

The relationship between online histrionic behaviours, conspicuous consumption, and compulsive buying

Çevrimiçi histriyonik davranış, gösterişçi tüketim ve kompulsif satın alma arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesi

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate whether online histrionic behaviours differ across demographic variables and to examine whether they statistically predict conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 405 participants via online and face-to-face surveys. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, confirmatory factor analysis, and regression analyses. The findings indicate that online histrionic behaviours differ across certain demographic variables, particularly age, educational attainment, and marital status. However, no significant gender differences were observed. Furthermore, the results show that online histrionic behaviours positively and significantly predict both conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying. These findings indicate that online histrionic behaviours may extend beyond digital self-presentation and should also be understood in relation to consumer behaviour. As one of the initial efforts to examine histrionic tendencies in a digital context and in relation to consumption behaviours, the present study is expected to offer original, empirical contributions to the literature on digital self-presentation and consumer psychology. The findings are also anticipated to provide data-driven insights for policies and practices aimed at protecting vulnerable groups from excessive consumption cycles.

Keywords: Online Histrionic Behaviours, Conspicuous Consumption, Compulsive Buying, Consumer Behaviour, Online Self-Presentation, Consumer Psychology

Jel Codes: D12, M31, Z13

Öz

Bu araştırma, çevrimiçi histriyonik davranışların demografik değişkenlere göre farklılaşp farklılaşmadığını belirlemeyi ve söz konusu bu davranışların gösterişçi tüketim ile kompulsif satın alma üzerindeki yordayıcı etkilerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Nicel araştırma deseni kapsamında, çevrim içi ve yüz yüze anket yöntemiyle 405 katılımcıdan toplanan veriler; betimleyici istatistikler, bağımsız örneklem t-testleri, tek yönlü ANOVA, doğrulayıcı faktör analizi ve regresyon analizleri ile incelenmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular, çevrim içi histriyonik davranışların bazı demografik değişkenlere göre farklılaştığını, özellikle yaş, eğitim düzeyi ve medeni durum açısından anlamlı farklılıklar gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Buna karşılık, cinsiyet açısından anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmamıştır. Araştırma sonuçları ayrıca, çevrimiçi histriyonik davranışların hem gösterişçi tüketimi hem de kompulsif satın alma davranışını pozitif ve anlamlı biçimde yordadığını göstermektedir. Bu bulgular, çevrim içi histriyonik davranışların yalnızca dijital benlik sunumunun bir yansıması olarak değil, tüketim davranışlarıyla ilişkili bir olgu olarak da değerlendirilmesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Histriyonik eğilimleri dijital bağlamda ve tüketim davranışlarıyla ilişkisi çerçevesinde ele alan ilk araştırmalardan biri olan bu çalışmanın, dijital benlik sunumu ve tüketici psikolojisi literatürüne özgün ve ampirik katkılar sunması beklenmektedir. Elde edilen bulguların; hassas grupları aşırı tüketim döngülerinden korumayı hedefleyen politika ve uygulamalar için veri temelli çıkarımlar sağlayabileceği öngörülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevrimiçi Histriyonik Davranış, Gösterişçi Tüketim, Kompulsif Satın Alma, Tüketici Davranışı, Çevrimiçi Benlik Sunumu, Tüketici Psikolojisi

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Introduction

In an era in which digitalisation has profoundly reshaped all domains of social life, individuals' self-presentations and consumption practices are increasingly shifting toward virtual environments. Social media platforms and online interaction spaces have evolved beyond mere channels of communication, becoming central arenas for identity construction and the pursuit of social approval. As a reflection of Erving Goffman's (2009) metaphor of the "presentation of self in everyday life" in the digital age, online environments provide individuals with opportunities to construct, reproduce, and perform their identities before an audience in a theatrical manner.

Within these environments – where visibility is quantified through instant feedback mechanisms and social approval is expressed through metrics such as likes and engagement – the online manifestations of histrionic behavioural patterns, characterised by attention-seeking, emotional exaggeration, and a persistent need for approval, have become increasingly salient. Online histrionic behaviours, conceptualised as an adaptation of traditional histrionic behaviour patterns to online contexts (Savcı et al., 2020), are examined in the literature primarily within non-clinical samples as a form of digital behaviour reflecting attention-seeking, approval-oriented, and exaggerated self-presentation tendencies in online environments, rather than as a direct clinical assessment of Histrionic Personality Disorder (Savcı et al., 2020, 2021; Zhao et al., 2026).

Within the dynamics of the consumer society, individuals' tendency to express their identities through goods and services has become increasingly pronounced. Consumption practices, rooted in Thorstein Veblen's (2015) concept of "conspicuous consumption" and later explained through status-related motivations, have acquired new dimensions within the visibility economy afforded by digital platforms.

In such digital environments, where individuals continuously present themselves and feel constantly observed by others, consumption may extend beyond a purely functional activity and may become a means of signalling identity and achieving social positioning. Individuals may display products, lifestyles, and experiences not only for their utilitarian value, but also as symbolic resources to construct and communicate a desired social identity.

Moreover, in environments where curated and idealised lifestyles are persistently visible, individuals may engage in social comparison processes, leading them to adopt similar consumption behaviours to maintain or enhance their perceived social status. This dynamic may become particularly salient in digital contexts characterised by heightened visibility and an intensified pursuit of social approval.

At the same time, the lack of continuity in social approval and the reliance on dynamic external feedback for self-worth may lead individuals to use consumption as a form of emotion regulation. In this regard, individuals may engage in compulsive buying behaviours as a way of coping with low self-esteem, emotional fluctuations, or feelings of inadequacy.

Although conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying have long been examined in the consumer behaviour literature, the role of histrionic behaviours as a psychological mechanism underlying these patterns has not been sufficiently addressed. The association between histrionic behavioural patterns exhibited in online environments and consumption decisions remains unclear in the literature.

