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ARTICLE

A General Attitude towards Shopping and Its Link with Basic Human Values in the UK

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ABSTRACT
Prior literature about shopping has focused mostly on specific aspects such as on attitudes towards specific products or shopping practices. A General Shopping Attitude (GSA), capturing how much an individual is attracted by shopping in general, has rarely been explored. In an online questionnaire study conducted in the UK, here we developed and validated a self-report scale to assess GSA. Moreover, adopting Schwartz's theory of basic human values as framework, we explored the relationship between GSA and general value orientations. We observed that people valuing more Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence (i.e., valuing the own social status and wellbeing versus the wellbeing of others and of the environment) reported more positive GSA. This fits with theories proposing that, in consumer societies, shopping is appealing because it allows one to achieve social status. Contrary to perspectives claiming that shopping is appealing because it enables expressing creativity and freedom, a negative relation between GSA and Self-direction (i.e., a tendency to value freedom and creativity) emerged. Rather, this observation fits with proposals viewing the appeal of shopping in its ability to enable one to conform to a reference group's standards. These findings shed light on general value orientations underlying the appeal of shopping.

KEYWORDS
general attitude towards shopping; social status; self-expression; conformism; basic value

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Introduction

Influential scholars regard consumer culture as being at the centre of contemporary society (especially in Western Europe and the USA but increasingly also elsewhere) and shopping as a prototypical expression of such culture (Featherstone, 2007; Slater, 1997; Stillerman, 2015). Many of these scholars view the modern individual as being fascinated by shopping. Where would this fascination come from? To this question, different answers have been proposed by scholars. We propose to classify some of the approaches to this question in two broad families: *Self-expression theories* and *Social status theories*. The former interpret the appeal of shopping as arising because shopping would be experienced as a manifestation of personal freedom, choice, and autonomy, allowing one to articulate one's own identity, rationality (about which goods maximize utility and minimise monetary cost), and creativity (Campbell, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 2021; Holt, 2004; Miller, 1998; Zelizer, 1989). For example, Douglas & Isherwood (2021) view consumption as a creative ritual enacted to mark identity and express meaning within a community. Contrary to this view, Social status theories maintain that, in consumer societies, which goods one purchases is fundamental for defining social status, thus rendering shopping attractive in the race for social rank (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Hirsch, 1976; Veblen, 1899/2005). As an example, Veblen (1899/2005) introduced the notion of conspicuous consumption to describe a tendency to purchase luxury goods in order to signal economic power.

This debate between Self-expression theories and Social status theories raises an obvious empirical question: what is the real appeal of shopping for common people? What is the actual attitude common people have towards shopping? Arguably, people vary in their attraction towards shopping; why are some more attracted than others? Do certain general value orientations, such as valuing self-expression (Campbell, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 2021; Holt, 2004; Miller, 1998; Zelizer, 1989) or valuing social status (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Hirsch, 1976; Veblen, 1899/2005), account for these individual differences? Surprisingly, these questions remain largely unaddressed. The present paper explores them in the context of contemporary British society. Although prior literature about shopping behavior is overwhelming, this has focused on specific aspects such as on attitudes towards specific products or shopping practices (e.g., online shopping). A General Shopping Attitude (GSA), capturing the appeal of shopping in general, remains to be explored. Here we focus on examining such GSA and in exploring its link with general value orientations such as valuing self-expression or valuing social status. To this aim, the study sets two objectives. The first consists in developing a self-report measure of GSA. The second objective is to explore the relation between GSA and general value orientations. With this regard, we relied on the *theory of basic human values* (Schwartz, 1992), because, as we shall see, this proposes that human values can be described by two broad dimensions analogous to valuing self-expression and valuing social status, respectively. Below, we spell out these two objectives in detail.

General Shopping Attitude (GSA)

Although our specific focus on the concept of GSA is new, to some degree two previous lines of research tap into it, albeit only indirectly. A first research line has explored a materialistic value orientation, capturing a tendency to care about materialistic concerns such as money, appearance, social comparisons, and material goods (Kasser & Kanner, 2004). While this construct appears to encompass aspects potentially related with GSA, it remains unclear to what degree these aspects are captured. Moreover, several aspects external to the notion of GSA are also included. Finally, operationalizations of the materialistic value orientation appear to encompass certain personality traits or general values from the outset (e.g., including most items referring to negative emotions or envy) (Solberg et al., 2004). Conversely, when constructing the GSA, we aimed at removing any explicit overlap with personality or general values, in such a way that any relation found empirically could not be explained by semantic overlap (see below). For these reasons, the construct of materialistic value orientation is not suited to assess GSA in a specific fashion. A second relevant research line has explored the motives driving people when shopping. After initially identifying 11 of such motives (Tauber, 1972), more recent work has grouped these in two broad dimensions comprising utilitarian and hedonic factors (Babin et al., 1994; Guido, 2006). Utilitarian motives would be at play when shopping is instrumental to purchasing a desired item in an efficient and rational manner, whereas hedonic motives would be aroused by the ludic and entertaining nature of going shopping as such. However, this research approach does not examine to what extent, overall, people are attracted by shopping: knowing whether utilitarian or hedonic motives are engaged during shopping does not tell us precisely to what extent shopping is appealing for an individual. Altogether, previous literature does not yet allow for a specific assessment of GSA; the present study aims to fill this gap.

