CHAPTER VI

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Doubt is not an agreeable condition, but certainty is an absurd one—Voltaire.

As described in the previous chapters, the research was conducted using qualitative and quantitative procedures. Data, thus generated, were varied and required multiple analytical techniques for revealing the internal structure of the constructs.

The data were mostly collected using standard scales (for description see the previous Chapter) which are tested for their reliability and validity. The study, as per its objectives, aimed at developing a new scale and tests its reliability and validity following accepted standards of psychometric processes.

The student sample, as it appears, is more homogenous in nature—not only in terms of age and education but also in terms of gender distribution. To further validate the instrument (scale), it was subjected to a more heterogeneous consumer groups spread across Kolkata.

6.1 Developing the Scale

As elaborated in the previous chapters, the principal aim of this dissertation remains developing a scale for measuring CC. Starting from the initial definition of the same, we can proceed on to the developmental stages of the scale.

Stage I: Initial Item Generation

Item generation was primarily done (keeping in mind, the definition) using

1. Qualitative response generation and
2. Expert comments.

For the process of qualitative response generation a Bengali advertisement of a popular local brand “Sreeleathers” was chosen. Using a copy of this commercial,
বাংলা বোঝার নামকরণ চুক্তি।
a few questions were posed to the respondents. This print commercial can be
categorised as a 'Lifestyle' advertisement. The brand deals in leather goods
category—which is a fashion accessory. The creative (See the adjoining picture)
focuses on a lady with a handbag with headline—"Byag to Noye, Najarkarar Chuto"
literally meaning "Not merely a bag—but an excuse to attract attention". (This
translation is made only for the benefit of any reader not having Bengali as
his/her mother tongue. The material was distributed to the students in its
original form). Rhetorically, it highlights the 'shcw-off' quality of the brand. One
may find a number of other commercials competing with the chosen one.
However, the reason for choosing this particular advertisement was motivated
by the researcher's understanding of the position of the brand in the market—
———'Sreeleathers' is generally playing in the lower end of the local market,
yet extremely popular and seen as a 'value-for-money' brand rather than only a
'cheap' alternative. With consumers moving up the value, keeping the
affordability plank unaltered, Sreeleathers has been trying to appeal to the
consumers on design and quality fronts. This commercial is perfectly in sync
with this strategy and also serves well suited to the premises of the present
study—especially the proposed aspect of cultural capital.

This specific approach, photoelidtation, as it is called, largely follows from the
one suggested by Soley (2006), and is principally based on the Thematic
Apperception Test (Murray 1943). Techniques like this, which are modifications
of the classical TAT, are often used in marketing research to help uncover not
only their internal thoughts and feelings but also their reactions about the social
environment (van der Does et al. 1992). However, these techniques (the format as
used in the present study), may not squarely uncover aspects of personality at a
greater depth (which has also not been our objective) (see Soley for details).

Similar techniques were used in communication, advertising and marketing
research during the 1950s, and were quite positively accepted, at least initially
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(see Sanford 1950/51; Rogers & Beal 1958). However, quantitative researchers such as Rothwell (1955), Luck, Wales & Taylor (1961), Kerlinger (1973), and Yoell (1974) criticized projective techniques for being ineffective, unreliable and invalid. Largely as a result of such criticism, projective techniques declined in popularity in communication, advertising, marketing and even educational research during the middle to last decades of the twentieth century, but have been revived in consumer research since the mid-1990s (see Belk 1978; Belk, Ger, & Askegaard 1997).

The 5 questions were designed to elicit the respondents' reaction to similar kinds of buying situations, consumer demography & psychographics. These are supposed to be reflecting the consumer's innate purchase motivations (Soley 2006) and can make vital contributions in generating items for scale development in the area. The questions were:

1. Can a bag be a "NAJOR KARAR CHUTO"? If it is, then how is that possible?
2. If you think the bag is "attractive"-give a few words qualifying attractiveness
3. Why the girl could be so much interested about attracting others' attention?
4. How else (other than the bag) could the girl attract others attention?
5. Can you draw the word-profile of the girl to describing her background, school, age, education, peers, and residence?

This method has not been commonly used in standard scale development procedures, however an insight into the consumers' aspirations during early scale development process are always helpful (Netemeyer & Bearden 1999). The
responses generated, gave certain interesting and revealing views and aspirations. A few can be quoted: "Bag is not only an accessory, but also reflects our personality, taste, attitude, status and standard." "Now-a-days people like to prove themselves unique, some one away from the crowd". "Small and sexy", "happening and fashionable", "unique shape, sleek looks, vivacious". The girl has been described uniformly by all the respondents as a modern urban lady with contemporary taste, having 'English medium school' background having 'good' and 'contemporary' taste. She is also not hesitant to 'exhibit', to others, that she is 'unique' when compared. These findings are reasonably close to our definition of CC. According to the respondents this girl never feels uneasy to express herself through her possessions and is careful about her presence among her peers.

These responses were used to generate some primary items of the scale. However, standard psychometric procedures (Nunnally 1978) demand generation of substantial quantum of items for a successful scale. This scale had no significant predecessors, but a few closely related scales were identified. For this purpose, around 50 other scales were consulted for generation of new items. At the next stage, these items were subject to experts, who are Senior Professors in their respective areas of specialization.

The number of the experts consulted and their areas of interest are as below:

- Economics - 1
- Statistics - 1
- Marketing - 3
- Psychology - 1
- Sociology - 2
- Psychometrics - 1

This process helped the present researcher to filter and refine on the quality and
the quantum of the items to be included in the proposed CC scale.

Using the procedures listed above the initial instrument for testing contained 60 items that prima facie appeared to tap a broad array of behaviours and dispositions hypothesized to be related to the CC construct. Collectively, these items included each of the consumer behaviours discussed in the previous section, as well as several other potentially related characteristics. However, this pool was reduced to 40 items with the help of the comments of the above experts—the obvious superfluous and unclear items were removed. This pool of items is relatively small; however, it exceeds Nunnally's (1978) recommended minimum number of items necessary for using factor analysis to construct a scale. Starting with this instrument the next stage of refinement using standard statistical refinement was taken up.

