

# **Navigating Cognitive Dissonance: Exploring the Interplay between Conspicuous Consumption, Product Involvement, Price Sensitivity, and Pleasure**



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## **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the complex relationship between product involvement, price sensitivity, conspicuous consumption, the feeling of pleasure, and post-purchase cognitive dissonance. Data were collected from 511 participants utilizing a convenience sampling technique. The results demonstrate the directional effects among the variables. While product involvement significantly and inversely affects price sensitivity, no relationship was found between product involvement and cognitive dissonance. Moreover, it was concluded that the feeling of pleasure positively and significantly affects both price sensitivity and cognitive dissonance. On the other hand, price sensitivity was found to have no effect on cognitive dissonance. This study is significant as it investigates both positive and negative consumer emotions alongside conspicuous consumption within a single integrated model, highlighting how these variables directly impact the pre- and post-purchase experience.

**Keywords:** Conspicuous consumption, cognitive dissonance, price sensitivity, product involvement, pleasure

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## Bilişsel Uyumsuzluğu Anlamak: Gösteriçi Tüketim, Ürün İlgilenimi, Fiyat Hassasiyeti ve Haz Arasındaki Etkileşimin İncelenmesi

### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, gösteriçi tüketim, ürünle ilgilenim, fiyat hassasiyeti ve haz duygusu ve satın alım sonrası bilişsel uyumsuzluk arasındaki ilişkiyi entegre bir modelde araştırmaktır. Veriler kolayda örneklemek teknigi ile toplamda 511 kişiden toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar değişkenler arasındaki doğrudan etkileri göstermektedir. Ürünle ilgilenimin fiyat hassasiyetini ters yönde ve anlamlı bir şekilde etkilerken, bilişsel uyumsuzluk ile arasında herhangi bir ilişki tespit edilememiştir. Bununla birlikte haz duygusunun hem fiyat hassasiyetini hem bilişsel uyumsuzluğu pozitif ve anlamlı etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Öte yandan fiyat hassasiyetinin bilişsel uyumsuzluk üzerinde bir etkisi olmadığı görülmektedir. Bu araştırma, olumlu ve olumsuz tüketici duygularını ile gösteriçi tüketimi tek bir entegre modelde araştırması bakımından önemlidir, çünkü bu değişkenler tüketici satın alma deneyiminin öncesi ve sonrasına doğrudan etkilemektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Gösteriçi tüketim, bilişsel uyumsuzluk, fiyat hassasiyeti, ürünle ilgilenim, haz

### Introduction

Conspicuous consumption, grounded in Veblen's seminal work, is still relevant to explain consumer behavior in so many contexts. Conspicuous consumption has been considered one of the crucial motivations that people purchase products to reflect their status, wealth and power social contexts (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). The concept manifests itself in two different dimensions: the bandwagon effect and the snob effect, which are consumption styles that attach importance to social hierarchy (Barrera & Ponce, 2021). Basically, social and psychological needs lead to this type of consumption (Gierl & Huettl, 2010) and rather than utilitarian and functional values, hedonic and symbolic values gain prominence (Berger & Ward, 2010). This behavior, although predominantly

associated with luxury goods and affluent consumers, has evolved into a broader phenomenon encompassing individuals across different socio-economic groups. From branded apparel to high-tech products, the act of conspicuous consumption is omnipresent, highlighting its significance in consumer culture and marketing discourse. While much of the existing literature emphasizes the positive emotional outcomes of conspicuous consumption, its potential downsides remain relatively underexplored. This gap is critical, as consumer decisions driven by conspicuous motives may also evoke negative emotional responses like cognitive dissonance which is defined as psychological discomfort such as guilt and regret that arises as result of conflict between attitude and behavior in purchase process (Sweeney et al., 2000). In conspicuous consumption context, post-purchase dissonance can be particularly pronounced, as consumers navigate the tension between their perceived value and desires for social validation through luxury purchases and the financial implications of such choices. As the recent studies suggest emotions should be included more in consumer research (Luong & Sleg, 2014) the interplay between these emotional responses and the decision-making processes surrounding online purchases is complex, necessitating a further understanding of how emotions shape consumer motivation for purchasing.

Product involvement, the degree to which consumers are emotionally or cognitively invested in a product (Zaichkowsky, 1985), significantly influences consumer decision-making processes. In this sense it is a crucial psychological variable related to conspicuous consumption. The psychological need for self-esteem and social validation further amplifies this relationship, as consumers often seek products that satisfies utilitarian needs and represents consumer's identity and status (Hız, 2011; Boğa & Başçı, 2016). In such a situation consumers may experience disappointment when a highly anticipated product fails to deliver the expected value. Another concept related to conspicuous consumption and cognitive dissonance is price sensitivity. The extent that consumers perception of price as a significant determinant in buying behavior, varies depending on the context of consumption, social environment, and individual values (Goldsmith et al., 2010). Consumers with conspicuous

consumption tend to be financially affluent people, and these consumers show lower price sensitivity because the expected benefit is a social benefit rather than a performance benefit (Sun et al., 2020).

On the other hand, if consumers perceive price fairness or fail to obtain the expected benefit, post-purchase dissonance may occur. Pleasure, a fundamental component of hedonic consumption, represents the emotional gratification derived from the act of purchasing or owning a product (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The concept's intrinsic connection to emotions links it to both conspicuous consumption and cognitive dissonance. The relationships between these variables, both in pairs and in interaction with other variables, have been examined in prior research in different contexts, either directly or indirectly. However, how these concepts affect each other in a comprehending and integrated model that is based on consumer psychology and emotions is yet unexplored. Especially, although cognitive dissonance has been extensively researched in the psychological literature, its importance in the marketing literature has not yet been fully explored (Özyörük, 2022).

This study aims to develop an integrated model that explores how conspicuous consumption, price sensitivity, product involvement and pleasure interact and affect post-purchase cognitive dissonance in the context of online fashion consumption. Accordingly, the current study considers the balance between positive and negative emotional outcomes—namely, pleasure and cognitive dissonance, respectively to understand the psychological and behavioral dynamics at play after conspicuous consumption. The research model considers price sensitivity and product involvement as influencing variables in this relationship. Additionally, the feeling of pleasure is examined as an emotional factor that shapes the link between conspicuous consumption and cognitive dissonance. In this context, the study is based on a structural framework that addresses consumer behavior from both psychological and emotional perspectives. Thus, by addressing these relationships collectively, the study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature on consumer behavior and provide an original contribution to the field. Main research question of current study is as follows:

*“How do conspicuous consumption, product involvement, price sensitivity, and pleasure interact to influence cognitive dissonance in consumer behavior?”*

Based on the main research question, the following topics are included in the current study:

1. *The interplay between consumer emotions, price sensitivity and product involvement in shaping cognitive dissonance.*
2. *The potential inverse relationship between product involvement and price sensitivity, pleasure and price sensitivity*
3. *To test the assumption that price sensitivity is inversely related to cognitive dissonance.*

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Conspicuous Consumption**

The concept is defined as a style of signaling individual's economic power, status and self-image through excessive spending on the things that denote luxury to impress others and denote membership in higher classes, referred to Veblen's work on leisure class (Güleç, 2015; Lee et al., 2024). This consumption form is related to ostentation and presence of other consumers, which is linked to a desire to show social hierarchy (Zakaria et al., 2020). In this context, the concept is often used and defined with status consumption in the same manner. Although some studies suggest that status and conspicuous consumption overlap, the concepts have different meanings. Status consumption is defined as the pursuit of products that confer status, prestige and enhance social class and standing, but it does not necessarily require the same level of ostentation to social environment as conspicuous consumption (Arora et al., 2015). Whereas social visibility is considered as crucial dimension of conspicuous consumption, status consumption can occur through purchasing of status-driven goods that may not be overtly luxurious but are perceived as symbols of status (Mann & Sahni, 2015). On the other hand, Eckhardt

et al. (2015) conceptualized conspicuous consumption as about image and appearance, while status consumption is about quality, luxury and social class. It has been noted that status and conspicuous consumption are different concepts that some high-status brands show lower in conspicuousness and some low status brands show higher conspicuousness (Truong et al., 2008).