In short, a first objective of the paper is to develop a method to assess GSA. Below, the second objective is examined, consisting in exploring the link between GSA and general value orientations in the context of the theory of basic human values (Schwartz, 1992).

Basic Values and GSA

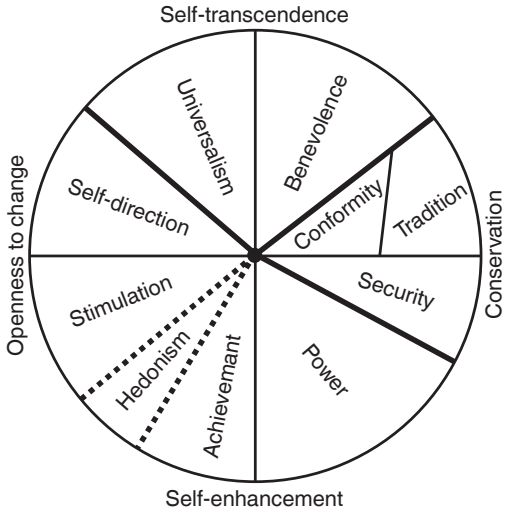
The theory of basic human values (Schwartz, 1992) is one of the most influential perspectives on the psychology of human values, corresponding to abstract principles driving human behaviour in everyday life. This theory postulates the existence of ten basic values arranged (based on their pattern of correlations) along a quasi-circular organization (Fig. 1): basic values appear to be distributed circularly but not evenly spaced, thus forming clusters (from which the definition of quasi-circular arrangement). The ten basic values are:

- *Self-direction* (valuing independent thought and action, autonomy, freedom, and creativity)
- *Stimulation* (seeking novel experience, arousal, variety, and challenge in life)

- *Hedonism* (valuing enjoyment and pleasure)
- *Achievement* (reflecting a strive for acquiring competence in fulfilling socially defined goals)
- *Power* (valuing attainment and preservation of dominant positions in the social system)
- *Security* (seeking harmony, safety, and stability of society and relationships)
- *Conformity* (restraining from actions, inclinations, and impulses that violate social norms)
- *Tradition* (acceptance, commitment, and respect for norms, rituals and ideas of the own culture)
- *Benevolence* (commitment for the wellbeing of close others in everyday interactions)
- *Universalism* (understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the wellbeing of all people and nature)

Figure 1

Representation of Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values



Note. Adapted from Schwartz, 1992, p. 24.

Moreover, the space where the basic values are arranged can be described by two broader dimensions. The first opposes Self-enhancement, emphasising the own well-being and social position (and including Power, Achievement, and Hedonism as basic values), versus Self-transcendence, focusing on the welfare of other people and of the environment at large (and including Universalism and Benevolence as basic values). The second dimension opposes Conservation, valuing stability and compliance with social norms (and including Tradition, Conformity, and Security as basic values), versus Openness to change, valuing freedom, change, and autonomy

(and including Self-direction, Stimulation, and Hedonism as basic values—note that Hedonism is relevant for both Self-enhancement and Openness to change). This two-dimensional structure is particularly relevant for assessing Self-expression (Campbell, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 2021; Holt, 2004; Miller, 1998; Zelizer, 1989) and Social status (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Hirsch, 1976; Veblen, 1899/2005) theories of shopping (introduced above): the Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence axis appears as remarkably appropriate for describing how much individuals value social status (with Self-enhancement corresponding to heavy interest in social status and Self-transcendence to poor interest in social status), whereas the Conservation versus Openness to change axis appears as remarkably appropriate for describing how much individuals value self-expression (with Openness to change corresponding to valuing self-expression and Conservation to disregarding self-expression).

Thus, when exploring the link between GSA and human values, two predictions arise from Self-expression and Social status theories of shopping: (a) following Self-expression theories, individuals stressing more Openness to change versus Conservation are predicted to have a more positive GSA; (b) following Social status theories, individuals stressing more Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence are predicted to have a more positive GSA. This paper aims to test these predictions.

Methods

Participants

Recruitment of participants was carried out online using the Prolific website[1]. Any (18 years old or older) individual from any country interested in participating to online social science studies can register with the Prolific website. Individuals receive monetary reward after participating to a study. Most people get to know Prolific via social media, poster/flyer campaigns at universities, and through referrals from researchers and participants already using the site. When registering to Prolific, individuals are asked demographic questions, which later allow researchers to pre-screen participants during recruitment. When a researcher creates a new study, any eligible participant (i.e., those meeting the pre-screening criteria) can sign in and participate until the sample in complete (the sample size is established a priori). Eligible participants are informed that a new study is available because the study becomes visible to them when accessing the Prolific website, and because the Prolific system sends an email to a random subset of eligible participants (Rigoli, 2021).