6.2 Assessment of Reliability

The Theory: At the outset, the problem of reliability is closely associated with understanding of the problem of understanding measurement in the area of marketing. Technically, the process of measurement or operationalisation involves "rules for assigning numbers to objects to represent quantities of attributes". (Nunnally 1978, p.2). The definition involves two key notions. First it is the attributes of the objects that are measured and not the objects themselves. Second, the definition doesn't specify the rules by which the numbers are assigned. However, the correctness of the measurement conceived or devised depends on a large number of factors (for details see Churchill 1977). However, impact of all these factors is often predictable. They distort the observed values \( X_0 \) away from the true score. Functionally the relationship can be expressed as:

\[
X_0 = X_T + X_s + X_r
\]

A measure, thus, is valid when the differences in the observed scores reflect true differences on the characteristic one is attempting to measure and nothing else, that is \( X_0 = X_T \). A measure becomes reliable to the extent that
independent but comparable measures of the same trait of a given object agree (Churchill 1977). Reliability depends on how much of the variation in scores is attributable to random or chance errors. If the measure is perfectly reliable, \( X_r = 0 \).

The fundamental objective in measure is to produce \( X_0 \) which approximate \( X_1 \) scores as closely as possible. The researcher, however, never knows the exact \( X_r \) scores are, rather has to depend on inferences and estimations as formulated (Churchill 1977). These initial treatments on reliability started off with the pioneering efforts of Spearman between the years 1904 and 1910. There are two basic methods of estimating reliability: a. test-retest, b. internal consistency (Peter 1979). All these measures attempt to determine the proportion of variance in the scale. Basically, these methods correlate scores obtained from a scale with scores from some form of replication of the scale. If the correlation is high, most of the variance is of the systematic type and with some degrees of consistency.

The basic difference among the three methods is in what the scale is to be correlated with, to compute the reliability coefficient. In the test-retest the identical set of measures is applied to the same subjects at two different points of time. The difference between the time-points should not be less than two weeks. However, longer time interval is also reported (Tepper-Tian et al. 1999). The method is useful, but it should not be used as a sole indicator of reliability (Peter 1979).

In internal consistency, a measurement scale is applied at one point of time, subsets of items are then subject to correlation. One important method for this remains the split-half method, where item scores are divided randomly in either even or odd number of items and the resulting half scores are correlated. But the results are contingent upon which halves are selected (as we can have \( n (n-1)/2 \) combinations). This problem is overcome by the Cronbach's Alpha—which is by far the most popular and useful measure of reliability (Nunnally 1978; Peter 1979).
Peter (1979) summarises that test-retest and internal consistency in form of Cronbach Alpha, are the most popular forms of estimating reliability. In this context, the question of satisfactory reliability value needs to be answered. However, no hard and fast rules have been offered for evaluating the magnitude of reliability coefficients. Nunnally (1978) suggests the following guidelines. In early stages of research, modest reliability in the range of .5 to .6 will suffice. For basic research, it is argued that increasing reliability beyond .8 is unnecessary because at that level the correlations are attenuated very little by measurement error. Nunnally says that in applied settings a reliability of .9 is the minimum that should be tolerated and a reliability of .95 is desirable. Thus, as the present study is not applied in nature, a reliability coefficient in the range of .8 can be considered highly satisfactory. Peter (1979), however, suggests that in marketing research studies lower levels of reliability is also acceptable. After examining a sample of 400 articles from leading marketing journals, he found that the average internal consistency measure was .75 and the sample size ranges from 13-504. As a means of avoiding the response biases associated with multi-item scales that are worded in a single direction (e.g., acquiescence, straight line responding, etc.), psychometricians often recommend reverse wording (e.g., Baumgartner & Steenkamp 2001; Churchill 1979; Nunnally 1978).

But the use of reverse-worded scales has a long and controversial history. Proponents of mixed wording suggest that this practice reduces the dangers of response bias such as acquiescence (Churchill 1979; Nunnally 1978). Critics suggest this mixture lessen a scale’s internal consistency and disrupt its dimensionality (Cronbach 1950; Falthzik & Jolson 1974). An examination of reverse-worded scales in practice reveals that while some scales, such as the Change Seeking Index (Steenkamp & Baumgartner 1995), appear to work well in American and western European samples, others, such as SERVQUAL

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(Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml 1991), do not. A review of the literature suggests that problems with reverse worded scales most often arise for members of subcultural groups (e.g., Bachman & O'Malley 1984; Schmitz and Baer 2001; Steenkamp & Burgess 2002). This bias appears to be even more pronounced when American scales are applied in Asian/Indian cultures that differ greatly in terms of values, customs, and language. For example, a spate of recent studies has found that reverse coded measures of psychological functioning (e.g., optimism, aggression, anxiety) that are unidimensional for Americans split into separate positive-versus reverse-wording factors for East Asians (e.g., Cheng & Hamid 1997; Lai & Yue 2000; Nakano 2001; Suzuki, Tsukamoto, & Abe 2000).

Although reverse coded materialism scales appear to work reasonably well among Americans, consumer researchers often find that these measures have questionable reliability and validity in cross-cultural applications (e.g., Eastman et al. 1997; Ger & Belk 1996; Wallendorf & Arnould 1988). Similarly, cross-cultural psychologists also find that reverse coded measures that are psychometrically sound in the US applications are deficient in foreign settings (e.g., Iwata, Roberts, & Kawakami 1995; Iwata, Saito, & Roberts 1994; Meloni & Gana 2001; Nakano 2001). The reasons why a reverse coded format creates problems in cross-cultural contexts are not fully understood. However, there appear to be two possible mechanisms underlying diminished internal consistency and disrupted dimensionality in cross-cultural applications. First, these problems could be because subjects have trouble understanding and responding to reverse worded items. These problems are most pronounced for subjects who are young and uneducated (Marsh 1996; Pilotte & Gable 1990; Schmitz & Baer 2001). Psychometricians widely agree that it is difficult to design good reverse worded scales and that the negations and contradictions employed as markers of reverse worded items can be confusing (McClendon 1991; Rorer 1965; Schuman & Presser 1981). These problems are likely to be exacerbated
when domestic reverse coded measures are translated into languages that employ different ways of marking negation or contradiction, such as Japanese or Chinese (Bloom 1981). This view suggests that the confusion surrounding reverse worded introduces unwanted noise, which attenuates a scale’s psychometric properties (i.e., reducing reliability and obscuring dimensionality). An alternative (and emerging) view is that the problems associated with reverse coded scales are because subjects interpret and respond to these two sets of items quite differently (Cheng & Hamid 1997; Lei & Yue 2000). Rather than representing opposite ends of the same construct (as assumed by measurement theory), subjects might view positive worded and reverse worded as unrelated. This differential in how positive worded and reverse worded are interpreted (and responded to) may be influenced by cultural norms or values.