Previous studies have explored the psychological and emotional dimensions such as gift giving (Givi & Galak, 2019), maximizing one's own goals (Luan et al., 2023), personality traits and involvement (Barerra & Ponce, 2021), self-expression, self-esteem and social hierarchy (Zheng et al., 2018), loneliness and mate search (Liu et al., 2020), acculturation of luxury and status consumption (Das & Jebarajakirthy, 2020), religiosity (Ramazani & Kermani, 2022) and economy (Collins et al., 2015) urbanization, fashion and mass media (Koçak, 2017). Altogether these research adds depth to the knowledge of why individuals prefer conspicuous consumption, linking it to broader societal trends and cultural norms. Social status and prestige are often associated with luxury consumption and affluent individuals, leading to a focus on the conspicuous consumption behaviors of this specific group. However, previous research has demonstrated consumers with lower income levels are more inclined to commit in luxury and conspicuous consumption (Zheng et al., 2018). Chen et al. (2022) examined the subjective social class in shaping conspicuous consumption behaviors in emerging economies, suggesting that increased conspicuous consumption may be associated with enhanced perceived economic well-being, particularly among lower-income households. In such economies conspicuous consumption practices are particularly evident among the middle class (Çiçek, 2022). The desire for prestige, image, status, is not confined to those with a particular lifestyle or income level. These needs represent universal features of human nature and cut across all social and economic classes, not just the wealthy. Indeed, by adopting this wider perspective, it is possible to get a clearer view of conspicuous consumption as a phenomenon and as a reflection of the aspiration and behavior of people in large sections of society.

## Product Involvement

Involvement is defined as subjective importance or value of a product that is relevant to individuals' needs, values and goals (Zaichkowsky, 1985). This perspective maintains that involvement is subjective and varies from one consumer to another, depending on physical, personal and situational factors. Similarly, Laurent and Kapferer (1985) suggested that involvement is based on perceived importance, value and risk of the product. The literature suggests three types of involvement: response, situational and enduring involvement (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). However, enduring and situational involvement types have received much attention (Porral et al., 2019). Enduring involvement is defined as a cognitive processing in which involvement is related to relevance and perceived value attached to product. Situational involvement evolves under the effect of specific situations or object. For example, it might be a result of internal state variables such as interest and arousal, as well as time, price and consumption situation. While decreased involvement means less interest in product and brand alternatives, high level involvement means brand consciousness, strong beliefs, extensive search for the product, evaluation of alternatives and quality concerns (Cilingir & Basfirinci, 2014; Porral et al., 2019). For instance, consumers may exhibit high involvement with products that fulfill essential needs or align closely with their self-identity, such as clothing (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). Similarly, high involvement leads consumers to prefer niche products that provide inherent values (Zhang et al., 2023). Conversely, low-involvement products, like everyday groceries, may not elicit the same level of engagement (Radder & Huang, 2008). Additionally, Quester and Lim (2003) emphasized that this relationship varies based on category and levels of involvement. Furthermore, product involvement is influenced by external factors, i.e. social interactions and cultural contexts. Studies suggest that status consumption can increase product involvement, as people tend to align their purchasing decisions with social norms, peer influence, materialistic values, and self-esteem (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004; Eastman et al., 2014).

## Pleasure

Although consumption traditionally has been viewed as a cognitive process some scholars highlighted the role of affective and experiential dimensions focusing on consumer emotions such as enjoyment and fun (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). These feelings can be positive (pleasure and arousal) or negative (guilt and regret). Pleasure refers to the positive emotional responses that consumers experience during and after the purchasing process. It is an emotional state where the individual's intrinsic motivation aligns with environmental factors, resulting in positive reactions (Chen et al., 2023). In this sense, pleasure is conceptualized differently from satisfaction and happiness. While satisfaction refers to the fulfilment of expectations from the product, happiness is generally used in positive psychology to measure quality of life (Alba & Williams, 2013). Pleasure in consumers behavior is a multifaceted concept that shapes pre and post purchase process. Zarantonello et al. (2024) indicates that consumers can drive emotional responses and satisfaction from any consumption experiences regardless of the specific purchase context. Moreover, research in different contexts adds further knowledge to the topic such as hedonic consumption (Alba & Williams, 2013), impulsive consumption (Chen et al., 2023), status consumption (Ki et al., 2017), online retailing (Anninou & Foxall, 2019), food consumption (Hur & Jang, 2015). The concept is generally associated with hedonic consumption and derived from two sources the product and consumer's experience (Alba & Williams, 2013). Product dimensions include design and aesthetics, the act of consumption, meaning attached to product or the consumption. The experience dimension is grounded in consumer-product interaction, consumer's expectation from product and consumer-product engagement. The multifaceted nature of pleasure stems from its roots in consumers' intrinsic motivations and the influence of numerous external factors. Consequently, it is necessary to conduct further research regarding emotional reactions in consumer behavior across various contexts.

## Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity is consumers' responses to price changes of a specific product or brand (Wakefield & Inman, 2003) and affected by status consumption, involvement, innovativeness, similarities between products, discounts and brand loyalty (Goldsmith et al., 2010; Dominique-Ferreira et al., 2016). In general, consumers establish an acceptable price range they are willing to pay based on specific criteria during shopping, a concept referred to as price sensitivity (Ho & Wyer, 2024). Although price sensitivity and price consciousness are often confused with each other, there is a significant difference between the two. Price consciousness primarily focuses on low-priced purchases, whereas price sensitivity is one among factors that shape choices in purchasing purchase (López-Fernández, 2020). Relatively higher price sensitivity dictates a narrower acceptable price range, while lower price sensitivity means a broader price range. Price sensitivity is a fundamental factor shaping consumption patterns and has been analyzed in different contexts in the literature. Study by Ho and Wyer (2024) on collection mindset highlighted the role of price sensitivity in purchasing behavior. The research found that collectors tend to experience hedonic consumption rather than utilitarian value, thus their sensitivity to price changes are at lower levels. Ouyang et al. (2018) demonstrated that the dimensions of customer satisfaction are inversely related to price sensitivity, emphasizing that consumers prioritize positive emotional responses such as satisfaction and pleasure over price considerations. In another study Jeong et al. (2019) explored price-quality heuristics in different cultures and found that price sensitivity can vary depending on the context of consumption, whether hedonic or value-oriented, and the social environment. Accordingly, the study demonstrates that price sensitivity is lower, and higher prices are preferred, in expenditures made with family members or friends. This indicates that price sensitivity can also vary depending on consumers' different value perceptions. It has been emphasized that concepts such as green consumption, social responsibility, and ethical consumption are closely related to high levels of price sensitivity (López-Fernández, 2020).