For the present study, 300 adults were recruited (all participants were included in the analysis). This sample size was established a priori based on a Pearson correlation hypothesis testing, a type-one error rate of 0.05, a type-two error rate of 0.1, and an expected Pearson coefficient of r = .2 (this requires 259 participants minimum; we rounded this number to 300). By relying on the Prolific pre-screening, we ensured that all participants were UK citizens (citizenship was established based

[1] www.prolific.co

on the following pre-screening question: "What is your nationality?"). Participants were all English speakers (this also was ensured based on a pre-screening question)[2]. To assess test-retest reliability, 100 participants among the 300 initially recruited were tested again after about two months.

Procedure and Measures

The study was published on March 11, 2021 and the sample was fully collected on the same day. Participants answered a set of questions online via the Qualtrics website[3]. Answering all questions took approximately 10 minutes, and subjects were paid £1.50 for participating in the study. Questions included a newly created GSA scale and the Schwartz's Value Survey (SVS) (Schwartz, 1992), a widely used instrument to assess basic values. These measures were the focus of the study. For exploratory purposes, we also asked some additional questions. Below, the GSA scale, the SVS, and the additional questions are described in detail. To assess the test-retest reliability of the GSA scale, a subset of participants (n = 100) filled this scale on May 28, 2021.

GSA Scale

As it was mentioned above, a main objective of the study was to develop and validate a self-report measure of GSA. This scale was constructed as follows. We considered theories viewing attitudes as constituted by three facets (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993): emotional (reflecting the affective states elicited by an action/object), cognitive (describing beliefs about the benefits associated with that action/object), and behavioural (capturing a tendency to engage in that action/object). Following these theories, we formulated three items for each facet (items were initially created after discussions with common people and marketing experts). For each item, participants had to indicate how much they agree or disagree (on a 5-point rating scale) with the following statements:

- when I have free time, I spend much time and energy going shopping
- shopping is one of my favourite hobbies
- even when I am currently unable to go shopping, I often make plans about it
- shopping often makes me forget problems
- shopping often makes me feel euphoric
- shopping is often boring
- shopping helps me expressing myself
- shopping helps me being liked by other people
- shopping helps me fulfilling my personal goals

Items 1, 2 and 3 map to the behavioural facet; items 4, 5, and 6 to the emotional facet; and items 7, 8, and 9 to the cognitive facet. The total score of the scale was calculated as the sum across items (with item 6 being reversed).

[2] The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University supporting the study (located in the UK; IRB code: ETH1920-0624.

[3] www.qualtrics.com

Schwartz's Value Survey (SVS)

To assess values in the context of the theory of basic human values, we administered the SVS (Schwartz, 1992). Here, for each of 56 items describing a general human value or principle, participants are asked to indicate on a 9-point rating scale (ranging from –1 [opposed to my principles], 0 [not important], 3 [important], 6 [very important], 7 [of supreme importance]) how much that item is important for them. Scoring of the scale worked as follows. First, to correct for individual tendencies to report a different overall average score, for each participant the average across all items was subtracted to each item. Second, only 45 items (those established by prior literature as adequate for cross-cultural comparisons; Schwartz, 1992) were further considered. Among these, each item maps to a specific basic value; items associated with the same basic value were averaged to obtain the score for that basic value. For example, the basic value of Power was scored as the average across 4 items (social power, wealth, authority, and preservation of public image). Finally, the scores for the two broad dimensions of Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence and Openness to change versus Conservation were computed. For the former, we summed all items for Self-enhancement and subtracted all items for Self-transcendence (i.e., we summed items for Power [4 items], Achievement [4 items], and Hedonism [2 items], and subtracted items for Benevolence [5 items] and Universalism [8 items]). For the latter, we summed all items for Openness to Change and subtracted all items for Conservation (i.e., we summed items for Self-direction [5 items], Stimulation [3 items], and Hedonism [2 items] and subtracted items for Tradition [5 items], Conformity [4 items], and Security [5 items]).

Additional Questions

In addition to the GSA scale and the SVS, the following variables were also collected:

- Age, assessed through the statement "Indicate your age", answered by indicating a number.
- Gender, recorded through the statement "Indicate your gender", with male and female as options.
- Ethnicity, assessed through the statement "Indicate your ethnicity", with Caucasian, ethnic minority, and mixed as options (the two latter categories were collapsed for analyses).
- Education, assessed through the statement "Highest education", with options 1 = "No formal qualification", 2 = "GCSE", 3 = "A level", 4 = "Undergraduate degree", 5 = "Graduate or doctorate degree".
- Socioeconomic status, assessed through the question "How would you define your economic status in comparison with other people in the UK?", with options 1 = "Substantially worse off, 2 = "Moderately worse off", 3 = "Middle level", 4 = "Moderately better off", 5 = "Substantially better off".
- Religiosity, assessed through the question "Do you consider yourself a religious person?", with options 1 = "Not religious", 2 = "Somewhat religious", 3 = "Religious", 4 = "Highly religious".

