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**The Impact of Social Media Usage on Conspicuous Online Consumption: The Mediating Roles of Feeling of Envy and Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence Among Gen Z in Soloraya**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous online consumption among Generation Z in Soloraya, with a specific focus on the mediating roles of feeling of envy and consumer susceptibility to normative influence (CSNI). In the digital era, social media platforms have become central arenas for self-presentation and social comparison, potentially intensifying the desire to showcase wealth and status online. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 210 respondents aged 18 to 25. The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the hypothesized relationships among the variables. The results reveal that social media usage significantly and positively influences both feeling of envy and CSNI. Furthermore, both feeling of envy and CSNI serve as significant mediators in the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous online consumption.

**Keywords:** Social Media Usage, Feeling of Envy, CSNI, Conspicuous Online Consumption, Generation Z

**1. Introduction**

Social media has significantly reshaped the way individuals interact, present themselves, and engage in consumption (Kaur, P., Dhir, A., 2021). Among Generation Z, these platforms serve not only as channels of communication but also as arenas for identity expression and social validation (Djafarova, E., 2019). Digital interactions often trigger psychological responses such as envy and heightened sensitivity to social expectations, which can influence consumer behavior (Lee, 2023). This environment provides fertile ground for conspicuous consumption, where individuals purchase and display products to signal status and meet psychological needs (Veblen, 1899).

Despite extensive research on the link between social media and consumption, gaps remain. Much of the existing literature examines envy and consumer susceptibility to normative influence (CSNI) separately, without integrating them into a comprehensive model. Furthermore, prior studies have predominantly focused on Western contexts, leaving emerging markets underexplored. In countries like Indonesia, where social media penetration among youth is exceptionally high, understanding how these psychological mechanisms shape consumer identity and online conspicuous consumption is particularly relevant.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how envy and CSNI mediate the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous online consumption among Generation Z in Soloraya, Indonesia. By drawing upon social comparison theory and normative influence theory, this study develops and tests six hypotheses using a quantitative approach. Data from 210 respondents were analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) technique, providing insights into both direct and indirect effects within the proposed conceptual model.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Social Media Usage (SMU)*

According to Ozimek et al. (2023), social media usage has become a key tool for people to demonstrate their social position and create their identities online. In addition to communication, it provides a stage for showcasing one's accomplishments, lifestyle, and belongings as a kind of self-presentation (Burnasheva & Suh, 2021). Especially among younger generations, this approach promotes conspicuous consumption and social comparison (Sastra et al., 2023). By exposing users to popular items that match their interests and consumption habits, algorithm-driven content curation furthers this tendency. As a result, social media encourages symbolic consumerism, in which societal perceptions of products influence their value more so than practical requirements (Oh, 2021).

### *2.2 Feeling Of Envy*

According to (Smith & Kim, 2007), envy is an emotional reaction that happens when people believe they are less wealthy or have a lower position than others who are thought to be superior. According to (Van De Ven et al., 2009), it usually results from social comparison, especially when it comes to accomplishments, social standing, and the possession of luxury things. According to (Smith & Kim, 2007), there are two main types of envy: benign envy, which encourages self-improvement, and malignant envy, which may result in animosity or harmful intent. Envy is a major motivator for people to imitate the consuming habits of others in order to improve their social standing when it comes to online consumption. This phenomenon is amplified in the digital era, where exposure to glamorous lifestyles via social media intensifies feelings of envy and promotes conspicuous consumption as a means of social validation (A Sastra et al., 2023).

### *2.3 Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI)*

The degree to which people are swayed by the expectations of others, especially when making purchasing decisions to win acceptance from others or prevent rejection, is known as Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) (Bearden et al., 1989). When choosing products, people with high CSNI are more likely to follow peer norms and give their reference groups' judgments a lot of weight (Bharti et al., 2022). By continuously displaying the consumption habits of others, social media in online settings exacerbates these normative demands and promotes a culture of conformity and comparison (Burnasheva & Suh, 2021). In order to obtain likes, favorable comments, and social validation, this exposure pushes people to adopt consumption habits that correspond with prevailing social trends (Barauskaite et al., 2018).