## Cognitive Dissonance

As a crucial psychological concept in consumer behavior, cognitive dissonance is the process of psychological discomfort which consumers experience pre and post purchase process of a product that eventually affects consumer satisfaction with the purchase (Sweeney & Soutar, 2006). Cognitive dissonance refers to the psychological discomfort, such as regret, unease, and anxiety, that consumers experience when they compare their purchase decision with alternatives and are uncertain whether they made the right choice (Wilkins et al., 2016). The theory basically makes significant contributions to understanding consumer psychology in decision making process. In cognitive dissonance, the dissonance in question is not caused by the performance of the product. Rather, there is a measurement for the purchase decision. For example, even if the product is satisfactory in terms of expected performance, the consumer may regret the purchase decision. Or in another way, the consumer may not be sure about the preferred product or brand. In the literature various studies explored the antecedents of cognitive dissonance. Fernandez-Lores et al. (2024) categorizes these factors as follows: product category, number of alternatives, involvement, personality, impulsive buying, website design, and information overload. In theory, cognitive dissonance is commonly conceptualized using Sweeney et al., (2000) three-dimensional approach, which includes concern over deal, wisdom of purchase and emotional dissonance. Concern over the deal refers to whether the consumer was influenced by other external factors during the purchase stage. Wisdom of purchase, often identified as product dissonance, is related to choice. It refers to whether consumers need the product, or whether they made the right choice, (Chen et al., 2023). Lastly, emotional dissonance states that individuals may feel discomfort after purchase resulting from guilt and regret. According to the fundamental assumption of the concept of cognitive dissonance, consumers focus on reducing dissonance to escape the negative emotional state they experience (Yücel & Çizel, 2018). For example, they engage in biased information seeking to generate arguments that support their decisions, evaluate alternatives (change

attitude), make quality comparisons and highlight the preferred brand's perceived value (Gbadamosi, 2009; Jamwal & Mishra, 2023).

## **Research model and hypotheses development**

### **Conspicuous Consumption and Product Involvement**

The interaction of these two concepts can be understood through various psychological, social, and economic perspectives. Consumers who are highly involved with certain products may prefer conspicuous consumption to reflect preferences, taste, wealth and social status to others in contexts where social comparison is prevalent (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004; Zheng et al., 2018; Feng et al., 2019). For instance, Zhao et al. (2017) highlight that women associate conspicuous brands with enhanced attractiveness and partner loyalty which highlights significant effect of product involvement as a social signaling function. Moreover, Wu et al., (2017) highlighted that materialistic individuals are often allocated more to spend on status and ostentatious brands. Similarly, Lee et al. (2021) demonstrated that independent self-construal and materialistic consumers prefer inconspicuous products due to desire for uniqueness, on the other hand, consumers who do not show materialistic tendency but with inter-dependent self-construal tends to purchase conspicuous products due to strong self-control. This aligns with findings from Sedikides and Hart (2022), who posit that narcissism drives individuals towards conspicuous consumption as a means of communicating a distinctive self-image. Additionally, the role of social media has been emphasized as a catalyst for conspicuous consumption, where consumers are increasingly influenced by the portrayals of luxury lifestyles online, thereby enhancing their involvement with luxury products (Becan & Eaghanioskou, 2019; Efen-dioglu, 2019). Thus, higher levels of involvement can potentially lead to conspicuous consumption as a way of satisfying social and psychological needs. Based on the background information hypothesis is:

*H1: Conspicuous consumption has a positive and significant effect on involvement.*

## Conspicuous Consumption and Price Sensitivity

Basic philosophy of conspicuous consumption suggests that higher prices mean higher demand (Braun & Wicklund, 1989). This consumption behavior is often characterized by a lower sensitivity to price, as consumers prioritize the social signals associated with high-priced items over the actual cost of the goods. Research indicates that consumers engaged in conspicuous consumption are often willing to pay premium prices for luxury products, as these purchases serve as a means of status (Sun et al., 2020). That consumption motivation and desire derive from not only intrinsic motivations but also external environment. Their research concluded that if the price of status products increases, the snob effect is activated and snobs lead to an increase in product demand in a market where there are followers and no change in product quality or individuals' wealth (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005). Similarly, Tereyagoglu and Veeraraghavan (2012) discuss under the scarcity principles how conspicuous consumers are less price-sensitive because their purchasing decisions are influenced by the desire for exclusivity and social recognition rather than economic considerations. Study conducted by Li (2019) focuses on product line extension strategy when facing threat of new entry and highlights that status consumption can increase firm's profitability through rising prices. On the other hand, studies found that while low price sensitive consumers benefit the firm high price sensitive consumers hurt the firm, indicating that conspicuous consumers often show lower price sensitivity because they own more wealth and pursue uniqueness and exclusivity (Zhu et al., 2022). This is further supported by findings from Rao and Schaefer (2013), who highlighted that higher prices could reinforce the perceived value of a product among conspicuous consumers. Moreover, counterfeit products provide another context in which the interaction between conspicuous consumption and price sensitivity can be examined. Conspicuous consumption leads to the emergence of counterfeit brands and consumers with status sensitivity accompanied by relatively lower economic well-being prefer to use these products (Sun et al., 2020). Moreover, the dynamics of pricing strategies in the context of conspicuous consumption reveal that luxury brands often leverage this reduced-price sensitivity to mainta-

in high profit margins. For instance, Zhou et al. (2018) found that luxury fashion brands can implement scarcity and pricing strategies that capitalize on the discount sensitivity of consumers, highlighting that conspicuous consumers may respond differently to price changes than consumers who are more price-sensitive. In general, the relationship between conspicuous consumption and price sensitivity is characterized by a tendency for consumers to exhibit lower price sensitivity when purchasing luxury goods. Based on the above information hypothesis is:

*H2: Conspicuous consumption has a negative and significant effect on price sensitivity.*

### **Conspicuous Consumption and Pleasure**

The psychological aspects of pleasure in conspicuous consumption are multifaceted. Previous research has explored how consumption desires can evoke both positive feelings, such as pleasure, and negative feelings, such as guilt, in luxury consumption (Dedeoğlu & Kazançoglu, 2010; Boujbel & d'Astous, 2015). The relationship between conspicuous consumption and pleasure can be explained in two dimensions. The first dimension is the emotional response of shopping, frequently emphasized in consumer literature, which refers to the enjoyment and happiness derived from the act of shopping itself (Veenhoven et al., 2021). This pleasure stems from the positive feelings experienced during the shopping process, providing a gratifying experience for the consumer. The second dimension is the pleasure derived through ownership of products, which arises from fulfilling one's psychological and identity-related needs via conspicuous consumption. In other words, individuals with a tendency for conspicuous consumption experience satisfaction by possessing products seen as reflection of image and status, providing an opportunity to reveal their identity (Belk, 1988). The pursuit of pleasure through conspicuous consumption is not merely about the products themselves but also about the social narratives and identities that these products help to construct. Luan et al. (2023) argue that as a result of the need for prestige and status, maximizing consumers seeks to optimize their consumption experiences,

therefore have a tendency toward conspicuous consumption, which in turn contributes to their experience, satisfaction and pleasure. In summary, there is an emotional side of conspicuous consumption that is characterized by a complex interplay of social recognition, personal identity, and emotional fulfillment (Richins, 1994). Consumers derive pleasure from conspicuous consumption as it allows them to signal status, image, prestige and identity (Tian et al., 2001). Thus, the hypothesis is:

*H3: Conspicuous consumption has a positive and significant effect on pleasure.*

### **Involvement and Price Sensitivity**

The relationship between involvement and price sensitivity is a crucial area of study in consumer behavior, reflecting how engagement can affect consumer sensitivity to price changes. Studies show that the economy is a factor that directly affects the degree of involvement of consumers. According to Slama and Tashchian (1985) high-involved consumers consist of individuals who already have high income, and their price sensitivity is relatively less, whereas individuals with lower socio-economic status show high price sensitivity and low involvement. Previous studies also show that involvement degree plays a crucial role in the relationship between price and involvement. While some studies have found a positive relationship between level of involvement and price sensitivity, for example high involvement-high price sensitivity, some studies have found an inverse relationship, for example high involvement-low price sensitivity. While consumers with low product involvement shows greater interest in pricing (Porral et al., 2019), study by Martin et al. (2011) has shown that cognitive signals such as complex decision making, good price-quality ratio, wide assortments and detailed information leads to satisfaction and trust in high-involved individuals. On the other hand, in situations such as grocery shopping, where there are much less interest and information seeking, price awareness remains at lower levels, so the sensitivity of these individuals is at low levels (Murthi & Rao, 2012).