- Political orientation, assessed through the question "Overall, are your political opinions closer to the left or to the right?", with options 1 = "Strongly right", 2 = "Moderately right", 3 = "Neutral", 4 = "Moderately left", 5 = "Strongly left".
- Life satisfaction, assessed through the question "Overall, how satisfied are you about your life?", with options 1 = "Very unsatisfied", 2 = "Unsatisfied", 3 = "Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied", 4 = "Satisfied", 5 = "Very satisfied".

Statistical Analyses

To ascertain that a single factor underpinned all items of the GSA scale, we ran an exploratory factor analysis based on maximum likelihood. Decision on how many factors to retain relied on considering both the point of inflection criterion and the Kaiser criterion (counting how many factors had eigenvalue higher than one). To assess the internal consistency of the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha score was calculated (and a decision whether any item should be retained was based on looking at the Alpha score if that item was deleted). Finally, to evaluate convergent validity of the scale, its relationship with age and gender was assessed. A large body of evidence indicates that shopping is more common among females (Milestone & Meyer, 2012; Stillerman, 2015) and young people (Stillerman, 2015; Wassel, 2011). Thus, a valid GSA scale would be expected to be related with gender and age accordingly. To assess the test-retest reliability of the GSA scale, for participants who filled the scale twice we calculated the Pearson correlation of the total score between time one and time two.

After validating the GSA scale, we examined its relationship with the SVS adopting Pearson correlations. To ensure a family-wise type-one error rate of .05, we distinguished between a priori and post-hoc tests. A priori tests, for which two-tailed $p = .05$ was adopted as significance threshold, were restricted to the two broad dimensions of Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence and Openness to change versus Conservation. Post-hoc tests concerned the Pearson correlation between the GSA scale and individual basic values (10 tests in total). Adopting a Bonferroni correction, a two-tailed $p = .005$ was employed as significance threshold for post-hoc tests. Finally, for exploratory purposes, the Pearson correlations (and associated p values) between the GSA scale and the additional questions was calculated, although these do not represent hypotheses tested in this study.

Results

Descriptive statistics for interval variables are reported in Table 1 (for gender and ethnicity, the sample included 175 females and 270 white participants, respectively).

The exploratory factor analysis of the GSA scale produced the scree plot shown in Fig. 2. Both the Kaiser criterion and point of inflection criterion indicate that a single factor underlies all items (with 56% of variance explained and a minimum communality score of .382). When considering internal reliability, a Cronbach's Alpha of .918 was obtained (a minimum item-total correlation of r = .609 emerged; Alpha did not improve if any item was removed). These results show that the scale had internal reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Supporting convergent validity

of the scale, females exhibited higher GSA than males (t(298) = 3.835, $p < .001$), and the GSA scale correlated negatively with age (r(298) = –.193, $p = 0.001$). Concerning the test-retest reliability of the scale (calculated as the correlation between total scores for time one and time two), according to standard criteria (Cicchetti, 1994) this resulted to be good (r(98) = .724, $p < .001$).

The GSA scale exhibited a positive relationship with the Self-enhancement versus Self-transcend dimension (Fig. 3; r(298) = .281, $p < .001$), but not with the Openness to change versus Conservation dimension (Fig. 4; r(298) = –.037, $p = .523$). Table 2 reports Pearson correlations between the GSA scale and individual basic values (and among basic values themselves). Based on a Bonferroni correction applied to these tests (implying in a significance threshold of $p = .005$; see the Methods section above), a significant positive correlation emerged for Power (Fig. 5; r(298) = .277, $p < .001$) and a significant negative correlation emerged for Self-direction (Fig. 6; r(298) = –.172, $p = .003$) and Universalism (Fig. 7; r(298) = –.197, $p < .001$); non-significant results were obtained for other basic values. Finally, Table 3 reports Pearson correlations (and associated p values) for the relationship between the GSA scale and the additional questions (and among these questions themselves). We report these data for exploratory purposes, stressing that no hypotheses were tested regarding them.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for All Interval Variables

	Mean	SD	Skewness
GSA	20.71	7.81	.27
Self-direction	.66	.77	.54
Stimulation	–.68	1.16	–.29
Hedonism	.43	1.16	–.32
Achievement	–.19	.86	–.15
Power	–2.06	1.30	–.04
Security	.16	.80	.07
Tradition	–1.14	.99	–.27
Conformity	.03	.90	–.30
Benevolence	.75	.67	.31
Universalism	.70	.89	–.04
Self-enhancement vs Self-transcendence	–17.47	14.79	.05
Openness to change vs Conservation	6.83	13.99	.22
Age	36.81	13.73	.80
Education	3.50	1.09	–.29
Socioeconomic status	2.97	.85	–.048
Political orientation	3.27	1.18	–.17
Religiosity	1.48	.75	1.53
Life satisfaction	3.41	1.06	–.52

