating from 1 to 9, being 1 = not at all; 5 = moderately; and 9 = very much)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Past Condition Well-Being & Importance Questions

5. Please, indicate in a scale of 1 to 9 the importance your purchase (Give a rating from 1 to 9, being 1 = not very important; 5 = moderately important; 9 = very important)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. When you think about your purchase now, how happy does it make you? (Give a rating from 1 to 9, being 1 = not happy; 5 = moderately happy; and 9 = extremely happy)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7. When you think about purchase now, how much do you think it has increased your overall life satisfaction? (Give a rating from 1 to 9, being 1 = not at all; 5 = moderately; and 9 = very much)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Future Condition Buying Motives Items

Adapted from Dittmar (2011).

8. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, using the following scale:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Disagree a little	4 Agree a little	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree
This purchase will make me feel more independent						
This purchase will put me in a better mood						
The purchase will help me to express what is unique about me						
This purchase will help me to boost my self-esteem						
I will buy this purchase thinking about how others will see me						
This purchase will symbolise close personal relationships						
This purchase will express which group or groups of people I belong to						
This purchase will help me to gain autonomy						
This purchase will help me to escape feeling bad						
This purchase fits with who I am						
This purchase will make me feel closer to my ideal self						
This purchase will give me prestige						
Buying this will make me think of people who I feel very close to						

This purchase will help me to feel more of a part of a social group						
This purchase will help me to gain control over my environment						
I will buy this not because I have to, but because I want to						
The purchase will make me feel different from others						
This purchase will make me feel more like the person I want to be						
I will buy this purchase to impress other people						
Buying this will give me a sense of personal control						
Buying this will be a truly enjoyable experience						
This purchase will express who I am						
Buying this will give me a greater sense of self-worth						
Buying this purchase will give me greater social status						

Past Condition Buying Motives Items

Adapted from Dittmar (2011).

8. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, using the following scale:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Disagree a little	4 Agree a little	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree
When I made this purchase felt more independent						
Making this purchase put me in a better mood						
The purchase helped me to express what is unique about me						
This purchase helped me to boost my self-esteem						
I made this purchase thinking about how others will see me						

This purchase symbolised close personal relationships						
This purchase expressed which group or groups of people I belong to						
When I made this purchase I gained autonomy						
This purchase helped me to escape feeling bad						
This purchase fit with who I am						
This purchase made me feel closer to my ideal self						
This purchase gave me prestige						
Buying this made me think of people who I feel very close to						
This purchase helped me to feel more of a part of a social group						
This purchase helped me to gain control over my environment						
I bought this not because I have to, but because I wanted to						
The purchase made me feel different from others						
This purchase made me feel more like the person I want to be						
I bought this purchase to impress other people						
Buying this gave me a sense of personal control						
Buying this was a truly enjoyable experience						
This purchase expressed who I am						
Buying this gave me a greater sense of self-worth						
Buying this purchase gave me greater social status						

Material – Experiential Rating Question

9. Moreover, we would like you to rate your purchase on a scale going from a completely material possession (something one purchases to *have*) to a completely intangible experience (something one purchases to *do*).

Use the following scale:

1 = definitely a material possession; 4 = both; 7 = definitely an experience.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Demographic Questions

10. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

11. How old are you? ____

12. What do you do? (*select all that apply*)

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Part-time employed
- ☐ Other (please indicate): _____

13. What is your nationality? _____

14. Have you grown up in the UK?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. Please indicate how much money you have a month to spend on yourself. This

amount should be disposable income (e.g. shopping trips or social activities) and

should not include costs such as rent or bills.

- ☐ < £50
- ☐ £51 - £100
- ☐ £101 - £150
- ☐ £151 - £200
- ☐ £201 - £250
- ☐ £251 - £300
- ☐ £301 - £350
- ☐ £350+

APPENDIX 3

Identity-related functions: Paper 1, studies 1 and 2.

Table B: Identity related functions description, items* and factor loadings from Study 1 ($n = 329$) and Study 2 Time 1 ($n = 370$) and at Time 2 ($n = 183$).

IRF	Description	Reference	Cronbach's Alpha (α)			Items	Factor Loadings		
			S1	S2T1	S2T2		S1	S2T1	S2T1
<i>Projected</i>	Social status and reputation.	Dittmar et al. (2008)	.82	.84	.85	I (will buy) bought this purchase thinking about how others will see me	.81	.82	.85
<i>Identity</i>	Identity projection.	Dittmar & Kapur				This purchase (will give) gave me prestige	.80	.86	.81
	Conspicuous consumption.	(2011)				I (will buy) bought this purchase to impress other people	.79	.81	.84
						Buying this purchase gave me great social status	.82	.84	.84
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Control, independence,	Dittmar (2011)	.74	.84	.85	This purchase (will make) made me feel more independent	.72	.83	.87
	Autonomy.					This purchase (will help) helped me to gain autonomy	.77	.84	.86
						This purchase (will help) helped me to gain control over my environment	.71	.77	.74
						Buying this (will give me) gave me a sense of personal control	.81	.84	.85
<i>Distinctiveness/</i>	Individuality/differentiation.	Dittmar (2011)	.78	.81	.84	The purchase (will help) helped me to express what is unique about me	.79	.84	.88
<i>Actual Identity</i>	Symbol of personal qualities, values, goals.					This purchase fits with who I am	.80	.73	.77
						The purchase (will make) made me feel different from others	.67	.75	.74
						This purchase (will express) expresses who I am	.83	.87	.88

Table B : ... continued.