Although reverse coded scales may reduce the risks of certain types of response biases, the inclusion of reverse worded may produce unintended problems by reducing a scale’s internal consistency and obscuring its dimensionality (Goldsmith and Desborde 1991; Schriesheim and Hill 1981). Researchers who employ reverse coded scales often find that reverse worded display somewhat lower reliability and weaker item-to-total correlations than their positive-worded counterparts (Cronbach 1942; Benson & Hocevar 1985; Peabody 1966). Furthermore, when subjected to factor analysis, the reverse worded often load on a separate factor (Benson & Hocevar 1985; Herche & Engelland 1996; Pilotte & Gable 1990). In sum, reverse coded scales are likely to face difficulty in terms of obtaining adequate internal consistency and dimensionality. Moreover, in addition to creating difficulties in terms of establishing measurement equivalence, it may also pose a serious threat to the construct validity of reverse coded scales, leading to potentially misleading cross-cultural comparisons. As a result, these cross-cultural applications may lack both measurement equivalence and construct validity. As such fifty-two percent of the scales listed in the
Handbook of Marketing Scales (Bearden & Netemeyer, 1999) don’t use reverse worded scales (Rindflisch et al. 2003). After examining the extant literature on reverse coding, decision was taken to avoid the same, as our proposed scale can be utilised for cross-cultural testing also.

Multi-item Likert-type scales are a common and have been recommended widely as means of collecting data on attitudes, beliefs, values, and other latent consumer behaviour constructs (Peterson 1994). However, scale labels and position are reported to change the response pattern, irrespective of the instrument (Wildt & Mazis 1978). So care must be taken in constructing a proper usable scale. Related to this, another major debatable issue is the inclusion of midpoint in the Likert type scales. Psychometricians like Nunnally (1978) are of the opinion that a forced choice model increases reliability. However, there have been substantial counter-arguments put forward by psychometricians. According to them, midpoints create failure through ‘mid-point piling’ (Alreck & Settle 1985) especially when opinions are not firm, thereby attenuating score reliability (Alwin & Krosnick 1991). Gilljam and Granberg (1993) referred to such responses as “false negatives” and found that many respondents take positions when further questioned. Other studies (Ryan 1980; Swearingen 1999) that examined different response options found a difference in means between scales with and without a midpoint. Opponent’s also contend that the magnitude of a set of attitudes can be underestimated—likewise, Masters (1976) found that score reliability decreased when 4-point scale was increased to 5-point and 6-point increased to 7-point scale. In addition, the ambiguity in actual interpretation of the mid-point adds one more dimension to the controversy. The midpoint can imply ‘don’t know’, ‘don’t agree’, ‘neutral’, etc. The earlier findings of Wildt (1978) can be recalled here to understand the complexity of the issue. Very recent studies by Weeme and Onwuegbuzie (2001) also lend support to all these facts. The researcher was interested in a simple, predictive measure of this
one construct, and sought to develop a scale in which items reflecting various manifestations of the construct were summed into a single score. This corresponds to what Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994) call the total aggregation model of personality construct measurement. Keeping in mind the above issues, 

*The new CC Scale is proposed to follow a 6-point Likert-type summated format without any midpoints and reverse coding response style.*

Assessment of reliability was done through a four separate studies:

- Pilot Study I
- Pilot Study II
- Student Study
- General Consumer Validation study

The two pilot studies were conducted to assess the initial estimates of reliability so that the next levels of scale refinement can be taken up carry out the process of scale refinement through elimination of those items which show a low and insignificant item-total correlation. Although no standard statistical measures do exist for this process, however, following standard procedures (Netemeyer & Bearden 1999) we decided on a cutoff of a correlation value of .490.

Table 6-1 shows the initial estimates of Cronbach Alpha and Split-half measures reliability of the scales. Thus it is seen that the early efforts are yielding significantly encouraging results. This served for the present researcher as a source of motivator and the subsequent stages of scale development were initiated. At the next level, as it has been already pointed out, the item-total correlation was run to find out and subsequently eliminate the items that contribute minimally to the core scale value (Nunnally).
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Table 6-3: Summary of Cronbach Alpha Results of the New CC Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Study type</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Reliability α</th>
<th>Split-half</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Pilot 1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Pilot 2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>.762</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Student Study</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>.824</td>
<td>.689</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>General Consumers</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td>.845</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This process was repeated with the results obtained in the two Pilot studies. In the process the number of items in the proposed scale was subsequently reduced to 12, from the initial 40 (See Appendix for Versions I, II, III). The table below shows the values of the item-total correlation for the items (variables) which were eliminated and also for the final 12 items. All correlations are positive and significant at 95% CL. Items having correlation values less than .490 were also deleted.

6.3 Analysis of Student Data

According to the sampling guidelines, as stated previously, 120 students (79% males and 21% females- this discrepancy is expected given the fact, that there is always lower enrolment of females in technical/professional courses in our country) were selected randomly for the purpose of the study. The relevant results indicated that the scale shows strong psychometric properties. The reliability of the scale was assessed with the use of internal consistency and test-retest methods. The alpha value was estimated to be .824. Guttman Split-half was found to be .6891. To estimate test-retest reliability, a new sample of 50 students completed the scale on two occasions, 12 weeks apart (Nunally 1978).
The correlation between the two sets of scores was 0.83. Thus, the CC scale displays adequate internal and test-retest reliability. Average Measure Intraclass Correlation equals .8168 and existence of all positive inter-item covariance indicate a highly reliable scale (Nunnally 1978). Tukey’s Test exhibits Significance of .1086 which indicates Additivity. When the residuals were plotted against the CC data the linearity of the data was also established. This appears to be an important property of any data which will be subsequently subjected to major multivariate data analysis. The individual items explain the total additive score to the extent of over 87% ($R^2=.875$, $p<.05$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>.3619</td>
<td>Import</td>
<td>.4623</td>
<td>Originl</td>
<td>.5907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosper</td>
<td>.3865</td>
<td>Wealthy</td>
<td>.4953</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>.4009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopmal</td>
<td>.5147</td>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>.3242</td>
<td>Fnetst</td>
<td>.4729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saysom</td>
<td>.5471</td>
<td>Membr</td>
<td>.5172</td>
<td>Sophi</td>
<td>.3555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expnsve</td>
<td>.2207</td>
<td>Rstrnt</td>
<td>.4854</td>
<td>Abstrct</td>
<td>.4572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topline</td>
<td>.3492</td>
<td>Classy</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>.4257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice</td>
<td>.3738</td>
<td>Costly</td>
<td>.5729</td>
<td>Appeal</td>
<td>.2691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hussain</td>
<td>.4965</td>
<td>Uncmn</td>
<td>.3949</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>.3121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iam</td>
<td>.4274</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>.0053</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>.5690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye</td>
<td>.5631</td>
<td>Exotic</td>
<td>.5227</td>
<td>Trend</td>
<td>.4057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>.6054</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>.2959</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6-4: Summary of Item-Total Correlation (Items from Study II Instrument are shortened using abbreviated key-words) [Final 12 Items Highlighted]