### *2.4 Conspicuous Online Consumption*

The term "conspicuous online consumption" describes the practice of showcasing high-end products or services in online settings, especially on social media sites, in an effort to improve one's reputation and attract attention from others (Trigg, 2001). On visually-focused platforms such as Instagram, where users purposefully share content that showcases branded goods, upscale experiences, and high-status lifestyles, this behavior is frequently seen. (Hennig et al., 2023) state that active showcasing of symbolic goods, motivation for self-presentation, uploading demonstrative content frequently, seeking social acceptance, and social comparison are important markers of this behavior. In addition to reflecting personal preferences, these actions also show how social identities are formed in a culture that is very competitive online. Amplified by algorithm-driven visibility, conspicuous online consumption reinforces social norms and aspirational values within virtual communities.

## **3. Hypothesis Development**

### *3.1 Social Media Usage and Conspicuous Online Consumption*

Social media is not only a communication platform but also a space for constructing and displaying self-identity (A Sastra et al., 2023). Frequent exposure to idealized lifestyles and achievements shared by others encourages social comparison and the desire to showcase one's own status. This often leads individuals to engage in conspicuous online consumption as a means of gaining validation or projecting success (Fang & Zhang, 2019). Social media amplifies materialistic values and the visibility of luxury consumption. Consequently, higher social media usage is associated with increased conspicuous consumption behavior. Based on this, it is hypothesized that social media usage positively influences conspicuous online consumption.

H1: Social Media Usage positively influences Conspicuous Online Consumption.

### *3.2 Social Media Usage and Feeling of Envy*

Social media functions not only as a medium for communication but also as a space for constructing and displaying self-identity (A Sastra et al., 2023). Frequent exposure to others' curated lifestyles and achievements on social platforms can trigger upward social comparisons,

often leading to feelings of envy. When individuals perceive a gap between their real self and the idealized images they encounter online, this emotional discrepancy may intensify envy (Lemay et al., 2018). As such, increased social media usage is positively associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing envy.

H2: Social media usage has a positive effect on feelings of envy.

### *3.3 Social Media Usage and CSNI*

Social media facilitates diverse forms of social interaction, where users are often influenced by the actions, preferences, or visible norms of their peers (Bharti et al., 2022). Intensive users tend to seek validation and social approval, which strengthens their inclination to conform to online trends and group behaviors. Individuals with high consumer susceptibility to normative influence are particularly responsive to such digital cues, making them more likely to adopt behaviors seen on social media (Wooten & Reed, 2004). This includes imitating consumption patterns promoted by friends, influencers, or community members.

H3: Social Media Usage Has a Positive Effect on Consumer Susceptibility To Normative Influence (CSNI).

### *3.4 Feeling of Envy and Conspicuous Online Consumption*

In social contexts, the desire for recognition often stems from upward social comparisons triggered by feelings of envy. Envy influences how individuals perceive themselves and how they wish to be perceived by others (Lemay et al., 2018). When individuals feel envious of others' achievements or lifestyles, they are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption as a way to compete or bridge perceived social gaps. In digitally competitive environments, conspicuous online consumption becomes a tool for social validation and status signaling (Oh, 2021).

H4: Feelings of Envy Have a Positive Effect on Conspicuous Online Consumption.

### *3.5 CSNI and Conspicuous Online Consumption*

High consumer susceptibility to normative influence is associated with a strong need for social validation and self-image enhancement (Barauskaite et al., 2018). Individuals with this trait are more likely to be influenced by the consumption behaviors of peers or influencers they follow on social media. Exposure to such content often motivates them to imitate similar behaviors as a means of asserting identity and gaining group acceptance (Stöckli & Hofer, 2020). As a result, they are more inclined to engage in conspicuous online consumption to align with perceived social expectations (Wooten & Reed, 2004).

H5: Consumer susceptibility to normative influence has a positive effect on conspicuous online consumption.

3.6 Social Media Usage, Feeling of Envy, and Conspicuous Online Consumption

Exposure to idealized lifestyles and social standards on social media often triggers feelings of envy among users (Lemay et al., 2018). This emotional response can drive individuals to engage in conspicuous consumption as a way to assert status and compensate for perceived shortcomings. Excessive social media usage intensifies these comparisons, thereby amplifying the desire to display wealth or achievement through material goods. Therefore, envy functions as a psychological mechanism that mediates the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous online consumption.

H6: Feelings of Envy Mediate the Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Conspicuous Online Consumption.