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix for the GSA Scale and the Basic Values

	GSA	Self-direction	Stimulation	Hedonism	Achievement	Power	Security	Tradition	Conformity	Benevolence	Universalism
GSA scale	1	r=–.172 *p*=.003**	r=.024 *p*=.677	r=.132 *p*=.022*	r=.151 *p*=.009*	r=.277 *p*<.001**	r=–.030 *p*=.609	r=–.010 *p*=.867	r=.116 *p*=.044 *	r=–.145 *p*=.012*	r=–.197 *p*=.001**
Self-direction		1	r=.170 *p*=.003**	r=.065 *p*=.262	r=–.013 *p*=.818	r=–.281 *p*<.001**	r=.271 *p*<.001**	r=–.371 *p*<.001**	r=–.292 *p*=.677	r=–.001 *p*=.989	r=.200 *p*=.001**
Stimulation			1	r=.202 *p*<.001**	r=.105 *p*=.070	r=.006 *p*=.917	r=–.357 *p*<.001**	r=–.344 *p*<.001**	r=–.295 *p*<.001**	r=–.076 *p*=.189	r=–.012 *p*=.843
Hedonism				1	r=–.032 *p*=.578	r=.209 *p*<.001**	r=–.159 *p*=.006*	r=–.246 *p*<.001**	r=–.267 *p*<.001**	r=–.109 *p*=.060	r=–.111 *p*=.054
Achievement					1	r=.329 *p*<.001**	r=–.130 *p*=.024*	r=–.210 *p*<.001**	r=–.040 *p*=.493	r=–.148 *p*=.01*	r=–.305 *p*<.001**
Power						1	r=.067 *p*=.245	r=.152 *p*=.009*	r=.030 *p*=.603	r=–.466 *p*<.001**	r=–.570 *p*<.001**
Security							1	r=.198 *p*=.001**	r=.245 *p*<.001**	r=–.181 *p*=.002**	r=–.260 *p*<.001**
Tradition								1	r=.384 *p*<.001**	r=–.128 *p*=.026*	r=–.398 *p*<.001**
Conformity									1	r=–.088 *p*=.130	r=–.416 *p*<.001**
Benevolence										1	r=.290 *p*<.001**
Universalism											1

Note. * for $p < .05$; ** for $p < .005$.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Matrix for the GSA Scale and the Additional Questions

	GSA	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Socioeconomic status	Political orientation	Religiosity	Life satisfaction
GSA scale	1	r=–.193 *p*=.001**	r=.217 *p*<.001**	r=.191 *p*=.001**	r=–.065 *p*=.262	r=–.001 *p*=.984	r<.001 *p*=.995	r=.143 *p*=.013 *	r=–.025 *p*=.670
Age		1	r=–.015 *p*=.790	r=–.160 *p*=.005*	r=–.184 *p*=.001**	r=.064 *p*=.271	r=–.244 *p*<.001 **	r=.052 *p*=.369	r=.119 *p*=.039*
Gender			1	r=.007 *p*=.902	r=.100 *p*=.084	r=.085 *p*=.142	r=.105 *p*=.068	r=–.031 *p*=.595	r=.119 *p*=.040*
Ethnicity				1	r=.005 *p*=.933	r=–.070 *p*=.226	r=.087 *p*=.131	r=.207 *p*<.001 **	r=–.066 *p*=.245
Education					1	r=.256 *p*<.001**	r=.238 *p*<.001 **	r=–0.61 *p*=.289	r=.119 *p*=.039*
Socioeconomic status						1	r=–.130 *p*=.024 *	r=.041 *p*=.480	r=.401 *p*<.001**
Political orientation							1	r=–.220 *p*<.001 **	r=–.176 *p*=.002**
Religiosity								1	r=.087 *p*=.131
Life satisfaction									1

Note. * for $p < .05$; ** for $p < .005$.