6.3.1 Test of Discrimination

Another important character of a well-behaved scale is its ability to discriminate between responses. To test the same the scores were divided into 5 equal classes of class-width of 10 and the median score being 43. The scores of the ‘top class’ and the ‘lowest class’ were tested for difference and found to be significant
11-Item Conspicuous Consumption Scale

You are requested to go through each of them very carefully and give your answer by putting a CIRCLE on the alternative that you feel describes you the best.

1. It says something to people around me when I buy a high priced brand
   Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree

2. I buy some products because I want to show that I am as wealthy as some of my friends are.
   Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree

3. I would prefer to take-up a membership in a corporate club and organize various activities
   Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree

4. If I get a chance, I would decorate my drawing room with an M F Hussain’s Masterpiece
   Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree

5. Buying a high priced product I convey to my friends that I am classy.
   Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree

6. Even for relatively inexpensive products, I buy a costly version to impress my friends.
   Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree
7. Given a chance, I would buy an interesting and uncommon version of a product otherwise available with a plain design, to show others that I have an original taste

**Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree**

8. Others wish they could match my eye for beauty and taste.

**Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree**

9. By choosing a product having an exotic look and design I show my friends that I am different

**Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree**

10. I often look for products or brands to create my own style that everybody will admire

**Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree**

11. I would like to go to the shopping malls which are frequented by the rich and the famous of the town

**Strongly Agree 6 ...5...4...3...2...1Strongly Disagree**
(t=7.099, d.f=41, p<.001) thus we see that the scale data behaves excellently when its various properties are tested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>41.06</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>11.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>49.46</td>
<td>49.88</td>
<td>11.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6-5: Summary of Descriptive Statistics Results of the New CC Scale

6.3.2 Respondent Demography: General Consumer Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>MHI</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>10,000-15,000</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Business</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>15,001-20,000</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(General) Service</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>20,001-25,000</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>25,001-30,000</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30,001-35,000</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employed</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Teacher/Prof</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6-6: Summary of Respondent Education, Occupation, & Income
Graduates include BA/BSc/BCom and Postgraduates include MA/MSc/MCom. Engineers, Lawyers, Doctors, Govt. Officials, etc. are classified as Professionals.

6.3.3 Examining the Factor Structure

My understanding of the CC construct demands that the same is a multidimensional construct rather than unidimensional. It is supposed to capture the underlying dimension(s) that explain the concept. It is hypothesised that the formulated scale would have two dimensions— one culture related and another wealth related and both of them would be explaining the consumers' distinctiveness orientation. To reveal this, a factor analysis schedule was run using the standard SPSS 13.0 package. The popular usage of Principal components analysis is often confused with factor analysis and is marred by controversy (Bentler & Kano 1990; Floyd & Widaman 1995; Ford, MacCallum & Tait 1986; Gorsuch, 1990; Loehlin 1990; MacCallum & Tucker 1991; Mulaik 1990; Widaman 1990, 1993) ——— it became common decades ago when computers were slow and expensive to use; it was a quicker, cheaper alternative to factor analysis (Gorsuch 1990). It is computed without regard to any underlying structure caused by latent variables; components are calculated using all of the variance of the manifest variables, and all of that variance appears in the solution (Ford et al. 1986). On the contrary, during factor extraction the shared variance of a variable is partitioned from its unique variance and error variance to reveal the underlying factor structure; only shared variance appears in the
solution. Principal components analysis does not discriminate between shared and unique variance. When the factors are uncorrelated and communalities are moderate it can produce inflated values of variance accounted for by the components (Gorsuch 1997; McArdle 1990). Since factor analysis only analyses shared variance, factor analysis should yield the same solution (all other things being equal) while also avoiding the inflation of estimates of variance accounted for. An article by Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum and Strahan (1999) argued that if data are relatively normally distributed, maximum likelihood is the best choice because “it allows for the computation of a wide range of indexes of the goodness of fit of the model [and] permits statistical significance testing of factor loadings and correlations among factors and the computation of confidence intervals.” (p. 277). If the assumption of multivariate normality is “severely violated” they recommend the principal factor method. The number of factors to be retained is another crucial decision that has to be taken while going through this exercise. Because both over-extraction and under-extraction of factors retained for rotation can have deleterious effects on the results.

Principal components extraction factor analysis was run with varimax rotation in an exploratory mode to estimate the number of factors. Software obtained a total of 3 factors with eigen values greater than 1. However, there is a broad consensus in the literature that this is among the least accurate methods for selecting the number of factors to retain (Velicer & Jackson 1990). In fact, a Monte Carlo analyses performed by Costello & Osborne (2005) to test this assertion, found that 36% of their samples retained too many factors using this criterion. The above authors suggest that the best choice for researchers is the Scree Test. The Scree test involves examining the graph of the eigen values and looking for the natural bend or break point (popularly called “elbow”) in the data where the curve flattens out and thereby deciding on the number of factors to be arrived at (Lehmann, Gupta, & Steckel 1998, p. 611). Following this practice, the number of
factors was decided upon as to 2 (refer to the figures below) and this exactly corroborates with the hypothesised expectation. The present researcher ran all the three tests (PCA, Maximum Likelihood and Principal Axis) in order to arrive at the factor structure of the suggested scale and in all the three cases the scree plot indicated 2 factors.