Similarly, although histrionic tendencies have been widely examined in the clinical psychology literature (Babl et al., 2022; Perrotta, 2021; Posavac et al., 2022), their manifestations in digital environments have not yet been sufficiently explored. Demographic factors such as age, educational attainment, and marital status – which are closely associated with identity formation, patterns of social interaction, and digital engagement – remain unclear regarding how they influence the manifestation of histrionic behaviours in online environments.

This paper aims to investigate whether online histrionic behaviours differ across demographic variables and to examine whether they statistically predict conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying. This study can be considered one of the initial efforts to examine histrionic tendencies – although extensively studied in the clinical psychology literature, yet insufficiently addressed in digital contexts – within various social and developmental frameworks and in relation to consumption behaviours.

The study is expected to make an original contribution to the literature by empirically examining whether online histrionic behaviours extend beyond mere digital performance and are associated with conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying tendencies. The study is also expected to shed light on whether online histrionic behaviours exhibit similar patterns across different socio-developmental groups or vary across socio-developmental contexts. The study's findings, expected to contribute to

both the marketing literature and the psychology of online behaviour, may provide a data-driven foundation to guide policy and platform design decisions aimed at protecting vulnerable groups from excessive consumption cycles.

Within the scope of the study, a theoretical framework will first be established. Subsequently, the variations in online histrionic behaviours across diverse social and developmental contexts, as well as the relationship between these behaviours and consumption patterns, will be tested and interpreted through statistical methods.

Literature review

Online histrionic behaviours

Online histrionic behaviours are histrionic actions manifested in online environments. These behaviours are characterised by excessive emotionality, attention-seeking tendencies, dramatic modes of expression, and an intense need for approval from others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Lengel, 2020).

The historical roots of histrionic behaviour date back to Greek and Roman physicians, who associated the excessively dramatic and expressive emotional displays of patients with the term "hysteria. Because these behaviours were traditionally believed to be exclusive to women and rooted in uterine disturbances, these behaviours were labelled "hysterical," derived from the Latin word "hysterā," meaning "uterus". In the late 19th century, Sigmund Freud approached the concept of hysteria from a psychoanalytic perspective, defining it as a psychological condition centred on attention-seeking behaviour and emotional outbursts (Fathima & Mishra, 2024).

Freud's theoretical contributions provided a foundational framework for the examination of histrionic symptoms and behaviours (Fathima & Mishra, 2024). Histrionic Personality Disorder was formally recognised as a distinct diagnostic category in the mid-20th century and added to the list of diagnosable conditions in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) in 1980. The most recent iteration, the DSM-5-TR (2022), continues to recognise histrionic personality disorder as a discrete diagnosis (Fathima & Mishra, 2024).

Online histrionic behaviours are not separate from an online histrionic personality; rather, these behaviours arise from that specific personality pattern (Savcı et al., 2020). Histrionic personality disorder is characterised by a pervasive and enduring pattern of excessive, shallow emotionality, attention-seeking behaviour, seductive appearance or speech, and self-dramatisation or theatrical behaviour (National Cancer Institute, n.d.).

For a diagnosis of histrionic personality disorder, individuals are required to exhibit at least five of the eight defining symptoms. These symptoms include: (1) discomfort in situations where one is not the center of attention; (2) social interactions characterised by inappropriate sexually seductive or provocative behaviour; (3) rapidly shifting and shallow expressions of emotions; (4) consistent use of physical appearance to draw attention to self; (5) a style of speech that is excessively impressionistic and lacking in detail; (6) theatrical and dramatic expression of emotional experiences; (7) suggestibility (i.e., being easily influenced by others); and (8) a tendency to consider relationships to be more intimate than they actually are (Candel, 2019).

Histrionic traits, typically examined within a clinical context, have acquired new forms of expression through the influence of digitalisation and online platforms. Social media environments create spaces where visibility is heightened, self-presentations can be selectively and strategically crafted, and attention-seeking behaviours can be measured through numerical indicators such as likes, followers, and engagement metrics. In this context, individuals use online platforms extensively to become the centre of attention, gain approval, influence others, and create positive impressions. Some users may also exhibit high suggestibility and experience rapid mood fluctuations in online settings. These tendencies closely align with histrionic behavioural features, indicating that such characteristics are not limited to face-to-face interactions but can also be expressed within online contexts (Savcı et al., 2020).

Online histrionic behaviours are observable through the production of theatrical and exaggerated content, the construction of curated life narratives, and the frequent posting designed to attract attention. The desire to remain at the centre of attention becomes evident through constant notification checking and frequent posting. At the same time, excessive focus on physical appearance manifests in intensive filter use and heightened aesthetic concerns. In this process, individuals' self-esteem and emotional states may assume a fragile, fluctuating structure, contingent on follower counts and the nature of the feedback received.

Conspicuous consumption

The concept of conspicuous consumption was first introduced by Thorstein Bunde Veblen's 1899 seminal work, "The Theory of the Leisure Class". According to Veblen, conspicuous consumption refers to activities individuals engage in to manifest their wealth and social standing publicly (Veblen, 2015; Trigg, 2001). It represents a conscious engagement in the symbolic and visible acquisition, possession, and use of products and services—often those imbued with scarce economic and cultural capital—motivated by the desire to communicate a distinctive self-image to others (Chaudhuri et al., 2011).

Conspicuous consumption serves as a vital component in the construction of social identity and social positioning. Mason (1981, 2000) highlights that this mode of consumption functions as a symbolic communicative tool reflecting the desire to belong to one's current social group or to ascend to higher social classes.

Veblen emphasises that social networks are essential for an individual's wealth to be effectively communicated to the public (Veblen, 2015; Trigg, 2001). The advancement of mass media, particularly television, has been a key factor in this point, enabling ostentatious consumption to reach a broader audience. Social media has reinforced these behaviours by enabling lifestyle display and intensifying social comparison in consumption.