3.7 Social Media Usage, CSNI, and Conspicuous Online Consumption

Individuals with high consumer susceptibility to normative influence (CSNI) are more likely to be swayed by the actions and consumption decisions of others on social media (Stöckli & Hofer, 2020). These individuals often imitate the behavior of peers or influencers, especially when such behaviors signal high social status. As social media increases exposure to lifestyle displays and consumption trends, users with high CSNI become more prone to adopt conspicuous consumption patterns (Stöckli & Hofer, 2020). Therefore, CSNI is expected to serve as a mediating mechanism through which social media usage influences conspicuous online consumption.

H7: Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) Mediates the Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Conspicuous Online Consumption.

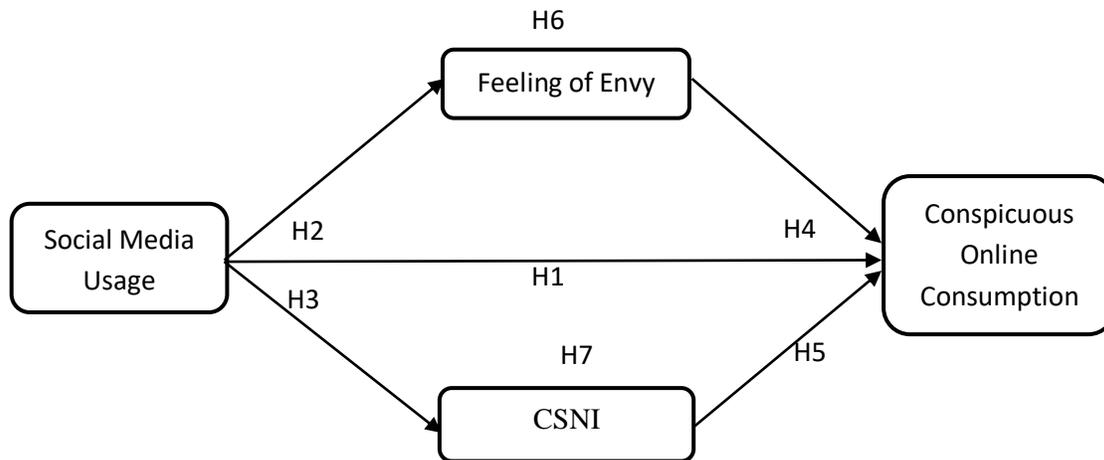


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

#### **4. Method**

The direct and indirect links between Social Media Usage (SMU), Feeling of Envy (ENVY), Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI), and Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC) were investigated in this study using a quantitative research design and a causal-explanatory methodology. The suggested study model looks into the structural connections between latent components linked to digital behavior as well as the mediating roles of CSNI and ENVY. The study's causal-explanatory design makes it possible to investigate the psychological processes that underlie conspicuous consumption in online contexts in addition to the strength of associations.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used for data analysis, conducted through SmartPLS version 4. PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for complex models involving latent variables, its robustness to non-normal data, and its effectiveness with relatively small sample sizes. The study utilized primary quantitative data obtained via an online questionnaire. Measurement items for each construct were adapted from previously validated scales. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5), was used to capture respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward social media usage, feelings of envy, normative susceptibility, and conspicuous online consumption.

Data collection was carried out using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who met the following criteria:

- a) Individuals who have access to digital devices (e.g., smartphones) and possess sufficient digital literacy to complete an online questionnaire.
- b) Willing to voluntarily participate in the study and provide informed responses.
- c) Belong to Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2007 (aged 18–28 years as of 2025).
- d) Have resided for at least the past six months in the Soloraya region, which includes: Surakarta City, Sukoharjo, Karanganyar, Boyolali, Sragen, Wonogiri, and Klaten.
- e) Active social media users, specifically:
  - 1) Spend more than 3 hours per day on social media platforms
  - 2) Regularly access, share, or interact with content on Instagram

This sampling strategy ensures that participants had adequate exposure to social media content that may influence their psychological responses and consumption behaviors. A total of 210 valid responses were obtained, fulfilling the minimum threshold required for PLS-SEM analysis, based on the guidelines from (Hair et al., 2017), which recommend 5–10 times the number of indicators.

The analysis procedure involved two main steps. First, the measurement model was assessed to ensure construct validity and reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated using outer loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Composite reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha were used to confirm internal consistency. Second, the structural model was analyzed to test the proposed hypotheses.