Moreover, Dominique-Ferreira et al. (2016) emphasize that involvement with products can affect individual's price sensitivity, highlighting that consumers who attach importance to the brand are less likely to react negatively to price changes. In specific contexts, such as luxury goods or high-involvement products, the relationship between involvement and price sensitivity becomes even more pronounced. Research conducted by Lin (2013) on high-involvement luxury products demonstrated that price discounts and promotions create a negative perception of the value of the products. Similarly, Nguyen and Nguyen (2019) revealed that consumers who tend to accept higher prices are searching for status-laden and prestigious products. This shows that consumers with high involvement of ostentatious products price is a lesser concern. Additionally, research has demonstrated that dimensions of involvement shape the relationship between involvement and price. For instance, in situational involvement, consumers with high involvement have been found to exhibit more sensitivity to price upon making a purchase of wine (Roe & Bruwer, 2017). The relationship between involvement and price sensitivity is usually an inverse shape, as involvement goes up, price sensitivity usually goes down. A lower level of price sensitivity may lead to stronger involvement with a product, placing greater emphasis on its benefits rather than its costs. Thus, based on these notions, the hypothesis is:

*H4: Product involvement has a negative and significant effect on price sensitivity.*

### **Involvement and Cognitive Dissonance**

Research indicates that high involvement often correlates with cognitive dissonance. For example, Wilkins et al. (2016) found that consumers with high involvement are less likely to experience cognitive dissonance compared to consumers with low involvement who are likely to switch brands and change purchase intentions after experiencing dissonance. Similarly, Polya et al. (2021) found a positive correlation between level of involvement and cognitive dissonance. Conversely, Nosi et al. (2022) highlight that consumers who engage in more cognitive effort, high in-

vovement activities such as searching for information, comparing alternatives etc., during their purchase decision are much likely to experience dissonance after purchase, as they have thoroughly considered their preferences. Another study shows that the gifts provided with the purchase arouses a high level of ownership for consumers with high involvement and negatively affects product returns and thus reduces dissonance (Lee & Yi, 2017). On the other hand, Gbadamosi (2009) studied low-income consumers habitual buying behavior for grocery products, highlighting that low involvement products can elicit cognitive dissonance under certain conditions. In their study, George and Edward (2009) showed that high-involved consumers maintain their pre-purchase cognitive coherence and do not experience post-purchase dissonance but instead develop dissonance-reducing pathways to support their purchases. That is to say, compared to low involvement high involved consumers feel a decreased level of cognitive dissonance. Based on the above information hypothesis is:

*H5: Product involvement has a positive and significant effect on cognitive dissonance.*

### **Pleasure and Price Sensitivity**

The relationship between pleasure and price sensitivity is a multifaceted aspect of consumer behavior that displays significant correlation between consumers' emotional responses and price sensitivity. Chung and Petrick (2012) highlighted the relationship between price fairness and emotional responses, which affects consumer behavior towards price changes. When consumers perceive prices are unfair, they may develop negative emotions which can result in price sensitivity. On the other hand, positive emotions experienced from a product, brand or purchasing can mitigate price sensitivity as consumers are inclined to pay higher prices and show lower sensitivity for products that are associated with pleasure, arousal and satisfaction (Ouyang et al., 2018). The relationship between pleasure and price sensitivity is also reflected in conspicuous and hedonic purchases and products. Luong and Sleg (2014) found that consumers anticipate the pleasure associated with discounts on hedonic products,

which can lead them to continue shopping despite higher prices. When consumers expect to experience satisfaction from the purchase, they may be less price sensitive, when pleasure is low, consumers tend to exhibit higher price sensitivity. Moreover, compared to utilitarian purchases consumers shopping for pleasure are generally more willing to overlook price increases, as the enjoyment derived from the product or experience outweighs the cost considerations (Alba & Williams, 2013; Tripathi & Pandey, 2018). This means that pleasure of consumption experience can outweigh the cost, resulting in willing to spend more (Ho & Wyer, 2024). Additionally, it has been studied that luxury product consumers exhibit lower price sensitivity compared to other product categories. Kowalczyk and Mitchell (2022) indicated that status and luxury-oriented consumers are willing to pay premium prices, highlighting that value-oriented consumers prioritize ostentation or hedonism rather than the monetary value of the product. This aligns with the findings from Lim et al. (2013) who demonstrated that status and prestige sensitivity play a significant role in how consumers perceive luxury prices especially for socially visible products. In summary, the relationship between pleasure and price sensitivity is characterized by an inverse correlation: higher levels of pleasure are associated with lower price sensitivity, while lower levels of pleasure can lead to increased price sensitivity. Thus, the hypothesis is:

*H6: Pleasure has a negative and significant effect on price sensitivity.*

### **Pleasure and Cognitive Dissonance**

Consumption is a multidimensional concept, which depends on creating pleasure, arousal and satisfaction (Karadeniz & Kocamaz, 2020). Research indicates that higher levels of pleasure associated with a purchase can mitigate or intensify the effects of post-purchase cognitive dissonance. When consumers derive significant pleasure from their purchases, they are less likely to experience dissonance, as the positive emotions and satisfaction can create happiness and overshadow any negative feelings related to the purchase (Veenhoven et al., 2021). Pleasurable emotions experienced during purchases can significantly influence

post-purchase appraisal, suggesting that positive emotional states can suppress after purchase dissonance especially for consumers with abstract mindset (Togawa et al., 2020). This implies that when consumers feel satisfied and happy with their purchases, they are less likely to question their decisions or feel regret. On the other hand, if the pleasure derived from a purchase is not at a satisfying level, the possibility of experiencing cognitive dissonance increases. Even though pleasure is higher from the purchase, consumers who do not feel a strong emotional connection to a product or who do not derive satisfaction from it may find themselves questioning their choices, leading to feelings of dissonance and switching behaviors (Wilkins et al., 2016). For example, impulsive buying may be triggered by pleasure, but this may lead to post-purchase guilt or cognitive dissonance (Chen et al., 2023). While pleasure may increase impulsive behavior momentarily, it may lead to cognitive dissonance in the long run. This duality suggests that while consumers may experience immediate pleasure from their purchases, they may also feel guilty associated with expensive or ostentatious products, which can complicate their overall consumption experience (Boujbel & d'Astous, 2015). In summary, the relationship between pleasure and post-purchase cognitive dissonance can be conceptualized as a positive correlation: higher levels of pleasure are associated with higher levels of cognitive dissonance in the context of conspicuous consumption. Thus, the hypothesis is:

*H7: Pleasure has a positive and significant effect on cognitive dissonance.*

### **Price sensitivity and Cognitive Dissonance**

Research indicates that price-sensitive consumers tend to experience post-purchase dissonance, especially when the product does not meet expectations. Cognitive dissonance is related to feelings of guilt and regret especially if consumers feel they have made a poor decision regarding the price. Therefore, regardless of low or high prices every product may be associated to dissonance (Jamwal & Mishra, 2023). Wilkins et al. (2016) found that consumers who experience cognitive dissonance due

to deceptive practices, such as misleading packaging or downsizing, are more likely to alter attitude and behavior toward brand. This suggests that when consumers are aware of price, any perceived discrepancy between the price and the value can lead to significant dissonance. Moreover, in the context of conspicuous consumption, when a previously purchased product is later offered at a discount, consumers tend to experience a decrease in the perceived value of their purchase, accompanied by post-purchase dissonance (Zhou et al., 2018). On the other hand, Yassin and Soares (2021) drew attention to impulsive buying in cognitive dissonance and emphasized that dissonance may be caused by psychological and emotional factors other than price. This indicates that the effect of price sensitivity on cognitive dissonance may increase or suppress depending on consumption motives and other cognitive and emotional factors. Price sensitivity, which will interact with conspicuous consumption and product involvement, may be inversely related to dissonance. For consumers engaging in conspicuous consumption, the perceived social or symbolic value of a purchase often outweighs financial considerations. If the purchase successfully conveys status or prestige, price sensitivity might play a diminished role in creating dissonance. Similarly, consumers with high involvement typically invest more effort in pre-purchase evaluations. This could lead to stronger justifications for their choices, even if they are price sensitive. What matters more in this consumption context than the price is the satisfaction derived from the act of consumption and perceived value of product or brand (Park et al., 2015).