Research indicates that the motivations underlying conspicuous consumption are both psychological and social. These include the desire to signal social status and superiority (Kumar et al., 2021), social comparison and the fear of missing out on social media (Zheng et al., 2018), the need for group belonging and conformity to norms (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Hamdani et al., 2023), the urge to showcase personal distinctiveness and identity, and the attempt to compensate for low self-esteem through the acquisition of social status (Zheng et al., 2018). Extant research also indicates that individuals characterised by narcissistic traits (Neave et al., 2020) and a high need for social approval (Tor Kadioğlu & Yağcı, 2021) exhibit a greater propensity to engage in conspicuous consumption.

Drawing on self-presentation theory and social comparison theory, it can be suggested that online histrionic behaviours may be associated with conspicuous consumption patterns. Self-presentation theory suggests that individuals actively manage how they are perceived by others, particularly in social environments where visibility and evaluation are salient (Hollenbaugh, 2021; Leary & Jongman-Sereno, 2017). In online contexts, this process becomes more pronounced due to the persistent visibility of content and the quantification of social approval through likes, comments, and follower counts (Hollenbaugh, 2021; Meeus et al., 2019).

Individuals exhibiting higher levels of online histrionic behaviours, characterised by attention-seeking and dramatisation, are more likely to engage in strategic self-presentation practices to enhance their social image (Renner et al., 2008; Savcı et al., 2021). In this sense, consumption becomes a symbolic tool through which individuals can construct and communicate desirable identities.

Social comparison theory suggests that individuals continuously evaluate themselves in relation to others, especially in environments characterised by high levels of social interaction and content sharing (Andrade et al., 2023; Arigo et al., 2024; Gerber et al., 2017). Continuous exposure to curated lifestyles and consumption displays may intensify upward social comparisons, leading individuals to adopt similar consumption patterns to maintain or enhance their perceived social standing. For individuals with histrionic tendencies, whose self-worth is highly dependent on external validation, these comparison processes may be particularly influential.

Compulsive buying

Compulsive buying behaviour is defined as an individual's inability to resist repeated purchasing urges to cope with psychological distress and negative emotional states, accompanied by a loss of control over purchasing activities (Maccarrone-Eaglen & Schofield, 2017; O'Guinn & Faber, 1989; Faber & O'Guinn, 2008). While this behavioural pattern temporarily provides relief and satisfaction, it can impair the individual's psychological, social, and financial functioning in the long term (Karahana & Söylemez, 2019; Türk, 2018).

Compulsive buyers are characterised by low self-esteem, high levels of anxiety, and negative emotional states (Arslan, 2015). Regardless of income level, this behaviour can be observed in various individuals; however, it is more commonly reported among women than men. Furthermore, compulsive buyers often do not use the products they purchase, frequently keeping them in their original packaging for extended periods (Faber & O'Guinn, 2008).

McElroy et al. (1994) specified that certain criteria must be met for an individual to be diagnosed with compulsive buying disorder. These include a preoccupation with buying impulses or the act of purchasing that is perceived as excessive, intrusive, and often senseless. Additionally, these impulses are expected to cause significant psychological distress, markedly impair social and occupational functioning, and/or result in serious financial problems. Moreover, it is emphasised that the buying behaviour must not be limited to episodes of hypomania or mania.

Drawing on compensatory consumption theory, it can be suggested that online histrionic behaviours may be associated with conspicuous compulsive buying patterns. Compensatory consumption is defined as "any acquisition, application, or consumption of goods or services driven by a desire to make up for or lessen a shortfall" (Wang & Wang, 2024). This perspective suggests that individuals may engage in consumption behaviours to compensate for psychological deficiencies, such as self-discrepancy (Cao et al. 2025), low self-esteem, emotional instability (Kim & Oh, 2026), or unmet social needs (Hammad & El-Bassiouny, 2024). Given that online histrionic behaviours are associated with a heightened need for approval and fluctuating self-worth, individuals may resort to compulsive buying to regulate negative emotions and restore a sense of self-worth.

Methodology

Research purpose and significance

This study aims to investigate whether online histrionic behaviours differ across demographic variables and to examine whether they statistically predict conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying.

Although conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying have been extensively examined in the consumer behaviour literature, the role of histrionic tendencies as an underlying psychological mechanism has received limited attention. In particular, there remains a notable gap in understanding how histrionic behaviours exhibited in online environments are associated with consumption decisions and how these behaviours may vary across socio-demographic contexts.

By addressing this gap, the present study seeks to conceptualise histrionic tendencies in a digital context and to empirically examine whether such behaviours constitute merely online performance or function as a psychological mechanism shaping consumption patterns. In this respect, the study is expected to contribute to both the marketing literature and the psychology of online behaviour. Furthermore, the findings may provide a data-driven basis for informing policy development and platform design decisions aimed at protecting vulnerable individuals from excessive consumption tendencies.

This study can be considered one of the initial efforts to examine histrionic tendencies—although extensively studied in the clinical psychology literature, yet insufficiently addressed in digital contexts—within various social and developmental frameworks and in relation to consumption behaviours.

Model and hypotheses of the research

This research seeks to answer whether online histrionic behaviour levels are significantly associated with conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying tendencies, and whether online histrionic behaviours differ significantly by participants' demographic characteristics (gender, age, educational attainment, income level, and marital status). The research model is shown in Figure 1.