<i>Self-Esteem /</i>	Identity repair.	Dittmar (2011)	.86	.89	.91	This purchase (will help) helped me to boost my self-esteem	.78	.85	.86
<i>Ideal Identity</i>	Moving closer to ideal self.					This purchase (will make) made me feel closer to my ideal self	.86	.87	.90
						This purchase (will make) made me feel more like the person I want to be	.87	.89	.90
						Buying this (will give) gave me a greater sense of self-worth	.83	.84	.90
<i>Relatedness</i>	Symbolic interrelatedness and	Dittmar (2011)	.84	.77	.82	This purchase (will symbolise) symbolised close personal relationships	.83	.80	.83
	Social identity function.					Buying this (will make) made me think of people who I feel very close to	.80	.74	.79
	Affiliation with close others and					This purchase (will express) expressed which group or groups of people I belong to	.83	.80	.83
	Group membership.					This purchase (will help) helped me to feel more of a part of a social group	.82	.73	.78

*In brackets are the future condition items.

APPENDIX 4**Table C:** Product categories analyses from studies 1 and 2 (paper 1).

	Category	Study 1		Study 2	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Accessories	2	.56	4	1.08
2	Books	3	.84	2	.54
3	Car/Motorbike	13	3.65	4	1.08
4	Clothing	72	20.22	103	27.84
5	Cosmetics	5	1.41	8	2.16
6	Electronics	49	13.76	69	18.65
7	Entertainment	29	8.15	34	9.19
8	Hairdresser	0	0	3	.81
9	House	2	0.56	0	0
10	House furniture	11	3.09	5	1.35
11	Jewellery	8	2.25	6	1.62
12	Learning	10	2.81	0	0
13	Meal	3	.84	9	2.43
14	Music Equipment	8	2.25	5	1.35
15	Sports Equipment	32	8.99	11	2.97
16	Tattoo	5	1.41	2	.54
17	Travelling	88	24.72	97	26.22
18	Undetermined	13	3.65	8	2.16
19	White goods	3	.84	0	0
Total		356	100	370	100

APPENDIX 5

Questionnaire measures: Paper 2 and 3

5.1. Subjective well-being measure (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

Below are some statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Neither agree or disagree	5 Slightly agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
In most ways my life is close to my ideal							
The conditions of my life are excellent							
I am satisfied with my life							
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life							
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing							
It is typical for me to experience positive emotions							
It is typical for me to experience negative emotions							

5.2. Aspiration index (Kasser & Ryan, 1993).

Everyone has long-term Goals or Aspirations. These are the things that individuals hope to accomplish over the course of their lives. In this section, you will find a number of life goals, presented one at a time, please use the following scale to indicate the importance of each life goal.

Indicate in a scale of 1 to 7 the importance of the goal in your life.

1 = not at all important; 4 = moderately important; 7 = very important.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To gain increasing insight into why I do the things I do							
To be financially successful							
To have people comment often about how attractive I look							
To have good friends that I can count on							
To keep up with fashions in hair and clothing							
To work to make the world a better place							
To have many expensive possessions							
To have an image that others find appealing							
To have committed, intimate relationships							
To be famous							
To grow and learn new things							
To be admired by many people							
To have my name appear frequently in the media							
To work for the betterment of society							
To know and accept who I really am							
To share my life with someone I love							
To help people in need							
To be rich							

APPENDIX 6**Text for manipulations: Paper 2****6.1 Extrinsic manipulation**

Now, please think of a time within the last year when you felt that being admired by other people played a positive role in your life. In the space below describe the particular situation and how you felt at the time.

--

Now, please think of a time within the last year when you felt that your appearance or displaying certain image played a positive role in your life. In the space below describe the particular situation and how you felt at the time.

--

Now, please think of a time within the last year when you felt that money played a positive role in your life. In the space below describe the particular situation and how you felt at the time.

--

6.2 Intrinsic manipulation

Now, please think of a time within the last year when you felt that learning new skills or gaining new knowledge played a positive role in your life. In the space below describe the particular situation and how you felt at the time.

--

Now, please think of a time within the last year when you felt that helping and supporting others played a positive role in your life. In the space below describe the particular situation and how you felt at the time.

--

Now, please think of a time within the last year when you felt that having close personal relationships (friends and/or family) played a positive role in your life. In the space below describe the particular situation and how you felt at the time.

--

APPENDIX 7**Windfall hypothetical scenario: Paper 2 and 3**

We would like you take a moment and imagine that you have unexpectedly won £300.

Please, describe how would you spend that money in **ONE** purchase in the in space provided below:

You can describe anything in which you will spend money on but we would like you to **exclude** purchases that are considered necessary to carry on with your everyday life such as groceries, stationary items, bills or regular commute expenses as well as paying off debts.

Moreover, you don't have to spend the exact amount of £300, you could choose to buy something cheaper if that is what you want.

Finally, since we are interested in spending behaviours we would like you to avoid responding that you will save the money for a future purchase.

--

APPENDIX 8**Text for manipulations: Paper 3****8.1 Self-defining manipulation**

We would like you to take a moment to reflect on how this purchase could help you to understand or appreciate the kind of person you are.

In the space below, we would like you to write about how your choice might help you to understand or appreciate who you are and how your choice might express who you are.

--

8.1 Self-expressive manipulation

We would like you to take a moment to reflect on how this purchase could help you to improve the way other people see you.

In the space below, we would like you to write about how your choice might help others to construct an image of who you are and to describe what image that might be.

--