This included assessing R-squared values for endogenous variables and performing bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to evaluate path coefficients. Significance was determined based on t-statistics (>1.96) and p-values (<0.05). Mediation analysis was conducted to explore indirect effects of ENVY and CSNI on conspicuous online consumption.

**5. Results**

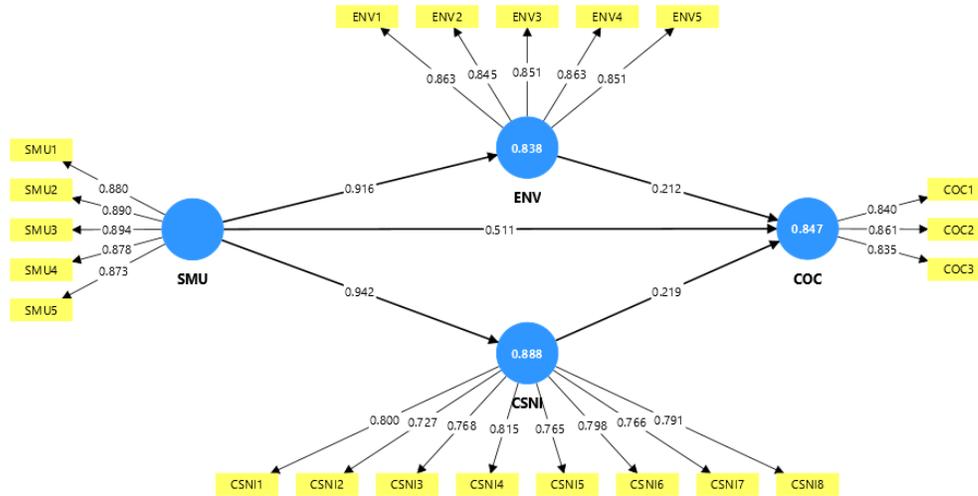
This section presents the results of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis conducted using SmartPLS. The findings are organized into two main parts: the evaluation of the measurement model to assess construct validity and reliability, followed by the structural model results that examine the hypothesized relationships among constructs. The analysis revealed that Social Media Usage (SMU) has both direct and indirect effects on Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC). While SMU directly predicts COC, it also significantly influences two key psychological constructs Feeling of Envy (ENV) and Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI). These two constructs were found to partially mediate the relationship between SMU and COC, highlighting the essential role of internal psychological responses in translating digital social interactions into outward displays of online consumer behavior.

Table 1. R-Square (R<sup>2</sup>) Value

	<i>R-Square</i>	<i>R-Square adjusted</i>
COC	0.847	0.845
CSNI	0.888	0.887
ENV	0.838	0.837

Table 1 presents the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) values for the endogenous latent constructs in the model. The R<sup>2</sup> value for Feeling of Envy (ENV) is 0.838, indicating that 83.8% of the variance in ENV is explained by Social Media Usage (SMU). Similarly, Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) yields an R<sup>2</sup> of 0.888, suggesting that 88.8% of the variation in CSNI is accounted for by SMU as its sole predictor. The dependent construct, Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC), shows an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.847, which signifies that 84.7% of its variance is explained jointly by ENV, CSNI, and SMU. These R<sup>2</sup> values reflect a substantial level of predictive accuracy according to the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2019), where R<sup>2</sup> values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. The high R<sup>2</sup> scores across all endogenous constructs demonstrate that the model exhibits strong explanatory power, particularly in capturing the psychological and social mechanisms that influence conspicuous consumption behavior in digital environments. The closeness of the R<sup>2</sup> values to the upper threshold also indicates that the model is both conceptually sound and empirically robust.

Figure 2. Structural Model of Algorithm Testing



The measurement model indicates that all outer loadings of the reflective indicators exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017), confirming satisfactory indicator reliability and convergent validity. For example, the indicators for Social Media Usage (SMU) range from 0.873 to 0.894, Feeling Of Envy (ENV) indicators vary between 0.845 and 0.863. The indicators for Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) range from 0.727 to 0.815, and the loadings for Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC) range from 0.835 to 0.861. These values confirm that all constructs demonstrate good reliability and robustness in the measurement model. In the structural model, the R<sup>2</sup> values for the endogenous variables indicate strong predictive accuracy. CSNI has the highest R<sup>2</sup> value at 0.888, followed closely by ENV at 0.838 and COC at 0.847. Based on (Hair, 2010), these values are interpreted as substantial, indicating that the model explains a large proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs.