Thus, in the next step a factor analysis was ran forcing two factors, using principal components extraction and varimax rotation. These factors explained 52.75% of the variance. A factor-loading value of .4 was used as a cut off to select items for the scale, as common magnitudes in the social sciences ranges between .40 and .70 (Costello & Osborn 2005). Using this criterion, the 'Rare' item was removed. Seven Items formed the first factor. The internal reliability of these items using Cronbach’s α was .76, which is acceptable (Hair, Babin, Money, & Samouel 2003; Sekaran 2000). These items were related to economic capital. Thus, this factor is called “Wealth-related Conspicuous Consumption.” Four Items formed the second factor. These items were related to cultural capital. This factor is termed as “Culture-related Conspicuous Consumption.”

The internal reliability of this second-set of items was α = .762. A factor with fewer than three items is generally weak and unstable; 5 or more strongly loading items (.50 or better) are desirable and indicate a solid factor (Costello & Osborn 2005). Thus the factor structure of our scale shows its internal strength. The final procedure was to modify the scoring pattern of the scale, given the fact that the two dimensions carry differing number of items. The final score was calculated as:

\[ \Sigma \text{Wealth Dimension} + 1.76 \Sigma \text{Cultural Dimension} = \text{Conspicuous Consumption Orientation} \]
Understanding Conspicuous Consumption

Figure 2: Scree Plot (PCA)

Figure 3: Scree Plot (Maximum Likelihood)
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Table 6-6: Factor Analysis of the Scale Result (* Removed due to low factor loading)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHOPMAL</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAYSOM</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEALTH</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMBR</td>
<td>.596</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUSSAIN</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASSY</td>
<td>.680</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSTLY</td>
<td>.643</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORIGINL</td>
<td>.803</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYE</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXOTIC</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RARE*</td>
<td>.334*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STYLE</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6-7: Variance Explained by Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>52.755</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4 Assessment of Validity

Does CC really exist as a meaningful, distinct construct? In order to answer this question, the CC scale was validated. In order to validate the scale, both the convergent and the discriminant validity of the CC measure were analysed using correlation coefficients (Cook & Campbell 1979; Kerlinger & Lee 2000).

Construct validity refers to the meaningfulness of the variable or construct under investigation. Campbell and Fiske (1959) suggested that convergent and discriminant validity is a way to approach the assessment of construct validity. Using this approach, other measures of the same trait and sometimes other traits are hypothesised to be related positively (convergent) or be independent (discriminant) to an extent beyond that caused by common method variance. If these hypotheses are upheld empirically, then construct validity is affirmed.

To establish convergent validity, measures of constructs that theoretically should be related to each other are, in fact, observed to be related to each other. To establish discriminant validity measures of constructs that theoretically should not be related to each other are, in fact, observed to not be related to each other (Campbell & Fiske 1953).

A valid test is one that measures what we want to measure, all of what we want to measure, and nothing but what we want to measure. Both convergent and discriminant validity are considered subcategories or subtypes of construct validity. The important thing to recognise is that they work together — if the evidences for both convergent and discriminant validity can be established, then, by definition, there is evidence for construct validity.

VALIDITY TEST 1. In general, the consumers tend show their distinction-orientation through acquisition of goods, services, and experiences that few others possess. These consumers are thus intelligent, perceptive, imaginative,
cultured, inquisitive, curious, (Judge & Bono 2000; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne 1999; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller 2000) and open to experiences and tolerant and have divergent thinking and creativity.

Thus, it was posited that CC is positively correlated to DUCP (Lynn & Harris 1999), a construct that conceptually measures a similar consumer behaviour phenomenon. A strong correlation ($p = .75, p<.01$) provided evidence for the convergent validity of the CC scale.

VALIDITY TEST 2. Taking the same logic a little further, we can understand that these consumers would have a strong motivation to exhibit their individualism in terms of their taste, and even wealth creating abilities. Technically speaking, at a more micro or individual level, consumer reactions are moderated by their self-schema—the SC construct is conceptually related to the way people interpret “who am I” and what it means to be “self” (Markus & Oysermen 1988). A separated person has a sense of independence and perceives him/herself as an individual who is distinct from others; that is, "I am me." In contrast, a connected person has a sense of interdependence and sees him- or herself as the continuation of others (i.e., "I am a part of others"). The separateness—connectedness distinction is found in several different literature. For example, Bakan (1966) describes the agentic orientation as a concern for oneself as an individual and the communal orientation as a concern for the relationship between oneself and others.

Other related terms, such as autonomous, independent, differentiated, individualist versus sociocentric, interdependent, united, etc have also appeared in various literature (see Markus & Oysermen 1988 for reviews). Bios (1967) has extended this separation-individuation process into later developmental stages and describes adolescence as a "second individuation process" in which a person recognises his or her independence and individuality. These ideas suggest that the more a person...
perceives him- or herself as separated, the greater the tendency that he or she emphasises his or her autonomy, independence, and individuality. In a second effort to validate the scale, it was thought to be important to understand CC scale’s ability to capture the ‘individualistic’ dimension that has been conceptually built into the definition. Wang and Mowen’s Separateness-connectedness scale (1997) measures actually this. A moderate relationship of CC with the Separateness sub scale \( (p = .43, p<.05) \) provides evidence for further validity of the CC scale. The smaller value of the correlation coefficient might have resulted from the natural Asian tendency to exhibit a lower level of the said characteristic when compared to the Westerners (Markus & Oysermen 1988; Wang & Mowen 1997).

**VALIDITY TEST 3.** Yet another attempt was made to validate the CC scale. As we understand the classical CC is characterised by visibility, a phenomenon which has been also considered in our present definition. Moschis Scale of Social Visibility conceptually measures the same aspect (in fact, in absence of a proper scale this has been used as a proxy for CC : in the literature) and has been considered here for the purpose of validation. A significantly high correlation \( (p = .56, p<.01) \) provides a strong evidence of the convergent validity of the CC scale.

**VALIDITY TEST 4.** In an attempt to assess the discriminant validity, the CC scale was tested against the standard Voluntary simplicity (VS) scale. A nonsignificant relationship was detected \( (p = .04, p= ns) \). This is very much expected given the mutual natures of the two constructs—VS focuses on an individual tendency to select a lifestyle intended to minimise his consumption and dependency on material items, whereas in CC we can understand materialism is seen as a central value (shown in later section).

**VALIDITY TEST 5.** In a further assessment cf discriminant validity, the CC
construct was related to Need for Uniqueness—Unpopular Choice Counter-Conformity Subscale. This measures different ness of consumers at the cost of being disliked or disapproved by the significant others, a behaviour which is expected to be working totally in contrast to our concept of CC where consumers desire to be different, yet admired. A nonsignificant relationship was detected ($p = .25$, $p= ns$) and our expectation is validated.