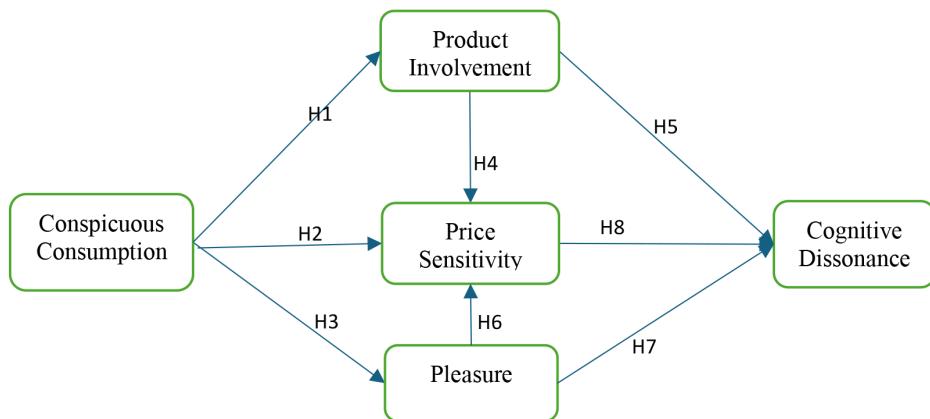
*H8: Price sensitivity has a negative and significant effect on cognitive dissonance.*

## **Methodology**

### **Measurement items**

The present study employed survey techniques to measure the proposed research model in Figure 1. The constructs used in the research are sourced from literature and previously validated. The items in the

scales were translated into Turkish and to avoid any ambiguity finalized after being reviewed by academicians who are experts in their fields. The questionnaire was designed to measure the following constructs: conspicuous consumption (Shukla, 2008; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Aslan, 2021), product involvement (Helmig et al., 2007; Olsen, 2007), pleasure (De Wulf et al., 2006), price sensitivity (Goldsmith et al., 2010) and cognitive dissonance (Sweeney & Soutar, 2006; Yücel & Çizel, 2019). The last section of the questionnaire includes statements for participants to provide their demographic information. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement for items of each construct on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Ethical approval for this research was obtained.



**Figure 1: Research Model**

## Data collection and Participants

The data was collected via the YouReply platform from individuals who purchased fashion apparel online. A total of 511 samples were collected. Kline (2005) stated that a sample size between 400 and 500 is sufficient for conducting confirmatory factor analysis. Moreover, according to Saunders et al. (2003) for a population greater than 1,000,000, a sample size of approximately 384 participants is sufficient to achieve a 95% confidence level. Since the sample size in the present study ex-

ceeds this threshold, it can be considered statistically adequate and generalizable. Additionally, compared to previous studies in the literature, this sample size is considered sufficient for the purposes of this research (Shukla, 2008; Boğa & Başçı, 2016; Ki et al., 2017). Demographics of participants are shown in Table 1. Analysis show that 70,2% of respondents are females and 29,4% are males. A considerable proportion of the participants were businesspeople (38,2%), between the ages of 25 to 34 (48,3%), and almost half of them graduated from university (50,1%).

**Table 1: Demographics of participants**

Categories	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	150	29,4
	Female	359	70,2
	N/D	2	0,4
Age	18-24	91	17,8
	25-34	247	48,3
	35-44	125	25,5
Income	45-54	35	6,8
	55 <	13	2,5
	<17.000 TL	143	28,1
	17.001 TL -30.000 TL	107	20,9
	30.001 TL -45.000 TL	73	14,3
	45.001 TL -60.000 TL	88	17,2
	60.001 TL - 75.000 TL	59	11,5
	75.001 TL <	41	8
	Elementary education	8	1,6
Education	Highschool	42	8,2
	Bachelor	256	50,1
	Postgraduate	205	40,1
	Unemployed	64	12,5
Occupation	Tradesman	4	0,8
	Laboure	12	2,3
	Officer	111	21,7
	Businessman/woman	195	38,2
	Student	125	24,5

## Results

### Common Method Bias

To address concerns regarding common method bias, Harman's one-factor test was conducted. In analysis, the first eigenvalue accounted for only 33.3% of the total variance, which is lower than the threshold value of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Fuller et al., 2016). This result suggests that common method bias is unlikely to significantly affect the findings, as the variance is distributed on different factors, reducing the potential influence of bias from single-source data collection. In addition, the presence of a strong relationship between independent variables creates a multicollinearity problem. To avoid this problem, the acceptance rate for the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) should be lower than 10 (Henseler et al., 2009). Since VIF values are below 10, there is no multicollinearity problem between variables.

### Measurement Model

*CFA:* To measure the constructs and items a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. Table 2 and Table 3 show factor loadings, Cronbach alphas, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct. Additionally, all fit indices (CMIN/DF 3,1; RMSEA 0,064; CFI 0,942; SRMR 0,062; TLI 0,934) were good within acceptable ranges. The item FH3 was removed in the first stage because its factor loading was less than 0.5 and it was not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Similarly, the item GT5 was excluded in the first stage of the analysis because its factor loading was below 0.5 and it negatively impacted both discriminant and convergent validity.

**Tablo 2: Factor loadings**

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	$\alpha$	Omega	CR	AVE
<b>Conspicuous consumption (CC)</b>	CC1	0,67				
	CC2	0,76				
	CC3	0,71	0,827	0,834	0,831	0,497
	CC4	0,77				
	CC6	0,60				
<b>Price sensitivity (PS)</b>	PS1	0,88				
	PS2	0,89				
	PS4	0,84	0,808	0,853	0,905	0,706
	PS5	0,74				
<b>Product involvement (INV)</b>	INV1	0,82				
	INV2	0,93				
	INV3	0,95	0,946	0,947	0,948	0,784
	INV4	0,92				
	INV5	0,79				
<b>Pleasure</b>	PL1	0,95				
	PL2	0,94				
	PL3	0,85	0,946	0,949	0,952	0,833
	PL4	0,91				
<b>Cognitive dissonance (CD)</b>	(Emotional dissonance)	CD1	0,63			
		CD2	0,78			
		CD3	0,71			
		CD4	0,56			
		CD5	0,71	0,890	0,885	0,83
	(Wisdom of purchase)	CD1	0,84			
		CD2	0,81			
		CD3	0,90			
		CD4	0,90			

*Reliability and Validity Analysis:* To test the validity and reliability of the constructs convergent and discriminant validity analyses were utilized. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggests that all CR values should exceed 0.7 and all AVE values (ranged from 0.497 to 0.833) should be higher than 0.5. The results show that the correlation values between the constructs are lower than the square root of AVE values which indicates that discriminant validity is achieved. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to

Fornell and Larcker (1981), AVE values provide more consistent results regarding the validity of the scales. It is suggested that AVE value should not be lower than 0.50; however, if CR value is at an acceptable level, an AVE value lower than 0.50, for this research it is 0,497, may be acceptable (Lam, 2012). Similarly, Malhotra and Dash (2011) argue that AVE is often too stringent, and that reliability can be established solely through CR.