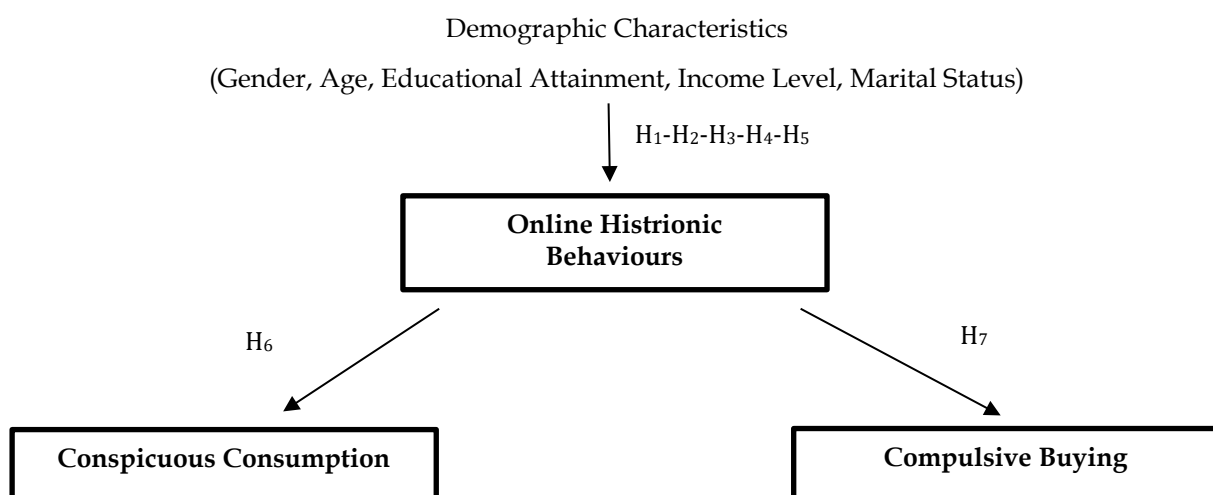


Figure 1: Model of the Research

In line with these research questions, the hypotheses to be tested are structured as follows:

H₁: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly by gender.

H₂: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly across age groups.

H₃: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to educational attainment.

H₄: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to income level.

H₅: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to marital status.

H₆: Online histrionic behaviour levels are positively and significantly associated with conspicuous consumption tendencies.

H₇: Online histrionic behaviour levels are positively and significantly associated with compulsive buying tendencies.

Data collection instrument

Within the scope of the study, data were collected using a survey questionnaire. The survey instrument consisted of 24 items: 6 questions to measure participants' socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, educational attainment, marital status, and income level) and 18 scale items. To measure online histrionic behaviours, the study employed the 8-item, unidimensional online histrionic personality scale, originally developed in Turkish by Savcı et al. (2020). Although this scale was derived from DSM-5 criteria for histrionic personality disorder, it is not intended for clinical diagnosis. Rather, it assesses self-reported online behavioural tendencies—such as attention-seeking and dramatisation—among non-clinical populations (Savcı et al., 2020). Accordingly, the construct is referred to as online histrionic behaviours throughout the study.

To assess participants' conspicuous consumption levels, a unidimensional, 4-item Conspicuous Consumption Scale was utilised. This scale was developed by Podoshen et al. (2011) and has been previously validated and used in the Turkish context (Akın, 2021; Özdemir Süzer, 2022). The adapted versions of the scale items were sourced from these aforementioned studies. Both the Histrionic Personality Traits and Conspicuous Consumption scales were administered using a five-point Likert-type format (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Participants' compulsive buying levels were measured using the 6-item, unidimensional Compulsive Buying Scale developed by Ridgway et al. (2008), which has also been utilised in various studies in Türkiye (Yüce & Kerse, 2018; Korur & Kimzan, 2016). The adapted version of the scale was obtained from the aforementioned studies. The compulsive buying scale was administered using a seven-point Likert-type format (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree).

In this study, different Likert-type scales (5-point and 7-point) were used as they were adopted from previously validated instruments in the literature. Preserving the original response formats of these scales was considered important to maintain their psychometric properties and comparability with prior research.

To ensure consistency in the analysis, all scale scores were computed as mean values. This approach allows comparability across scales with different response formats, as mean scores standardise the results to a common metric. Therefore, the analyses were conducted using standardised mean scores, and the findings were interpreted with these differences in mind. Previous studies have also demonstrated that using mean scores enables comparability across different Likert formats (Dawes, 2008; Xu & Leung, 2018).

Population and sampling

The study population consists of individuals aged 18 and over residing in Türkiye. The research sample was determined using convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method, comprising individuals aged 18 and over residing in Türkiye. A pilot study was conducted with 30 participants aged 18 or older to assess the questionnaire's applicability. No modifications were required based on the pilot results.

Following ethical approval from the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Pamukkale University (dated December 30, 2025, No. 68282350/2025/18), the survey was administered to a total of 405 participants via both online and face-to-face data collection methods. Before data collection, participants were informed about the study's purpose, and participation was strictly voluntary. Following data collection, no questionnaires containing identical responses to all

items or incomplete responses were identified; therefore, all 405 questionnaires were included in the analysis.

To evaluate the adequacy of the sample size, the widely cited Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table was consulted. According to this table, a sample of 384 is considered sufficient for populations exceeding 1,000,000 (Memon et al., 2020). Accordingly, the sample size in this study was deemed adequate for the research objectives.

Data analysis

In the study, descriptive statistics were first computed for all variables. This involves examining participants' demographic characteristics and the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the scales. Additionally, skewness and kurtosis values for the scales were computed to assess whether the data met the assumption of normality. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between the scales.

To investigate whether participants' levels of online histrionic behaviour varied according to demographic variables, independent-samples t-tests were conducted for dichotomous variables, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for variables with more than two categories. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was assessed using Levene's test; when variances were homogeneous, Tukey's post hoc test was applied; otherwise, the Games-Howell post hoc test was used to examine intergroup differences in detail.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the validity and reliability of the scales. Accordingly, validity was assessed using CFA goodness-of-fit indices and convergent validity criteria, and reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine whether online histrionic behaviour predicts conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying while controlling for demographic variables, including age, gender, educational attainment, income, and marital status. All statistical analyses in the study were conducted at a 95% confidence level. Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21, while IBM AMOS 19 was utilised for confirmatory factor analysis.