VALIDITY TEST 6. The potential confounding of responses to the CC scale by social desirability bias was assessed, as has recently been advocated in consumer research (Tepper-Tian et. al. 2000). Such an assessment was deemed necessary because making a distinctive choice in the Indian society is often difficult—given the chances of getting deviated from established group norms. This assessment was conducted such that the new CC measure could be counterbalanced with a measure of socially desirable responding. A ten item Social Desirability Scale, as designed by Strahan et.al. (1972), was selected. This is actually a shortened form of the Marlow-Crowne Socially Desirable Response Scale (1960). The new CC scale did not correlate with the MC Scale ($p = .08$, $p= ns$).
Understanding Conspicuous Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Type: Convergent Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Type: Discriminant Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6-8: Summary of Scale Validity Assessment

6.5 Analysis & Interpretation of Antecedents

Before going into the detailed analysis of the psychological antecedents and the related hypotheses, we may divide the same into:

a. Demography-related—H1, H2, H3, & H4 (The hypotheses testing involving this category has been done using the data obtained from the 'general consumer' respondents).

b. Self-related variables—H5, H6, H7, H8 & H9
c. Need related variables—H10, H11, H12, & H13
d. Value-related variable——H14, H15, & H16

Demography Related Hypotheses: Before examining the micro-level psychological antecedents of CC, the results of the general consumer survey were tested for the difference in the CC orientation between the genders. As it is seen, that this psychological variable can also be seen as a result of the overall value-system and the changes in the society, and thus we cannot expect any differences between the genders in the said characteristic (t= -.828, df= 349, p> .05) thus confirming H1. The Conspicuous Consumption is emerging as a universal phenomenon, and the gender background exerts little influence on the same, especially in the urban set-up. Purchase is largely a family decision and entry of women in work-force, or their increasing influence in the social and domestic affairs make them equally ‘vulnerable’ to symbolic consumption. In fact, even a casual scanning of novels, popular culture, etc. reveals that the lady-of-the-house is instrumental in flamboyant purchase behaviour in a typical Indian middle class family. Examining the effect of chronological age on CC-orientation, the author sees that there is no significant relationship between these two variables (p=.045, p=ns). There by confirming H2. Here it must be mentioned that, for the purpose of the present research respondent-age was purposely selected at little higher level——this deliberate strategy was taken keeping in mind, the trend that is exhibited by the society in general——the individuals are likely to settle down in their family lives and professional fields and achieve stability. This perceived stability brings in confidence and identity, a lack of which may initiate compensatory consumption behaviour——an activity particularly demonstrated by adolescents and young adults (for details see O’Donnell & Wardlow 2000). This phenomenon would have acted as a ‘cloud’ veiling the true CC orientation among the respondents.
Another observation we can make following Bourdieu is the difference in the CltCC across various education-qualification groups. Using univariate ANOVA-Post-HOC (Dunnett type) results show significant differences in the said the respondent category. Thus confirming H3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CltCC/Educational Groups</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MA/MSc/MCom</td>
<td>2.549(p&lt;.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA/BSc/BCom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>3.82(p&lt;.05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6-9: Impact of Educational Qualification on CltCC

The wider difference between the Professionals and ‘General PG’ s may be due to some unique cultural factors e.g. the professional degree students in India go-through a different training process in the Universities vis-à-vis those from the other PGs resulting in concomitant cultural orientation and lifestyles. However, no other satisfactory emanations could be found and the issue may require a more in-depth investigation in the future. Again, Bourdieu asserts individuals with higher levels of cultural capital also have a relatively strong economic back ground—this is reflected in the present research also. A post-hoc ANOVA (Dunnett’s test) indicates that there are significant differences in the mean CC-score across the income groups, thus confirming H4. This shows the combined effect of both the factors.
Self Related Hypotheses: It has been argued at length in the present thesis, that rather than seeing CC as a mode of compensatory consumption, it should be considered as a more positive phenomenon, contributing to the well-being of an individual's mental health. Drawing from this, the CC scores were correlated with the Rosenberg Self-esteem scores. The correlation was found to be significant ($p = .388, p<.05$) confirming H5. At the next stage, the respondents with higher SE scores were selected. The scores were found to yield stronger correlation results ($p = .534, p<.05$) confirming H6. This is very much expected because with CC, the individual consumer is making himself visible and distinct from among the others. It is possible only when he is confident about his abilities, and judicious of his taste—and the same being reflected in his higher levels of self-esteem and clear self-concept. There is enough evidence to suggest that self-esteem has motivational import (Hewitt 2005) ——favourable self-concept and esteem can explain individual's conduct ranging from pro-social, conformatory to even deviant behaviours. They associate with others selectively, choosing
those who will provide or confirm a positive self-evaluation. Our conceptualisation of CC demands that consumers crave for social approval and this, in no case, is contraindicative of a favourable self-esteem.

However, when viewed purely from psychometric perspective, SE measure (which often taken as a global measure of Self-concept) is argued to be less stable (Shavelson et al. 1976). To avoid this problem, the CC measure was further correlated to the Self-Concept Clarity construct. Both these constructs were found to be strongly correlated ($\rho = .514$, $p<.01$) confirming H7. To re-affirm the analysis was further extended and fine-tuned to incorporate the MSGO Actual-Ideal discrepancy score. The Correlation between CC and MSGO was found to be moderately negative ($\rho = -.365$, $p<.05$) proving H8. MSGO is considered as a good indicator of self acceptance and can be taken as a measure of self-concept and narcissistic vulnerability (Mitra 2000). The incongruence between actual and ideal selves leads to a painful state of self-appraisal, a condition also known as narcissistic vulnerability (Joffe & Sandler 1967; Bleiberg 1994) and this internal dissonance is an uncomfortable state. This state can be measured directly using the MSGO instrument. Under these circumstances individuals depend on the use of external objects to fill the void so created (Bleiberg 1988).