With respect to the direct effects, Social Media Usage (SMU) significantly predicts Envy ( $\beta = 0.916$ ), CSNI ( $\beta = 0.942$ ), and COC ( $\beta = 0.511$ ). Envy also has a positive effect on COC ( $\beta = 0.212$ ), while CSNI contributes to COC with a coefficient of  $\beta = 0.219$ . Although SMU has a direct influence on COC, the relatively smaller effect sizes of ENV and CSNI suggest the presence of partial mediation pathways. Overall, these findings highlight the psychological processes underlying conspicuous consumption in digital contexts. The structural model confirms that Envy and Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence act as key mediators that transmit the influence of social media exposure into observable consumption behavior.

Table 2. Data on Hypothesis Testing Results

	Original Sample (O)	T-Values	P-Values	Hypothesis
SMU → ENV	0.916	100.884	0.000	Supported
SMU → CSNI	0.942	138.899	0.000	Supported
ENV → COC	0.212	2.866	0.004	Supported
CSNI → COC	0.219	2.538	0.011	Supported
SMU → COC	0.511	5.439	0.000	Supported
SMU → ENV → COC	0.194	2.875	0.004	Supported
SMU → CSNI → COC	0.206	2.544	0.011	Supported

Social Media Usage (SMU) exerts a strong and statistically significant direct influence on Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC) ( $\beta = .511$ ,  $t = 5.439$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that increased engagement in social media platforms is associated with a higher tendency to engage in conspicuous consumption behaviors. SMU also demonstrates powerful positive effects on both mediating constructs Feeling of Envy (ENV) ( $\beta = .916$ ,  $t = 100.884$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) ( $\beta = .942$ ,  $t = 138.899$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Furthermore, both ENV ( $\beta = .212$ ,  $t = 2.866$ ,  $p = .004$ ) and CSNI ( $\beta = .219$ ,  $t = 2.538$ ,  $p = .011$ ) significantly predict COC, confirming that these psychological mechanisms are key pathways through which social media usage leads to conspicuous consumption. These results support the notion that users who feel envious or are normatively influenced by others on social platforms are more likely to display consumption behavior intended to impress or signal social status.

In terms of indirect effects, SMU → ENV → COC ( $\beta = .194$ ,  $t = 2.875$ ,  $p = .004$ ) and SMU → CSNI → COC ( $\beta = .206$ ,  $t = 2.544$ ,  $p = .011$ ) both yield statistically significant paths, reinforcing the mediating roles of ENV and CSNI. These findings suggest that the psychological responses triggered by social media, particularly envy and normative pressure, are essential in translating passive platform use into active consumption signaling.

Together, these results highlight that while social media usage has a direct impact on conspicuous online consumption, the effect is also transmitted indirectly through emotional (envy) and normative (susceptibility) mechanisms offering a more nuanced understanding of the digital consumer behavior landscape.

Table 3. Outer Loading

Test Result			Test Criteria > 0.70
Construct	Indicator	Loading Factor	
Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC)	COC1	0.840	Valid
	COC2	0.861	Valid
	COC3	0.835	Valid
Customer Suceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI)	CSNI1	0.800	Valid
	CSNI2	0.727	Valid
	CSNI3	0.768	Valid
	CSNI4	0.815	Valid
	CSNI5	0.765	Valid
	CSNI6	0.798	Valid
	CSNI7	0.766	Valid
	CSNI8	0.791	Valid
Feeling Of Envy (ENV)	ENV1	0.863	Valid
	ENV2	0.845	Valid
	ENV3	0.851	Valid
	ENV4	0.863	Valid
	ENV5	0.851	Valid
Social Media Usage (SMU)	SMU1	0.880	Valid
	SMU2	0.890	Valid
	SMU3	0.894	Valid
	SMU4	0.878	Valid
	SMU5	0.873	Valid

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha, rho\_A, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_A)	Composite Reliability (rho_C)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC)	0.800	0.802	0.883	0.715
Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI)	0.907	0.908	0.925	0.607
Feeling Of Envy (ENV)	0.908	0.908	0.931	0.731
Social Media Usage (SMU)	0.929	0.930	0.947	0.780