Findings

In this section, the data obtained within the scope of the research were analysed through statistical methods, and the findings were interpreted within the framework of the relevant literature.

Descriptive statistics

Participant demographics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
18-24	290	71.6
25-34	58	14.3
35+	57	14.1
Gender		
Female	322	79.5
Male	83	20.5
Marital Status		
Married	77	19.0
Single	310	76.5
Other	18	4.5
Educational Attainment		
Primary and Secondary Education	36	8.9
Vocational Degree	53	13.1
Bachelor's Degree	293	72.3
Graduate Degree	23	5.7
Employment Status		
Employed	141	34.8
Unemployed	264	65.2
Monthly Income Level		
Less than minimum wage	255	63.0
Minimum Wage	33	8.1
Between 1 and 2 times the min.wage	48	11.9
Between 2 and 3 times the min.wage	34	8.4
More than 3 times the min.wage	35	8.6

Note: *N* = 405

Table 1 indicates that 79.5% of the research participants were women, whereas 20.5% were men. Regarding age distribution, 71.6% of participants are aged 18-24, while 14.3% are aged 25-34. The vast majority of the sample consists of a bachelor's degree (72.3%). Additionally, 76.5% of the participants are single, 19% are married, and 65.2% are currently unemployed.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficients for the Scales

Variables	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
(1) Conspicuous Consumption	2.79	0.96	-0.117	-0.786	-		
(2) Online Histrionic Behaviours	1.93	0.70	0.603	0.160	0.47	-	
(3) Compulsive Buying	2.86	1.35	0.660	0.026	0.31	0.52	-

Note: $N = 405$. Pearson correlations are reported. All correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

To assess the normality of the data distribution, skewness and kurtosis values were examined for each scale. As shown in Table 2, the skewness and kurtosis values for all scales ranged between -1 and $+1$. Based on these values, the data were considered to be normally distributed (Haşiloğlu, 2022).

Table 2 also presents the mean scores obtained from the scales. The findings indicate that participants reported moderate levels of conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying behaviours. In contrast, the mean score for online histrionic behaviours was comparatively lower. These results suggest that while participants do not strongly perceive themselves as exhibiting histrionic tendencies in online environments, they still display certain consumption behaviours that may be associated with social visibility and emotional factors.

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the direction and strength of the relationships among the variables examined in the study. The results indicate statistically significant and positive relationships among online histrionic behaviours, conspicuous consumption, and compulsive buying. The data in Table 2 indicate a moderate positive correlation between online histrionic behaviours and conspicuous consumption ($r = .47, p < 0.01$), and a moderate-to-high positive correlation between online histrionic behaviours and compulsive buying ($r = .52, p < 0.01$). Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying ($r = .31, p < 0.01$).

Although correlation analysis provides an initial indication of the relationships among the variables, the validity of these relationships depends on the adequacy of the measurement model. Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was subsequently conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs before proceeding to further analyses.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Model Fit Indices, Validity, and Reliability Analyses

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is an analytical method used to test the extent to which a measurement tool, with a theoretical foundation and previously validated structure, fits the data obtained in the current study (Dragan & Topolšek, 2014). This analysis examines whether the original structural properties of the scale are confirmed in a new sample.

Table 3: CFA-Based Validity and Reliability Indicators of the Scales

Construct	Item	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE	α
Online Histrionic Behaviour	OHB-1	0.711	0.863	0.444	0.854
	OHB-2	0.747			
	OHB-3	0.746			
	OHB-4	0.675			
	OHB-5	0.674			
	OHB-6	0.698			
	OHB-7	0.511			
	OHB-8	0.522			
Conspicuous Consumption	CC-1	0.666	0.814	0.523	0.813
	CC-2	0.770			
	CC-3	0.706			
	CC-4	0.746			
Compulsive Buying	CB-1	0.549	0.851	0.493	0.856
	CB-2	0.821			
	CB-3	0.792			
	CB-4	0.680			
	CB-5	0.571			
	CB-6	0.755			

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted

The CFA results indicated that the factor loadings ranged from 0.511 to 0.747 for the Online Histrionic Personality Disorder Scale, from 0.666 to 0.770 for the Conspicuous Consumption Scale, and from 0.549

to 0.821 for the Compulsive Buying Scale. All path coefficients in the model were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

To evaluate whether the established research model met the minimum validity requirements, the model fit indices were analysed. During the confirmatory factor analysis, modification indices suggested a covariance between the error terms of items CB-4 and CB-5. This modification was implemented to improve model fit.

From a theoretical perspective, these two items capture conceptually similar aspects of compulsive buying behaviour, particularly related to impulsive and emotionally driven purchasing tendencies. Therefore, allowing their error terms to correlate is theoretically justifiable, as they may share common unexplained variance beyond the latent construct. Such modifications are consistent with recommendations in the literature, provided that they are theoretically grounded and not solely data-driven (Hair et al., 2019).

Hair et al. (2019) note that although numerous fit indices are available, reporting the chi-square statistic and degrees of freedom, along with CFI and RMSEA values, generally provides sufficient and distinctive information for model evaluation. The model fit indices revealed that the values obtained (CMIN = 402.801, $df = 131$, $\chi^2/df = 3.075$, CFI = 0.913, RMSEA = 0.072) fall within acceptable thresholds, indicating adequate model fit (Hair et al., 2019; Sahoo, 2019).