Figure 2

Scree Plot Relative to the Exploratory Factor Analysis of the GSA Scale

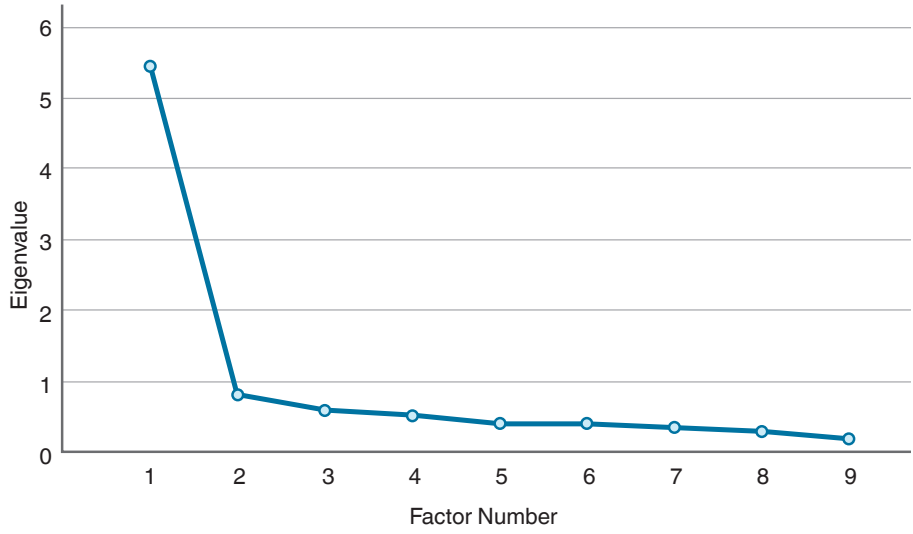


Figure 3

Relationship between Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence and the GSA Scale