**Table 3: CR, AVE values and correlations**

	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>MSV</b>	<b>CC</b>	<b>PS</b>	<b>INV</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>CD</b>
<b>CC</b>	0,831	0,497	0,508	(0,705)				
<b>PS</b>	0,905	0,706	0,674	-0,708*	(0,84)			
<b>INV</b>	0,948	0,784	0,674	0,713*	-0,821*	(0,886)		
<b>PL</b>	0,952	0,833	0,212	0,449*	-0,358*	0,460*	(0,913)	
<b>CD</b>	0,853	0,754	0,025	0,159	-0,110*	0,135*	0,151*	(0,869)

Significance of Correlations: \*  $p < 0.05$ ,

Values in parentheses indicate square root of AVE

Furthermore, the discriminant validity of the model was assessed using the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio in Table 4. It has been suggested that HTMT offers higher sensitivity and specificity compared to the traditional Fornell-Larcker criterion when applied in structural equation modeling (Henseler et al., 2015; Voorhees et al., 2016; Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). The HTMT results indicate that all values are below the threshold of 0.90, thereby confirming the discriminant validity between the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). Thus, the model demonstrates satisfactory discriminant validity based on the HTMT approach

**Table 4: HTMT Analysis**

	<b>CC</b>	<b>PS</b>	<b>INV</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>CD</b>
<b>CC</b>					
<b>PS</b>	0,702				
<b>INV</b>	0,714	0,843			
<b>PL</b>	0,475	0,38	0,484		
<b>CD</b>	0,193	0,146	0,16	0,155	

### Structural Model

To test the hypothesis a structural model was utilized. The results are demonstrated in Table 4. The goodness of fit values ( $X^2/df = 3,14$ ;  $CFI = .940$ ;  $TLI = .933$ ;  $RFI = .904$ ;  $RMSEA = .065$ ;  $IFI = .940$ ;  $p < .00$ ) show that the proposed measurement model is compatible with the data and has acceptable fit standards. Results show cognitive dissonance significantly affects product involvement ( $\beta = 0,73$ ;  $t = 11,27$ ), price sensitivity ( $\beta = -0,276$ ;  $t = -4,727$ ) and pleasure ( $\beta = 0,482$ ;  $t = 8,996$ ); thus, H1, H2 and H3 are supported. Product involvement has a significant and inverse effect on price sensitivity ( $\beta = -0,647$ ;  $t = -11,244$ ), thus, H4 is supported. On the contrary there is no relationship between product involvement and cognitive dissonance ( $\beta = 0,099$ ;  $t = 0,951$ ,  $p = 0,342$ ), demonstrating that involvement does not influence cognitive dissonance, thus H5 is not supported. In addition, the hypothesis (H6) that pleasure has a significant and inverse effect on price sensitivity is not supported ( $\beta = 0,069$ ;  $t = 2,013$ ), whereas pleasure affects cognitive dissonance in a positive and significant way ( $\beta = 0,127$ ;  $t = 2,053$ ), thus H6 is not supported and H7 is supported. Furthermore, price sensitivity does not affect cognitive dissonance ( $\beta = -0,007$ ;  $t = -0,068$ ;  $p = 0,945$ ), H8 is not supported.

**Table 4: Structural paths between variables and results**

Structural Paths Between Variables		$\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	p
H1	CConsumption--->PInvolvement	0,73***	0,087	11,729	***
H2	CConsumption ---> PSensitivity	-0,276***	0,078	-4,727	***
H3	CConsumption ---> Pleasure	0,482***	0,064	8,996	***
H4	PInvolvement ---> PSensitivity	-0,647***	0,055	-11,244	***
H5	PInvolvement ---> CDissolution	0,099	0,051	0,951	0,342
H6	Pleasure---> PSensitivity	0,069*	0,038	2,013	***
H7	Pleasure---> CDissolution	0,127*	0,035	2,053	***
H8	PSensitivity---> CDissolution	-0,007	0,052	-0,068	0,945

\*\*\*  $p < 0,001$ ; \*  $p < 0,05$

H5, H6, H8 not supported

## Discussion

Main objective of this research is to integrate the variables of conspicuous consumption, cognitive dissonance, involvement, price sensitivity, and pleasure to examine the interactions between consumer emotions and psychology. By doing so, it enables the analysis of the psychological and emotional factors influencing the consumer purchasing process within a single model, thereby contributing to the theoretical framework. In this context, consumers who purchase fashion products through online platforms were included in the study to test their purchasing experience.

Consistent with previous findings, the results indicate that conspicuous consumption positively and significantly affects price sensitivity, pleasure, and product involvement. This observation underscores that shopping behavior is primarily driven by individual and social benefits or perceived gains, with price playing a secondary and less influential role. This suggests that consumers with a tendency for conspicuous consumption, who value social status and strive to create a positive image, exhibit high levels of involvement with products that meet these needs (Feng et al., 2019). Additionally, this consumer segment tends to have higher price sensitivity. In other words, they are willing to pay more for conspicuous products. This dynamic is particularly evident in developing economies, where consumers often allocate their increasing incomes toward conspicuous consumption products as part of their efforts to attain and showcase social status (Chen et al., 2022). Which demonstrates that when consumers' status sensitivity is higher producers can benefit higher prices (Sun et al., 2020). This finding suggests that conspicuous consumption may not necessarily be dependent on income, highlighting its potential to transcend economic boundaries (Zheng et al., 2018). Conspicuous consumption is closely linked to the pleasure and happiness individuals aim to derive from their purchasing activities. Individuals with a propensity for conspicuous consumption focus more on the social influence and hierarchical context of purchasing. For these consumers, not only the pleasure and satisfaction derived from the shopping activity but also the ability to reflect their image, social status,

exclusivity, and wealth through the product becomes a significant source of happiness (Luan et al., 2023; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

Another topic in this research was to investigate the relationship between product involvement and price sensitivity. It was hypothesized that product involvement and price sensitivity have an inverse relationship. Results confirmed that assumption, highlighting that as product involvement increases, consumers tend to place less emphasis on pricing. In this context, price becomes secondary, indicating that increased involvement shifts consumer priorities toward the anticipated benefits and value of the product. This phenomenon becomes even more pronounced for luxury product categories that include extensive information seeking, comparing alternatives (Lim et al., 2013). This is because the importance attributed to the product and the expectations associated with this product category are significantly higher. One of the interesting results of this research is the relationship between product involvement and cognitive dissonance. Although a positive hypothesis was assumed, the data did not confirm this relationship. There may be more than one reason why this relationship is not significant. First, consumers develop strategies and follow ways to reduce cognitive dissonance to support their purchase decision at high levels of involvement (George & Edward, 2009). Second, the levels of involvement were not measured in this study, which may have limited a detailed analysis. The purchasing experiences of individuals with different levels of involvement exhibit differences (Pólya et al., 2021). A third reason may arise from the context of purchase depending on the level of involvement. Different buying situations may lead to different emotional or rational experiences. This research is concerned with an individual's preferences for fashion products for personal use, whereas gift buying behavior, for example, may result differently due to the different dynamics involved (Lee et al., 2024). Another reason may be the lack of mediating or moderating variables. For example, variables such as satisfaction, expected utility, and brand loyalty may show an indirect relationship between product relevance and cognitive dissonance.