Convergent validity was used to assess the scales' validity. For convergent validity to be established, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should ideally be 0.50 or higher ($AVE \geq 0.50$) and simultaneously lower than the Composite Reliability (CR) value (Shrestha, 2021). However, if the CR value exceeds 0.60, an AVE value as low as 0.40 is considered acceptable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The CR and AVE values for the scales are presented in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, the AVE values for the Online Histrionic Behaviour and Compulsive Buying scales are slightly below the recommended threshold of 0.50; however, given that the CR values exceed 0.60, convergent validity was considered acceptable. Nevertheless, this result should be interpreted with caution. Based on the values in the table, the scales exhibit internal convergent validity.

To determine the internal consistency and reliability of the scales, the CR and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were used. While a CR value between 0.60 and 0.70 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, values of 0.70 or higher indicate high reliability (Shrestha, 2021). As shown in Table 3, the CR values for the scales used in this study (ranging from 0.814 to 0.862) indicate high reliability.

Scales with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher are considered reliable (Field, 2009). The Cronbach's Alpha values for all scales used in this study ranged from 0.813 to 0.856. All values exceeded the 0.70 threshold, demonstrating that the scales employed in the research possess adequate internal consistency and reliability.

Hypothesis tests

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether participants' levels of online histrionic behaviour differ by gender; the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Comparison of Online Histrionic Behaviour Levels by Gender

Gender	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Female	1.91	0.67	-1.03	0.303	-0.14
Male	2.01	0.81			

According to the results of the independent-samples t-test, the participants' online histrionic behaviour levels do not differ significantly by gender ($t(112.59) = -1.03$, $p = 0.303$, $d = -0.14$). This finding suggests that online histrionic behaviours are exhibited at similar levels by both female and male individuals. Based on these findings, " H_1 : Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly by gender" was rejected.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine whether online histrionic behaviour levels differ across age groups; the results are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Comparison of Online Histrionic Behaviour Levels by Age Groups

Age Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (2, 402)	η^2
18-24	290	2.02	0.70		
25-34	58	1.69	0.59		
35+	57	1.73	0.72		
Total	405	1.93	0.70	8.43	0.04

Note: $p < 0.001$

The findings of a one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in online histrionic behaviour levels across age groups ($F(2, 402) = 8.43, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.04$). Post-hoc comparisons indicated that participants in the 18–24 age group exhibited significantly higher levels of online histrionic behaviour than those in the 25–34 and 35-and-over age groups. Accordingly, the hypothesis "H₂: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly across age groups" was supported.

ANOVA was also employed to investigate whether these behaviours differ by educational attainment (Table 6).

Table 6: Comparison of Online Histrionic Behaviour Levels by Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	N	M	SD	F (3, 401)	η^2
Primary/Secondary Education	36	1.85	0.78		
Vocational Degree	53	1.97	0.76		
Bachelor's Degree	293	1.96	0.69		
Graduate Degree	23	1.49	0.45		
Total	405	1.93	0.70	3.52	0.03

Note: $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 6, online histrionic behaviour levels differed significantly by educational attainment, $F(3, 401) = 3.52, p = .015, \eta^2 = 0.03$. In particular, participants with graduate degrees reported significantly lower online histrionic behaviour scores than those with bachelor's and vocational degrees. Thus, the hypothesis "H₃: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to educational attainment" was supported.

ANOVA was performed to examine whether online histrionic behaviour levels differ across income levels; the results are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: Comparison of Online Histrionic Behaviour Levels by Income Level

Income Level	N	M	SD	F (4, 400)	η^2
Less than minimum wage	255	1.96	0.67		
Minimum wage	33	2.03	0.71		
Between 1 and 2 times the minimum wage	48	1.86	0.77		
Between 2 and 3 times the minimum wage	34	1.84	0.71		
More than 3 times the minimum wage	35	1.79	0.82		
Total	405	1.93	0.70	0.92	0.01

The findings in Table 7 indicate that online histrionic behaviours did not differ significantly across income groups, $F(4, 400) = 0.92, p = 0.45, \eta^2 = 0.01$. Therefore, the hypothesis "H₄: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to income level" was rejected.

To examine whether participants' online histrionic behaviour levels differed by marital status, an independent-samples t-test was conducted, and the results are presented in Table 8. Although marital status was initially categorised in the survey as married, single, and other, participants classified as other – divorced, widowed, and separated – were excluded from the independent-samples t-test due to the small sample size and the heterogeneous nature of this subgroup. Accordingly, marital status was operationalised as a binary variable (married vs single) to ensure statistical robustness and conceptual clarity. This distinction allows for a more theoretically meaningful comparison in terms of social attachment, relational visibility, and patterns of online self-presentation.

Table 8: Comparison of Online Histrionic Behaviour Levels by Marital Status

Marital Status	M	SD	t	p	Cohen's d
Married	1.69	0.72	-3.45	0.001	-0.43
Single	1.99	0.69			

As shown in Table 8, single participants reported significantly higher levels of online histrionic behaviour than married participants, $t(385) = -3.451, p = 0.001, d = -0.43$. Consequently, the hypothesis "H₅: Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to marital status" was supported.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether online histrionic behaviour statistically predicts conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying while controlling for demographic variables (gender, age, educational attainment, employment status, marital status, and income). The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Multiple Regression Results for Conspicuous Consumption and Compulsive Buying

Variables	Conspicuous Consumption		Compulsive Buying	
	β	p	β	p
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Gender	0.074	0.101	-0.182	< 0.001
Age	-0.084	0.170	-0.019	0.747
Educational Attainment	0.031	0.482	0.031	0.473
Employment Status	0.048	0.377	0.041	0.431
Marital Status	-0.018	0.721	0.023	0.621
Income	0.065	0.282	0.007	0.907
<i>Independent Variable</i>				
Online Histrionic Behaviour	0.463	< 0.001	0.525	< 0.001
<i>Model Statistics</i>				
R^2	0.240		0.308	
Adjusted R^2	0.226		0.296	
$F(7,397)$	17.86	< 0.001	25.26	< 0.001

Note: $N = 405$. Standardised beta coefficients are reported.