Table 5. Fornell Larcker

Construct	COC	CSNI	ENV	SMU
COC	0.845			
CSNI	0.893	0.779		
ENV	0.879	0.912	0.855	
SMU	0.911	0.942	0.916	0.883

The evaluation of the measurement model demonstrates strong reliability and validity across all constructs. As presented in Table 3, all outer loading values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that each indicator accurately measures its corresponding latent construct (Hair et al., 2017). Table 4 further confirms the internal consistency of the constructs. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.800 to 0.929, while Composite Reliability (CR) values ( $\rho_C$ ) range from 0.883 to 0.947, all of which surpass the minimum recommended value of 0.70, indicating excellent internal consistency. Furthermore, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs range from 0.607 to 0.780, exceeding the threshold of 0.50 and thus supporting convergent validity.

Discriminant validity is established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 5). The square roots of AVE values (displayed on the diagonal) are higher than the correlations between constructs (off-diagonal values), confirming adequate discriminant separation between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Taken together, these results indicate that the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory levels of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, and is therefore suitable for use in subsequent structural model analysis.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 Social Media Usage and Conspicuous Online Consumption

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that Social Media Usage (SMU) plays a significant role in influencing Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC). SMU, as a construct reflecting the intensity and frequency of individuals' engagement with social platforms, exhibits a strong and statistically significant direct effect on COC ( $\beta = 0.511$ ,  $t = 5.439$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result reinforces the theoretical premise that consumption in the digital space is not merely functional but also symbolic driven by the desire to project social identity and status. In the contemporary online environment, where curated content dominates social feeds, users are increasingly influenced by the lifestyles and possessions of others, prompting them to mirror such behaviors through visible and intentional acts of consumption. These acts, shared through social platforms, serve as digital markers of prestige and belonging. The high explanatory power of the model ( $R^2 = 0.847$  for COC) further underscores the centrality of social media in shaping users' consumption patterns. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Fang & Zhang, 2019), which highlighted that social media fosters upward social comparisons and symbolic consumption. Therefore, SMU should be regarded as a critical antecedent of conspicuous online

consumption, with its influence rooted in both cognitive exposure to social norms and affective motivations related to self-presentation and peer validation.

### *6.2 Social Media Usage and Feeling of Envy*

The study confirms that Social Media Usage (SMU) has a strong and statistically significant effect on Feelings of Envy (ENV) ( $\beta = 0.916$ ,  $t = 100.884$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result aligns with the idea that social media fosters constant exposure to idealized lifestyles, which in turn triggers upward social comparisons. When individuals encounter content that highlights others' success, beauty, or wealth, it can evoke a sense of inadequacy and emotional discomfort. The exceptionally high path coefficient and  $R^2$  value (0.838) suggest that envy is not a marginal response, but a dominant emotional outcome of intensive social media interaction. These findings support earlier studies (Lemay et al., 2018) which suggest that curated online environments can significantly affect users' emotional well-being. Therefore, SMU should be viewed not only as a social tool but also as a psychological stimulus capable of influencing affective states particularly envy as part of users' digital experiences.

### *6.3 Social Media Usage and CSNI*

The results demonstrate that Social Media Usage (SMU) significantly and positively affects Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) ( $\beta = 0.881$ ,  $t = 56.285$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding supports the view that social media serves as a space for digital conformity, where users are exposed to social cues, group norms, and aspirational figures. Intensive engagement with social platforms increases individuals' desire for approval and social alignment, making them more likely to adopt behaviors observed in their online networks. The strong path coefficient suggests that SMU actively shapes susceptibility to peer influence in consumption-related contexts. These results are consistent with previous research (Wooten & Reed, 2004); (Bharti et al., 2022), which found that individuals often adjust their behavior to align with perceived social expectations. In the context of digital culture, this may include mimicking influencers' product choices, lifestyle habits, or aesthetic preferences. Thus, SMU should be understood as a significant driver of normative social influence in the online consumer environment.

### *6.4 Feeling of Envy and Conspicuous Online Consumption*

The analysis confirms that Feelings of Envy (ENV) significantly influence Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC) ( $\beta = 0.309$ ,  $t = 3.166$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). Although the effect size is moderate, the statistical significance suggests that envy acts as a motivational driver for individuals to engage in visible, status-oriented consumption. In online environments saturated with curated success and affluence, envy becomes a mechanism through which users seek to restore self-worth or gain social recognition. This finding supports earlier work by (Lemay et al., 2018) and (Oh, 2021), which highlighted envy's role in prompting symbolic consumer behavior. Thus, envy functions not merely as a passive emotional state but as an active influence on how users manage impressions and project identity in digital spaces.