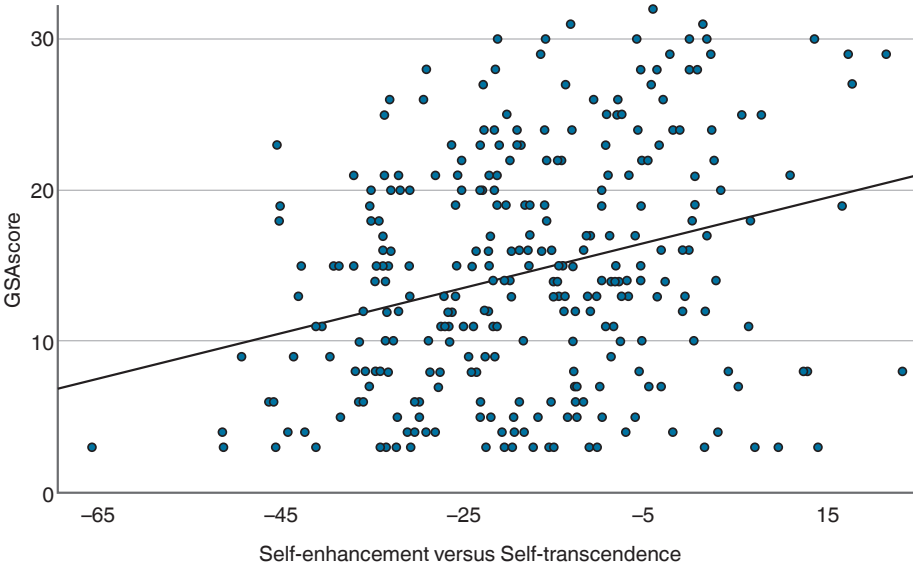


Figure 4

Relationship between Openness to change versus Conservation and the GSA Scale

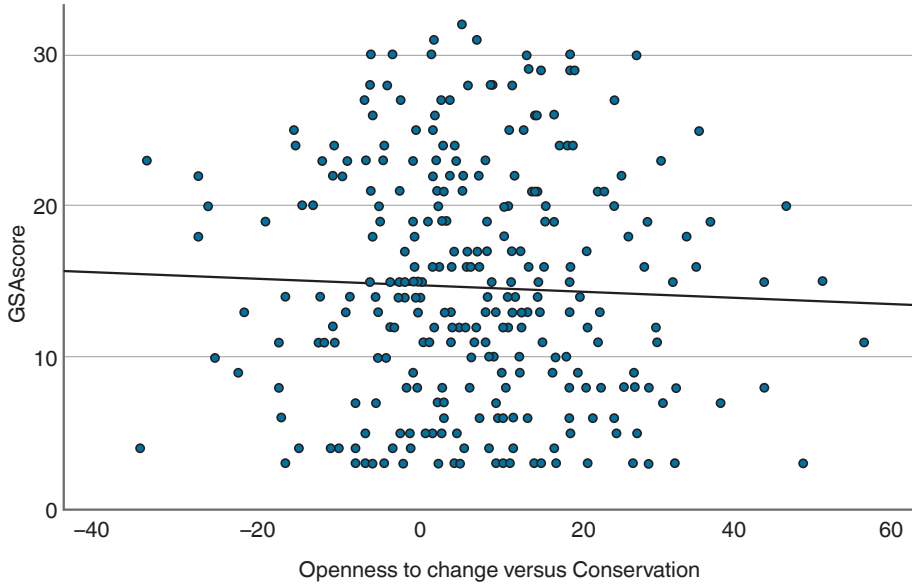


Figure 5

Relationship between Power and the GSA Scale

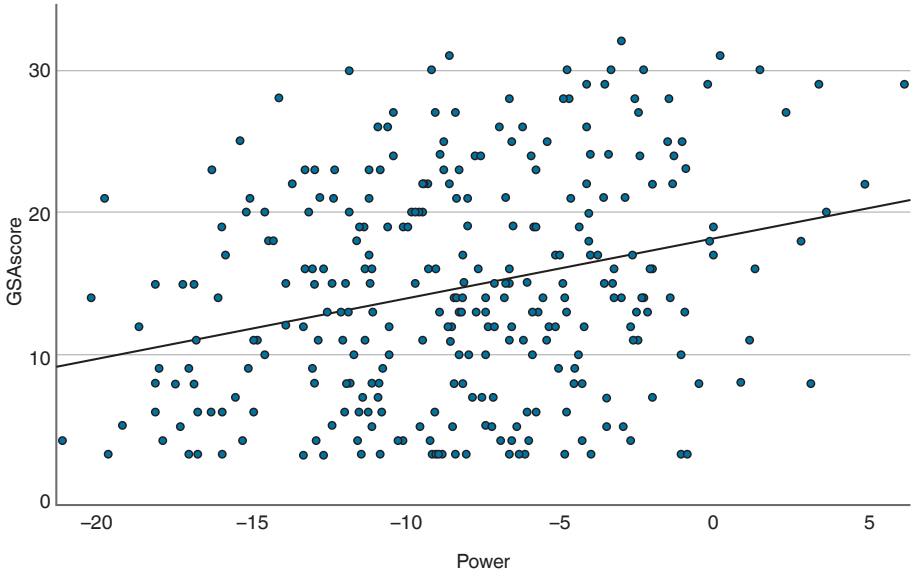


Figure 6

Relationship between Self-direction and the GSA Scale

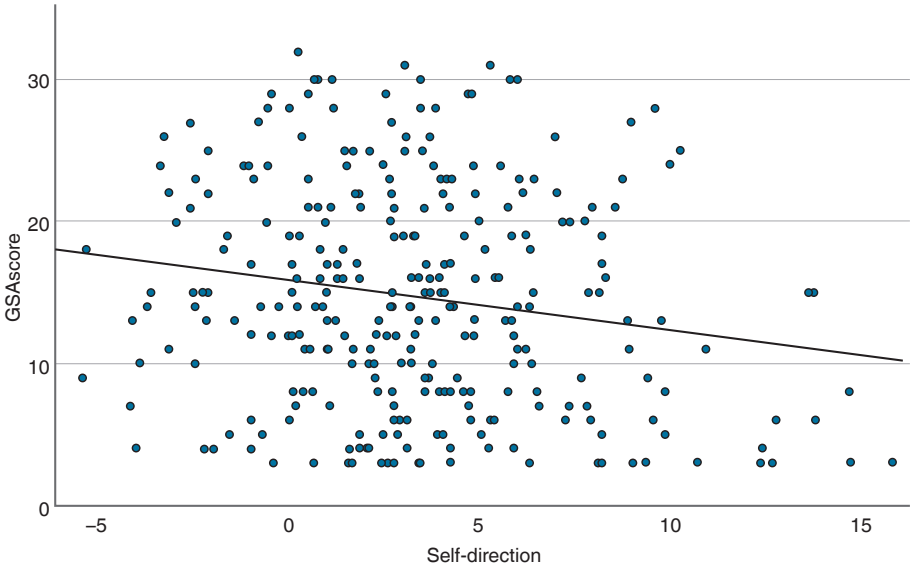
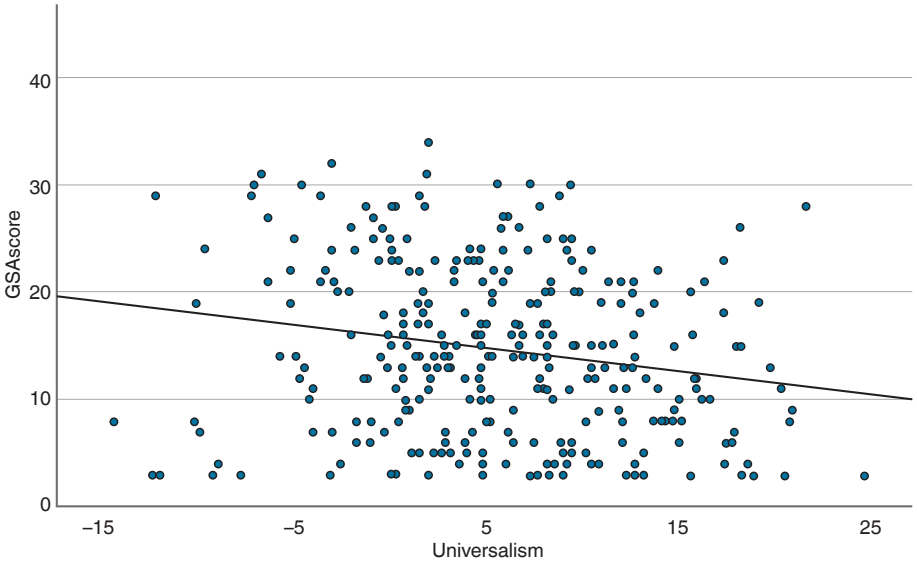