The regression model predicting conspicuous consumption was statistically significant ($F(7, 397) = 17.86, p < 0.001$). The results indicated that online histrionic behaviour significantly predicted conspicuous consumption ($\beta = .463, p < 0.001$). None of the demographic variables was significantly associated with conspicuous consumption.

The model explained approximately 24% of the variance in conspicuous consumption ($R^2 = 0.240$). This indicates that the set of predictors included in the model, particularly online histrionic behaviour, helps explain variations in conspicuous consumption. This finding suggests that higher levels of online histrionic behaviour may be associated with increased tendencies toward conspicuous consumption. In line with these findings, the hypothesis "H₆: Online histrionic behaviour levels are positively and significantly associated with conspicuous consumption tendencies" was supported.

The regression model for compulsive buying was also statistically significant ($F(7, 397) = 25.26, p < 0.001$). For compulsive buying, online histrionic behaviour also emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.525, p < 0.001$). Additionally, gender was significantly associated with compulsive buying ($\beta = -0.182, p < 0.001$), whereas other demographic variables were not.

The model explained approximately 31% of the variance in compulsive buying ($R^2 = 0.308$), indicating that the included predictors provide a meaningful explanation of compulsive buying tendencies. Based on these results, "H₇: Online histrionic behaviour levels are positively and significantly associated with compulsive buying tendencies" was supported.

Table 10: The Results of All Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statement	Results
H ₁	Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly by gender.	Not supported
H ₂	Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly across age groups.	Supported
H ₃	Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to educational attainment.	Supported
H ₄	Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to income level.	Not supported
H ₅	Online histrionic behaviour levels differ significantly according to marital status.	Supported
H ₆	Online histrionic behaviour levels are positively and significantly associated with conspicuous consumption tendencies.	Supported
H ₇	Online histrionic behaviour levels are positively and significantly associated with compulsive buying tendencies.	Supported

The results of all hypotheses are summarised in Table 10.

Discussion

This study aims to examine whether online histrionic behaviours vary across demographic characteristics and to investigate their associations with conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying.

The findings regarding demographic differences indicate that online histrionic behaviour varies across certain social and developmental characteristics (age, educational attainment and marital status).

Regarding age, findings show that individuals in the 18–24 age group exhibit higher levels of online histrionic behaviour. This pattern may be associated with more frequent social media use among young adults, the heightened salience of identity formation during this developmental period, and a

comparatively stronger need for social approval. These findings align with studies by Popat and Tarrant (2022) and Stapleton et al. (2017), which suggest that younger individuals engage more intensively with attention-seeking, visibility-oriented behaviours and social-comparison processes in online environments.

Educational attainment-related findings indicate that individuals with graduate degrees exhibit lower levels of online histrionic behaviour. Higher educational attainment may be associated with greater critical thinking and digital awareness, which could be linked to lower levels of dramatic and attention-seeking behaviours. This result parallels research suggesting that as educational attainment increases, individuals manage their self-presentation in online environments in a more controlled and functional manner (Artino & Stephens, 2009; Ibrahim & Aldawsari, 2023; Kayaduman et al., 2022).

In terms of marital status, single individuals were found to engage in online histrionic behaviours more frequently than married individuals. This pattern may be related to online visibility functioning as a more salient tool for social interaction and relationship-building among single individuals. Conversely, stronger offline social ties among married individuals may be associated with a lower perceived need for online attention. This is consistent with research highlighting that social media plays a more central role in the social interaction and visibility processes of single individuals (Gazi et al., 2024; Pradhan & Singh, 2023).

The absence of significant gender differences in online histrionic behaviour supports the proposition that online attention-seeking strategies are no longer strictly constrained by traditional gender roles (Kontolatau, 2025; Ahmed & Madrid-Morales, 2021). The relatively standardised interactional affordances of online platforms and their algorithmic structures may contribute to the emergence of similar behavioural patterns among both men and women in their pursuit of attention and visibility.

The findings further indicate that online histrionic behavioural tendencies do not differ significantly across income groups. This suggests that online histrionic behaviours reflect similar motivations for validation and visibility across income groups rather than being a phenomenon specific to affluent individuals.

The fact that online histrionic behaviours do not differ according to income level may suggest that this behavioural pattern reflects a more universal quest for attention and approval, relatively independent of financial means. This finding may support the view that histrionic tendencies are more closely associated with individual personality characteristics and psychological needs than with socio-economic factors. The low-cost accessibility of social media may facilitate the expression of dramatised self-presentation behaviours across different socio-economic groups.

When demographic factors are considered together, the lack of significant differences across gender and income levels suggests that online histrionic behaviours may emerge independently of fixed socio-demographic characteristics. In contrast, the significant relationships with contextual and developmental variables—such as age and marital status—may suggest that these behaviours are associated with life stages, social environments, and relationship-related needs. This may further suggest that such behaviours could reflect patterns reinforced through online interactions rather than solely stable personality characteristics.

The findings of this study show that online histrionic behaviour is significantly associated with both conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying. These results highlight that attention-seeking tendencies and the need for social approval may be associated with consumption patterns in digital environments.

Online histrionic behaviour was a significant predictor of conspicuous consumption ($\beta = 0.463$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a strong association. This finding suggests that individuals who seek visibility and recognition may be more likely to engage in consumption practices that signal status and enhance their social image. The finding is consistent with previous studies (Bainotti, 2023; Hamdani et al., 2023; Nesi & Prinstein, 2019).

Individuals with high histrionic tendencies may be thought to use consumption objects as markers of social identity and status symbols in their pursuit of being the centre of attention. In environments where visibility is central, consumption appears to function as a tool for self-presentation. Photographing and sharing consumption objects, along with receiving approval through algorithmically mediated “likes” and engagement, may contribute to the continuation of attention-seeking tendencies.