### *6.5 CSNI and Conspicuous Online Consumption*

In addition to its conceptual relevance as a social conformity trait, Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) also exerts a direct and significant influence on Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC). The analysis reveals that CSNI significantly predicts users' likelihood to engage in visible consumption behaviors ( $\beta = 0.527$ ,  $t = 4.226$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding emphasizes the role of normative pressure in digital consumer environments, where individuals tend to align their behaviors with those of peers, influencers, or dominant trends. High-CSNI individuals are particularly motivated to showcase consumption choices that reflect group identity and earn social approval. This supports earlier findings by (Stöckli & Hofer, 2020), who noted that perceived expectations from one's online community often guide purchasing and sharing decisions. Therefore, CSNI should be understood not only as a personality trait but also as a social mechanism that translates perceived norms into visible, status-oriented consumption in digital spaces.

### *6.6 Social Media Usage, Feeling of Envy, and Conspicuous Online Consumption*

Social Media Usage (SMU) and Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC). While SMU exerts a direct effect on COC ( $p = 0.000$ ), it also significantly predicts feelings of envy ( $\beta = \text{positive}$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), which in turn positively influence COC ( $p = 0.004$ ). This finding aligns with the theoretical proposition that exposure to idealized online content fosters upward social comparisons, triggering envy and, subsequently, motivating individuals to display status through consumption. The presence of both significant direct and indirect effects suggests a partial mediation, where envy serves as a psychological driver that amplifies the impact of social media engagement on consumption behavior. These results underscore the role of envy not merely as an emotional response, but as a key mechanism linking digital interactions to material self-presentation. Thus, envy is not just a byproduct of social media, but a functional link that reinforces conspicuous online behavior in digitally competitive environments.

### *6.7 Social Media Usage, CSNI, and Conspicuous Online Consumption*

The findings confirm that Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI) serves as a significant mediator between Social Media Usage (SMU) and Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC). SMU significantly predicts CSNI ( $p = 0.000$ ), and CSNI in turn significantly influences COC ( $p = 0.011$ ), suggesting a clear indirect pathway. These results support the notion that individuals highly sensitive to normative cues are more likely to internalize and replicate consumption trends displayed on social platforms. The mediation implies that social approval and peer influence are crucial drivers transforming digital exposure into actual purchasing behavior. Even when SMU directly affects COC ( $p = 0.000$ ), the presence of CSNI intensifies this relationship through a conformity-driven mechanism. Therefore, CSNI is not merely a trait but a psychological conduit that explains why some users are more vulnerable to conspicuous consumption pressure online. This aligns with prior literature emphasizing social conformity as a key influencer in digital consumerism.

## 7. Conclusion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence that Social Media Usage (SMU) significantly contributes to Conspicuous Online Consumption (COC), both through direct influence and through two key psychological pathways: Feeling of Envy (ENV) and Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence (CSNI). The results affirm that SMU not only encourages status-driven consumer behavior but also stimulates emotional and normative responses that serve as underlying mechanisms of digital consumption. High engagement with social media platforms was found to evoke feelings of envy and increase individuals' sensitivity to peer influence, both of which meaningfully predicted COC. These mediating effects reveal that the impact of social media is not merely functional or informational it operates on a psychological level by shaping users' self-perception, social comparison, and desire for social validation.

Importantly, the model demonstrates high explanatory power, with  $R^2$  values exceeding 0.80 for all endogenous constructs, indicating robust predictive accuracy. This reinforces the theoretical premise that consumption behavior in digital spaces is driven by a blend of emotional triggers and perceived social norms, rather than rational decision-making alone. Overall, this study contributes to the growing literature on digital consumer psychology by integrating emotional and normative constructs into the analysis of conspicuous consumption. It suggests that researchers and practitioners alike should consider the affective and social dimensions of online behavior when analyzing or influencing consumer decisions. Future research may benefit from exploring moderating factors such as individual personality traits, cultural background, or digital literacy, which may further explain variations in susceptibility to these influences.

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