Figure 7

Relationship between Universalism and the GSA Scale



Discussion

This paper offers a method for measuring GSA through a short self-report scale and supports the internal reliability and convergent validity (based on a correlation with gender and age) of the scale. Consistent with Status theories of shopping (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Hirsch, 1976; Veblen, 1899/2005), the GSA scale was related with the Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence dimension. A lack of correlation between the GSA scale and Openness to change versus Conservation does not fit with Self-expression theories of shopping (Campbell, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 2021; Holt, 2004; Miller, 1998; Zelizer, 1989). Regarding individual basic values, the GSA scale correlated positively with Power, and negatively with Universalism and Self-direction.

These findings show that valuing the own power and status and disregarding the wellbeing of others and the environment (aspects captured by the Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence dimension) encourage a more positive GSA. This is in line with proposals highlighting competition for status as driving shopping (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Hirsch, 1976; Veblen, 1899/2005). According to this view, in consumer societies status is often measured by the goods one buys and exhibits. These goods would represent signals of status such as wealth (e.g., expensive items reflecting affluence), power, and taste (i.e., the ability to select products based on their supposed quality and beauty; Bourdieu, 1979/1984). Our results indicate that, although appreciating Power and disregarding Universalism appear as primary basic values in driving the relationship between GSA and valuing social status (as these basic values exhibit a significant correlation with GSA; Table 2), a consistent pattern is evident also when considering the remaining basic values (though statistically non-significant, for these basic values the correlation with GSA goes in the expected direction; Table 2).

Not only a lack of correlation between Openness to change versus Conservation and GSA fails to support Self-expression theories of shopping (Campbell, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 2021; Holt, 2004; Miller, 1998; Zelizer, 1989), but an inverse correlation between Self-direction and GSA goes exactly in the opposite direction. This finding indicates that people reporting more positive GSA disregard autonomy, freedom, and creativity. We can interpret this observation in light of the notion that conformism might be a key driver of shopping (Riesman, 1950/1961; Simmel, 1900). Conformism implies a motivation to comply with the prevailing social norms, thus suppressing inclinations towards personal autonomy, freedom, and creativity. In the context of shopping, conformism would instigate people to purchase goods that are currently in vogue among a reference group, rather than those that enable original self-expression. Notably, regarding the Openness to change versus Conservation axis, no basic value showed a significant correlation with GSA except for Self-direction. For example, when considering basic values underlying Conservation, no correlation emerged for Tradition, Conformity, and Security. This might occur because, in consumer societies, trends and products are constantly changing. Hence, a more positive GSA might ensue from welcoming the dynamic nature of consumption (hence not appreciating Conservation values more than other people) and yet perceiving

such dynamics as driven by external, rather than self-established, standards to which one strives to conform (hence discounting Self-direction).

We highlight some limitations of the study. First, this was carried out in a specific time (March 2021) and place (UK). Many scholars view the UK as being among the countries where consumerism has been well-entrenched for longer (Slater, 1997). Whether similar results extend to countries with different society, culture, and history remain an open question. A possibility is that this might depend on how pervasive and long-lasting consumerism is in a country. For example, in societies where consumerism is relatively new and is not so pervasive, people reporting more positive GSA might be even more motivated by social status and conformism. This would fit with the proposal that self-expression becomes more important in post-Fordist societies (where consumerism is more well- established like in the UK) compared to Fordist ones (where consumerism is more recent) (Featherstone, 2007; Slater, 1997; Stillerman, 2015). Adoption of online recruiting represents a second limit of the study: this implies that categories such as internet illiterates and older people are likely to be underrepresented in the sample. Linked to this, a large body of research has shown that specific segments of the population (defined in terms of socio-demographic characteristics) are driven by different values during consumption (Dolnicar et al., 2018; McDonald, 2012). In light of this literature, our study leaves open the question of whether our findings generalise across different population segments.

In summary, this paper develops a method to measure GSA through a short self-report scale, and explores the link between this variable and general value orientation. Consistent with Social status theories of shopping (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Hirsch, 1976; Veblen, 1899/2005), GSA correlated with a Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence value orientation. Contrary to Self-expression theories of shopping (Campbell, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 2021; Holt, 2004; Miller, 1998; Zelizer, 1989), it did not correlate with Openness to change versus Conservation. Rather, an inverse correlation with the basic value of Self-direction emerged, suggesting that conformism (Riesman, 1950/1961; Simmel, 1900), and not self-expression, might explain a fascination towards shopping. Altogether, these findings contribute to shed light on the motives that drive many to engage in an activity (shopping) that takes central stage in contemporary society.

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