One unanticipated result was that while a negative relationship between pleasure and price sensitivity was hypothesized, the results revealed a positive relationship instead. The fundamental logical approach behind this hypothesis was that as the pleasure derived from a product increases, price sensitivity would decrease, with consumers not considering costs as a major factor (Ouyang et al., 2018; Luong & Sleg, 2014; Alba & Williams, 2013). However, the results suggest the opposite. Individuals seem to develop price sensitivity based on the pleasure they expect to receive from the product. A higher price may signal a higher level of pleasure or satisfaction. This could be particularly true for consumers who prefer luxury or exclusive products, as they might believe that the product will provide optimal benefits, leading them to be willing to pay more. Another possible explanation is the involvement with the product. Although product involvement was not examined as a mediator or moderator in this study, it could play a role in explaining the relationship between satisfaction and price sensitivity. Consumers who are more engaged with a product may be more sensitive to its price, as they may perceive it as a key component in obtaining the anticipated benefits and satisfaction. In this case, the pleasure derived from the product may enhance their willingness to invest more in it. Another factor could be the measurement of the variables. The relationship could be tested using different measurement models, which might provide more accurate insights or reveal nuances that were not captured with the current approach. By utilizing alternative models, it may be possible to better assess the connections between variables and understand the dynamics between pleasure, price sensitivity, and other related factors.

Another important finding is that there is a positive and significant relationship between pleasure and cognitive dissonance. Different assumptions can explain this relationship. Firstly, various psychological states of mind may come into play (Boujbel & d'Astous, 2015). This study was conducted within the context of conspicuous consumption, so although the purchasing impulse generates pleasure and happiness, the consumer may experience regret after the purchase. Additionally,

regardless of the product's performance, if the individual believes they won't receive the expected response from their social class, the motivation for conspicuous consumption may decrease, and post-purchase dissonance could arise. Another possible explanation could be that the product's performance fails to meet the desired value and lack of emotional connection between customer and brand (Wilkins et al., 2016). In this case, the consumer may abandon their decision and engage in brand-switching behavior.

Unlike the expectations, the study did not find a significant relationship between price sensitivity and cognitive dissonance. Several factors could explain this observation. The lack of a direct relationship between price sensitivity and cognitive dissonance may be due to the absence of mediating and moderating variables. Factors such as expected benefits, price fairness, demographic variables, and product category might play a role in this relationship. Additionally, cognitive dissonance may emerge more directly through psychological and intrinsic factors like impulsive buying and other psychological motivations (Ho & Wyer, 2024), as evidenced by the relationship identified between pleasure and cognitive dissonance in this study. Secondly, limitations related to research design could also contribute to the findings. Rather than relying solely on survey data, experimental designs could provide a more accurate testing ground for this relationship across various contexts. Furthermore, it is possible that these results are due to inappropriate measurement scale of price sensitivity. Instead of price sensitivity, using price consciousness scale might yield more meaningful results when testing the relationship between the two concepts.

## **Implications**

This study makes several significant contributions to existing literature. First, by addressing conspicuous consumption within an integrated model that incorporates both positive and negative emotional responses, this research aims to fill a critical gap in the field. By examining the relationship between pleasure and cognitive dissonance, it reveals that

conspicuous consumption can lead to conflicting emotional outcomes for individuals. In addition, the integration under one model of concepts like product involvement, price sensitivity, and cognitive dissonance enables a comprehensive analysis of how these factors interact with one another. The model enables a consideration of potentially inverse relations, for instance, between product involvement and price sensitivity, price sensitivity and cognitive dissonance, or between pleasure and price sensitivity. In addressing interactions between these factors within a single framework, the research provides a richer theoretical understanding for these problems. To this point, the research is informative not only about the emotional aspects of conspicuous consumption but also about more general psychological mechanisms in consumer behavior. Furthermore, including the price sensitivity as a mediator offers a novel perspective to the field. While conspicuous consumption is often associated with positive emotions such as involvement and pleasure, the introduction of price sensitivity as a mediator can shift these dynamics significantly. Furthermore, the integration of cognitive dissonance within the framework of conspicuous consumption provides a fresh and valuable approach. This combination highlights the complex interplay between emotional and rational dimensions of consumer behavior, enriching the existing body of knowledge.

Aside from theoretical contribution, this research provides practical implications for decision makers and marketers. Marketers can create effective planning by recognizing how these various concepts integrate and operate. For example, they can limit potential dissonance for status-seeking consumers by highlighting the importance of the buying process as well as the value acquired. Moreover, for consumers who exhibit high conspicuous consumption tendencies as well as product involvement, marketers can present their merchandise at premium prices. Pricing strategies tailored to the price sensitivities of different consumer groups, particularly in cases of high involvement with low status or low involvement with high status products, can contribute to a more pleasing purchasing process. However, to prevent consumers from experiencing cognitive dissonance after discounts or promotions, mechanisms such as

return policies or “best price guarantees” can be developed. Similarly, for price-sensitive consumers, practices that minimize negative emotions and maximize the overall experience can be implemented. It is crucial to convince consumers that the value they receive for the price they pay aligns with their expectations.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although this research aims to extend the knowledge on consumer psychology and emotional responses, it has several limitations. The study has been conducted without having specific product categories or level of involvement in consideration. While it provides certain useful insights, there are specific topics where future research can expand and deepen our understanding. First, future research can indicate certain categories of products to explore cognitive dissonance and conspicuous consumption across various types of goods, such as luxury items, technology products, or everyday consumables. Second, future research can be directed to study consumer behavior on certain shopping platforms. This type of research will be able to reveal the platform-specific triggers of emotions such as regret, satisfaction, or pleasure. Moreover, the time frame in which data is collected can significantly influence the findings, especially in dynamic shopping environments, like seasonal sales or promotional events. Future studies may investigate wider temporal scope by examining behavior over various time periods post-purchase to focus on the evolution of emotions-regret or cognitive dissonance. Another notable limitation of this study is the predominance of female participants in the sample. There may be several reasons for this imbalance. First, the subject of the research—online fashion product purchasing behavior—may have attracted more interest from female participants. Another possible reason relates to the data collection platform. As mentioned in the methodology section, the data were collected via the YouReply platform, where the number of female users may be higher than that of male users. Additionally, women may have been more willing to participate in the study compared to men. This gender imbalance in the participant profile

may have influenced the results and limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to design their research with greater attention to the distribution of demographic variables. Another limitation of this study is that it did not evaluate the involvement in two different measurement forms as high or low. Future studies can carry out research by considering the level of involvement. Additionally, to gain a deeper understanding of cognitive dissonance behavior, future research could explore various models incorporating different variables like return behavior and regret in models, particularly within the context of status products, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of post-purchase decision-making. A comparison of high-status versus low-status products might lead to the identification of some critical differences in consumer psychology. In addition, future studies may investigate the mediating and moderating roles of demographic variables such as age, income and gender. These variables can further be applied to various categories of products and consumption occasions for extracting meaningful information about conspicuous consumption and dissonance. Moreover, the effects of purchase motives on the feelings of pleasure and regret can be researched with respect to expected benefit and perceived meaning of purchase. For example, hedonic and impulsive motives of consumption in different product and involvement categories would go a long way toward helping better knowledge about post purchase dissonance.

### **Research and Publication Ethics Statement**

Ethics approval for this research was obtained from the Selçuk University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision numbered 16/97, dated 15 October 2024.

### **Author Contribution Statement**

As the sole author of this article, I am fully responsible for the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of the manuscript.