The relationship between online histrionic behaviour and compulsive buying was even stronger ($\beta = 0.525, p < 0.001$), pointing to a substantial association. This finding suggests that such behavioural tendencies may be associated with consumption patterns related to emotional processes. As supported by Arcan (2021) and Müller et al. (2021), the relatively higher effect size suggests that individuals may engage in repetitive purchasing behaviours not only for visibility but also to cope with internal states. While online visibility may temporarily enhance self-esteem, such externally derived validation is inherently transient and is generally considered unlikely to provide sustained emotional satisfaction. In this context, individuals may engage in compulsive buying as a way of filling emotional voids.

Among the control variables, only gender showed a significant association with compulsive buying ($\beta = -0.182, p < 0.001$), whereas the other demographic variables were not. This pattern indicates that most demographic differences cannot explain the observed relationship between online histrionic behaviour and compulsive buying.

A similar pattern was observed in the conspicuous consumption model, where none of the demographic variables emerged as significant predictors. This finding may indicate that the association between online histrionic behaviour and visible consumption practices is observed across different demographic groups.

Taken together, these findings emphasise that consumption behaviours in digital environments are closely linked to behavioural tendencies related to visibility, recognition, and internal regulation processes, rather than being exclusively associated with demographic characteristics. The absence of statistically significant demographic predictors in the regression models suggests that these behaviours are not limited to specific groups. Still, it may instead emerge across a broader user base associated with similar motivational tendencies.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature by examining both the demographic variability and the consumption-related correlates of online histrionic behaviour. It is important to note that this study focuses on self-reported online histrionic behavioural tendencies observed in a non-clinical population rather than on Histrionic Personality Disorder as a clinical diagnosis. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted within the context of everyday digital behaviour rather than as evidence of clinical psychopathology. It may be considered one of the initial efforts to examine histrionic tendencies—widely discussed in the clinical psychology literature—within digital behavioural contexts and in relation to conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying.

The findings indicate that online histrionic behaviour differs across certain demographic characteristics, particularly age, educational attainment, and marital status, whereas no significant differences were observed for gender or income. These findings suggest that online histrionic tendencies may be associated with specific social and developmental contexts rather than being uniformly linked to all demographic characteristics.

The study further demonstrates that online histrionic behaviour is significantly associated with both conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying, even after controlling for demographic variables. In particular, the stronger association observed with compulsive buying suggests that online visibility-seeking tendencies may be linked not only to status-oriented consumption but also to emotionally driven consumption patterns.

Overall, the findings highlight that visibility-oriented self-presentation tendencies in digital environments may be associated with problematic consumption behaviours. It points to the fact that the quest for attention in online spaces is not limited to virtual "likes". Still, it may extend to the redirection of individuals' resources (e.g., money and time) toward tangible consumption objects for social approval, potentially associated with problematic consumption tendencies.

The study offers important insights and practical implications for psychological counsellors, public health practitioners, marketing professionals and platform designers.

Based on the study's findings, psychological counsellors and those involved in public health campaigns may focus on interventions to prevent the transformation of online visibility-seeking into unhealthy consumption patterns. Intervention and awareness programs may play an important role in going beyond short-term impulse control by helping individuals recognise and restructure their online consumption habits. In this regard, incorporating social media use into financial literacy and impulse regulation training for university students and young professionals may help prevent risky consumption behaviours.

In light of the study's findings, it may be suggested that both marketers and platform designers share a responsibility in shaping healthier digital consumption environments. By adopting more ethical and user-centred approaches, it is possible to reduce the unintended consequences of visibility-driven consumption and support more sustainable consumer behaviours. Rather than encouraging constant comparison and visibility-based consumption, campaigns can be designed to promote authentic self-expression, functional product value, and long-term customer well-being. For example, reducing the emphasis on "showcasing lifestyles" and instead highlighting product utility, sustainability, or personal relevance may help mitigate excessive consumption driven by social approval.

For social media platform designers, the findings highlight the importance of ethical interface design. Features that continuously quantify social approval—such as visible like counts, follower metrics, and engagement statistics—may amplify attention-seeking behaviours and indirectly promote consumption pressures. Platforms could consider implementing alternative designs, such as optional hiding of like counts, reduced emphasis on popularity metrics, or usage feedback tools that promote mindful engagement.

Furthermore, integrating digital well-being tools—such as spending awareness prompts, screen time reminders, or content moderation to reduce excessive comparison—may help users regulate both their online behaviour and consumption tendencies. These approaches align with the broader concept of "ethical design," which prioritises user well-being alongside engagement metrics.

By exploring the relationship between online histrionic behaviours and consumer behaviour, this study provides empirical evidence for the literature on digital self-presentation and consumer psychology, offering insights and recommendations for preventing risky behaviours.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the results. In addition, the sample is heavily composed of young adults, particularly individuals aged 18–24, which may not fully represent the broader population. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as they may reflect the behavioural tendencies of younger, digitally active individuals rather than the general population. Future research using more diverse and representative samples would enhance the external validity of the results.

Another limitation is that reliance on self-report survey data may overlook certain objective factors that influence participants' thoughts and behaviours. Future research employing qualitative methods (e.g., in-depth interviews or focus groups) could provide a more nuanced understanding of the psychological and contextual mechanisms underlying online histrionic behaviours.

In this study, online histrionic behaviours were examined at a general level, and platform-specific differences were not analysed in detail. Future studies could explore how such behaviours manifest across platforms with different structural affordances, such as Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok, to understand better how varying dynamics of interaction and visibility associate with behavioural differences.

Moreover, examining potential mediating or moderating roles of variables such as social comparison and digital literacy in the relationship between online histrionic behaviours and consumption outcomes would contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

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