But our assertion and previous analysis do prove that individual consumers are confident and have a relatively well-developed self-esteem and self-concept---this, in general, does not motivate the consumers to take up compensatory forms of consumption in form of CC to bridge the Ideal-Actual gap and thereby avoiding manifestations of narcissistic vulnerability that may include proneness to embarrassment, shame, acute self-consciousness, shyness, and painful questions about self-worth and self-esteem (Bleiberg 1988). Taking a cue from the tests conducted above, we see that CC consumers have a strong desire to adopt unique products/designs. This is not a surprising characteristic for an individual who wants to distinguish himself from others through his self-confidence, choice...
and training. Hence, we see that CC is strongly related to another important consumer personality trait, innovativeness \((p = .528, p<.05)\), proving H9. Our result suggests once more that, at least, in case of CC the phenomenon is not driven by a lack of a clear self-concept, and mental insecurity. The overall analysis thereby reveals, as a corollary, that CC is not a symptom given out by insecure minds, looking at products as a means of compensating for felt psychological incompleteness.

The Need Hypotheses: The imperative to study the influence of the 'Need' dimension in the context of the present study comes from its ability to organise other psychological processes such as perception, thought, feelings, and hence behaviour (for details see Mitra 2000). It takes several forms (e.g. nAchievement, nAffiliation, nDominance) and represents significant sources of influence in a person's life. A major portion of an individual's will to perform can be explained or predicted by the intensity of his needs. This is not as much prominent as it is in the case of the nACH. It is the need that drives individuals to accomplish something difficult, to master and manipulate or organise resources as quickly as possible (Mitra 2000). It is characterised by the desire to overcome obstacles and achieve a high standard, to rival and surpass others. The motive is present when a person's reaction to an activity is not solely concerned with outcome but also with regard to some sort of standard he sets for himself, so that he is pleased with his competence and when successful, they continually raise their levels of aspiration in a realistic way (Spence & Helmreich 1983). nACH today is mostly represented in professional achievements and culminating into material successes.

When CC scores were correlated with nACH scores the two were found to be correlated \((p = .518, p<.05)\). Thus confirming H10. This assertion is all the more strengthened by nature the chosen scale — the importance of professional success is supreme among today's young generation and for especially those
who are taking Management/Engineering education and that is what the scale captures. On the hand, when correlated with nDOM the CC score showed no relation ($\rho = .265, p=ns$). Thus confirming H12. This result is not surprising as individuals with higher CC-orientation, hence higher nACH, would rather prefer to compete than controlling others through persuasion or force, which is the nDOM (Larsen & Buss 2002). Larsen & Buss (2002), have, in fact, seen the nDOM as an individual's drive to make up for a failure, defend him from criticism, or hide/justify failures—— largely a defensive behaviour mechanism reflecting a 
challenged
self-concept. In the same vein, no significant relation was detected with nAFF, given the relatively confident nature and the distinctive disposition expected of the subjects. According to H13, CC-orientation will be significantly related to the Need for Uniqueness. This hypothesis is also confirmed ($\rho = .25, p<.01$). However, this low correlation speaks more about the nature of the construct than less. NFU, by its nature, also incorporates 'desire to take socially unacceptable decisions'. This component is not desirable in CC phenomenon and hence is discounted for and results in a somewhat lower measure of correlation coefficient.

The Value Hypotheses: When correlated to the CC-score, materialism exhibit a strong and significant relationship ($\rho = .655, p<.01$), confirming H14. As a consumer seeks objects, his choices are also guided by his value system. It influences product choice directly or indirectly depending on the meaning of the product and the kind of judgment used to evaluate that meaning. Consumers see the products as a significant source of satisfaction in life and it forms a part of their social identity and, in turn, contributes to a dominant value system. Sirgy (1998) finds that overall life satisfaction is seen to be partly determined by the satisfaction with the standard of living. Thus going beyond considering materialism as a simple personality trait, we see it as a part of a global consumer culture and an individual value, which the consumers, especially the CC ones
subscribe to. This categorisation is consistent with the generally popular conceptualisation of Value—a prescriptive belief that guides the individual's behaviour throughout life (Rokeach 1973).

Cultural capital endows the individual to value finer things in life, beauty, and aesthetics. Their product choice is often unique, reflecting sophisticated taste and ability to appreciate innovativeness. This has been already exhibited in our previous set of analysis, however the data was subjected to further introspection—the ‘Cultural Capital’ subscale was correlated with ‘Aesthetic Response’ and ‘Hedonism’. In both the cases the effect of the ‘Wealth’ subscale was controlled—the Partial Correlation Coefficients were high and significant (\( \rho_{\text{Cltc/Hedonism.Wth}} = .622, p<.05 \); \( \rho_{\text{Cltc/Aesthetic.Wth}} = .506, p<.05 \)), thereby confirming H15, H16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
<th>( \rho )</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Hypothesised Result</th>
<th>Actual Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.534</td>
<td>( p&lt;.05 )</td>
<td>Should be related</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Self Concept Clarity</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td>( p&lt;.01 )</td>
<td>Should be related</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Consumer Innovativeness</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.528</td>
<td>( p&lt;.05 )</td>
<td>Should be related</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Need for Achievement</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.518</td>
<td>( p&lt;.05 )</td>
<td>Should be related</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>NFU</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>( p&lt;.05 )</td>
<td>Should be related</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Materialism Value</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.655</td>
<td>( p&lt;.01 )</td>
<td>Should be related</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6-10: Summary of Results of Major Antecedent Tests
6.5.1 Test of Consequences

The aesthetic value of a product pertains to the pleasure derived from seeing the product, without consideration of utility (Holbrook 1980). Consumer reaction to the aesthetic aspects of products is increasingly being recognised as an important determinant of consumer behaviour (Berkowitz 1987; Wallendorf 1980). The word "aesthetics," which is usually used in reference to either sensitivity to the beautiful or to the branch of philosophy that provides a theory of the beautiful and of the fine arts. However, some in the field prefer to apply aesthetic experience only to so-called "artistic" or "cultural products" (Holbrook 1981; Olson 1981), while others acknowledge that virtually any product can be appreciated in an aesthetic sense (Holbrook 1981; Olson 1981). It reflects Berlyne's sentiment that "... aesthetics is certainly concerned with the arts, but it is not confined to the arts ..." (Berlyne 1974, p. 1). A consumer can value the "look" of a product purely for its own sake, as looking at something beautiful is rewarding in itself. For example, the influence of an aesthetic judgment on product preference can be moderated by the perceived aesthetic fit of the product with other products the consumer owns, or his or her home interior (Bloch 1995). As discussed in the previous sections, the contemporary consumers dislike extravagance, yet balance their consumption with such qualities that reflect their taste. This reflection often comes in form of the design and the built-in aesthetics of the products they choose. Thus even the most inexpensive products may become an object of desire by the virtue of its aesthetic property and its capacity to appeal to the 'trained' eyes and 'sensitive' minds-----the increasing 'market' for marginalised tribal artifacts, influence of rare craftsmanship even in popular events like the 'Durga Puja' is a sure proof of the same. The influence of this concept of aesthetics on CC and its impact on the marketing practice were tested via two studies. These studies were done using a. Mobile phones, and b. Home furnishing. On the other hand, these products often
popularly categorised as 'shopping products', require higher level of consumer involvement. Consumer spend time & energy, use various decision criteria to find relevant product features, weigh alternatives before making the actual purchase decision. Choice of a product category like this enables the researcher to minimise the impact of impulse decision making while the products are being selected by the respondents during the course of the study.

6.5.1 Mobile Phone Study

The influence of mobile phones in modern life is enormous and in a vast country like India it has changed the way we live our life. It is now one of the largest markets in the world for mobiles and from being a toy of a rich brat it has transformed itself into a utility gadget in the hands of the commoner. Every young Indian owns a piece of this modern technological marvel, and these have become their statement of self. Prior developed concept of consumers' responses to conspicuous consumption motivation should influence choice of either more expensive or more unique looking product designs than the common place, easily available items. This contention is also supported by Tepper-Tian et. al (2001). The consumers, having higher levels of CliCC would value more of aesthetics, while those having higher quant:m of WlthCC would prefer a selection of more expensive product category. Procurement of aesthetically unique or more expensive items creates a sense of distinctiveness over the items which are owned by the masses and hence are commonplace in nature. Those who are driven by the CC motivation, as is captured by the new CC construct, would thus avoid this similarity and heighten this self-perceptions of differentness through selection of uncommon products—though it is easier to identify differentiate a product through its money value but it becomes more challenging when the consumers attempt to differentiate products based on its 'resident' meaning or 'infuse' a new one (thereby creating a difference) into the existing product. However, it must be borne in mind that it is not these consumers (e.g. }
CltCC consumers) value products as they are, but they must reflect the difference in taste etc. that the consumers have—the product is valued because they meet the unique individual aesthetic standard. Thus, we can contend that consumers with higher CC orientation would show differentiated product preference and the new CC scale—e.g. CltCC would stress upon aesthetics and will not consider expensiveness as the sole selection criterion.

**Method**

Using mobile phone as a focal point of the research, 60 management students were randomly selected to volunteer for the study. A questionnaire was designed which asked the question

"Do you think, given a chance, that you would like to show only an expensive mobile handset to others? Yes/No. Please give your reasons."

This question was designed to elicit such responses describing the internal feelings and attitude of the consumers. This technique called Cognitive Responses Cognitive responses were used primarily because they can mirror the actual thoughts that occur to people as they evaluate a persuasive message (Wansink, Ray, & Batra 1994) and are important indicators of attitude change (Greenwald 1968 cited in Lowrey 1998).

**Outcome Measures**

The responses thus generated were coded in terms of: Support Arguments (SA), coded 0 and Counterarguments (CA), coded 1 (Belch & Belch 2004). The points assigned were summed across responses to create measures of (revealed) preferences for mobile usage and exhibition.

**Results**

As expected, with the effect of WlthCC controlled, number of CAs correlate (partial correlation method) strongly with CltCC ($p_{\text{CltCC/CA, Wlth}} = .672, p<.05$). On
the other hand, with the effect of CltCC controlled, number of SAs correlate strongly with CC (\(P_{\text{with/SA, CltCC}} = .526, p < .05\)) and the difference was found to be significant (\(t = 5.372, p < .01\)). Again, as also hypothesised and proved earlier, CltCC students showed more aesthetic tendencies (\(p = .605, p < .05\)), indicating their normal preference for more aesthetically beautiful, than expensive handsets, to be distinctively visible to their peer group.

6.5.2 Home Furnishing Study

Method

To further validate our contention this second study was designed with 60 management students. For this purpose 20 pictures of various ‘interior decoration’ items were collected. The items were purposefully selected in such a way that (see appendix): i. Type A items (10), with their surroundings in a typical contemporary dwelling, should ‘look’ expensive. These mainly included furniture, sofa sets, beds, closets, etc. ii. Type B items (10), typical of a middle-class interior design accessory, reflect ‘taste’ but not ‘extravagance’. The items included such elements as Dokra Crafts, Madhubani Paintings, Kantha Stitch wall hangings, Miniature style paintings, Rajasthani woodcraft, etc. These pictures were mixed and arranged in such way that they don’t reflect any pattern. Due to resource constraint, and lack of expertise they shown on the computer screen using PPT slides, instead of getting them printed and making a professional catalogue (which certainly would have made the presentation look more realistic). The respondents were asked to indicate their choices and the probable price they are ready to pay for each item, without any prior information being given to the respondents. They were also asked to justify their choices.

Results

Respondents indicated the prices and the price quoted for the ‘Cultural Items’ (Type B) were different (lower) from the Type A items—Mean Price Type B = Rs. 132
Mean Price $\lambda = Rs. 8758$ and the difference being significant $t=67.98$, $p<.05$.

The price data indicate that there is an 'automatic' tendency among respondents (consumers) to infer about the inherent quality/attribute of the products. The classification (e.g. affordable things yet beautiful) has been clearly done, even without any prior information supplied to them. When asked to comment about their reason for choosing these items, the respondents' Support Arguments revealed that 68% of the statements justified the choice for 'Taste', 55% of the responses reflect the respondents' desire of shewing "Difference from Others" and 88% were looking for "Appreciation and Status". This shows that resident meanings are adequately interpreted which is being reflected in their price expectation.

The results were further used to compare the robustness of the New CC scale with that of Marcoux's instrument. This stage of enquiry, as the author thinks, may be deemed necessary to establish the comparable strength of the new instrument. This particular approach has also been used in some previous studies (Tepper-tian 2000).

The total price quoted by each respondent was correlated with the total CC score and Marcoux's CC scores respectively. The correlation were different ($p_{\text{NewCC}} = .716$, $p<.05$) & ($p_{\text{Marcoux}} = .394$, $p<.05$) and the difference was found to be significant ($t=18.57$, $p<.05$). The reliability of the two scales were also found to be different—— $\alpha_{\text{Marcoux}} = .85$, $\alpha_{\text{NewCC}} = .92$ on the same sample of students. This indicates that Marcoux's scale fails to estimate the complete nature of the contemporary CC not only on theoretical dimensions but also on simulated yet 'practical' marketing situation.