### **Support Statement**

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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### Genişletilmiş Özeti

## Bilişsel Uyumsuzluğu Anlamak: Gösterişi Tüketim, Ürün İlgilenimi, Fiyat Hassasiyeti ve Haz Arasındaki Etkileşimin İncelenmesi

Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, gösterişi tüketim, bilişsel uyumsuzluk, ürün ilgilenimi, fiyat hassasiyeti ve haz değişkenlerini bütüncül bir yaklaşımla ele alarak tüketici duyguları ile tüketici psikolojisi arasındaki etkileşimi incelemektir. Böylelikle, tüketici satın alma sürecini etkileyen psikolojik ve duygusal faktörlerin bu beş temel değişken aracılığıyla nasıl şekillendiği analiz edilmektedir. Bu bağlamda bu araştırma 1) ürün ilgilenimi, fiyat hassasiyeti ve haz arasındaki etkileşimin bilişsel uyumsuzluğun şekillenmesindeki rolünü, 2) ürün ilgilenimi ile fiyat hassasiyeti ve haz ile fiyat hassasiyeti arasındaki potansiyel ters yönlü ilişkileri ve 3) fiyat hassasiyetinin bilişsel uyumsuzlukla ters orantılı olduğu varsayımini test etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Gösterişi tüketim, bireylerin statü ve zenginliklerini sosyal çevrelerine yansıtma amacıyla ürün satın almalarının temel motivasyonlarından biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Temel olarak, bu tür tüketim sosyal ve psikolojik ihtiyaçlar tarafından yönlendirilmekle birlikte (Gierl & Huettl, 2010) genellikle hedonik ve sembolik değerlere odaklanmaktadır (Berger & Ward, 2010). Bu davranış, genellikle lüks ürünler ve varlıklı tüketicilerle ilişkilendirilse de günümüzde farklı sosyoekonomik sınıflardan bireyleri kapsayan daha geniş bir olguya dönüşmüştür. Mevcut literatürün büyük bir kısmı gösterişi tüketimin olumlu duygusal sonuçlarına odaklanırken, olası olumsuz yönleri görece az araştırılmıştır. Bu eksiklik kritiktir çünkü gösterişi motivasyonlarla yönlendirilen tüketici kararları, satın alım sonrası pişmanlık, suçluluk gibi olumsuz duygusal tepkilere de yol açılmaktadır. Bilişsel uyumsuzluk, satın alma sürecinde tutum ile davranış arasında ortaya çıkan çatışmanın bir sonucu olarak, suçluluk ve pişmanlık gibi psikolojik rahatsızlıklarla kendini gösteren bir olgudur (Sweeney, Hausknecht, & Soutar, 2000). Gösterişi tüketim bağlamında, satın alma sonrası bilişsel uyumsuzluk özellikle belirgin hâle gelebilir; çünkü tüketiciler, lüks alışverişler aracılığıyla sosyal onay arzusunu tatmin etmeye çalışırken, bu tür tercihlerinin finansal etkileriyle yüzleşmek zorunda kalmaktadır. Ürünle ilgilenim tüketici karar verme sürecini önemli ölçüde etkileyen, tüketicilerin bir ürüne duygusal veya bilişsel olarak ne derece yatırım yaptığını ifade eden bir değişkendir (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Bu anlamda, ürünle ilgilenim

gösteriçi tüketimle ilgili önemli bir psikolojik değişken olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Özsayı ve sosyal onay gibi psikolojik ihtiyaçlar, bu ilişkiye daha da güçlendirmektedir; çünkü tüketiciler, yalnızca işlevsel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayan ürünleri değil, aynı zamanda kimliklerini ve sosyal statülerini yansıtan sembolik ürünleri tercih etme eğilimindedir (Boğa & Başçı, 2016; Hız, 2011). Gösteriçi tüketim davranışını sergileyen bireyler genellikle finansal olarak varlıklı kişiler olup, bu tüketiciler daha düşük fiyat hassasiyeti eğilimi göstermektedir; çünkü bu tüketiciler ürünün performans faydasından ziyade sosyal faydaya odaklanmaktadır (Sun et al., 2020). Bununla birlikte, eğer tüketiciler fiyat adalı algılayamaz veya beklenen faydayı elde edemezlerse, satın alma sonrası uyumsuzluk meydana gelebilmektedir.

Haz, hedonik tüketimin temel bir unsuru olarak, bir ürünün satın alınması veya sahip olunmasından kaynaklanan duygusal tatmini ifade etmektedir (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Bu kavramın duygularla içsel bağlantısı, onu hem gösteriçi tüketim hem de bilişsel uyumsuzlukla ilişkilendirmektedir. Güncel çalışmalar, maksimum düzeyde istenilen faydayı (hedonik veya statü odaklı) elde etme çabasına dayanan tüketici davranışları ile ekonomik, etik ya da sosyal açıdan sorumlu tercihler yaparak suçluluk duygusunu hafifletme ihtiyacı arasında bir çatışma olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır (Ki et al., 2017). Bu çalışma, gösteriçi tüketim, fiyat hassasiyeti, ürünle ilgilenim, haz ve bilişsel uyumsuzluğun bütünselik bir modelde nasıl bir araya geldiğini incelemeye çalışmaktadır. Özellikle, bu değişkenlerin çevrimiçi moda tüketiminde satın alım sonrası bilişsel uyumsuzluğu nasıl etkilediğini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Her ne kadar tüketim genellikle haz ve mutlulukla ilişkilendirilse de belir bir zaman geçtikten sonra satın alım kararının heyecanı ve dürtüsü azaldıkça, özellikle statü odaklı satın alınan ürünler söz konusu olduğunda, olumsuz duygular ortaya çıkabilmektedir (Boujbel & d'Astous, 2015; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2015).

Bu bağlamda önerilen araştırma modelini test etmek için anket teknigi ile online ortamda 511 kişiden veriler toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar gösteriçi tüketimin ürünle ilgilenim (H1) ve haz (H3) değişkenlerini pozitif ve anlamlı bir şekilde etkilediğini, fiyat hassasiyeti (H2) ile ters yönlü ve anlamlı bir ilişkisi olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca ürün ile ilgilenim ve fiyat hassasiyeti arasında ters yönlü ve anlamlı bir ilişki tespit edilirken (H4), ürün ile ilgilenim ve bilişsel uyumsuzluk arasında anlamlı bir ilişki (H5) tespit edilememiştir. Haz duygusu fiyat hassasiyeti (H6) ve bilişsel uyumsuzluğu (H7) pozitif ve anlamlı etkilerken, fiyat hassasiyeti ile bilişsel uyumsuzluk (H8) arasında bir ilişki tespit edilememiştir.

Analiz sonuçları gösterişçi tüketim eğilimli, sosyal statüye önem veren ve olumlu bir imaj oluşturmayı hedefleyen tüketicilerin bu ihtiyaçlarını karşılayan ürünlerle yüksek düzeyde ilgilenim sergilediklerini göstermektedir (Feng vd., 2019). Ayrıca, bu tüketici segmentinin genellikle daha yüksek fiyat hassasiyeti gösterdiği tespit edilmiştir. Bu durum, özellikle gelişmekte olan ekonomilerde daha belirgin şekilde ortaya çıkmaktadır; çünkü tüketiciler artan gelirlerini, sosyal statü arayışının bir yansıması olarak gösterişçi tüketime yönlendirmektedir (Chen vd., 2022). Ayrıca, bu çalışmaya katılanların gelir seviyelerinin nispeten düşük olmasına rağmen, gösterişçi tüketim eğilimlerinin belirgin olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bu bulgu, gösterişçi tüketimin mutlaka gelirle ilişkili olmadığını ve ekonomik sınırları aşma potansiyeline sahip olduğunu göstermektedir (Zheng et al., 2018). Bunun yanında, araştırma sonuçları ürünle ilgilenim arttıkça, tüketicilerin fiyatı daha az önemseme eğiliminde olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda, fiyat ikincil hale gelmekte ve tüketicilerin önceliği üründen beklenen fayda ve değer tarafından biçimlenmektedir. Araştırmmanın bir diğer bulgusu fiyat hassasiyeti ile hız arasında tespit edilen pozitif ilişkidir. Bu sonuç bize bireylerin, üründen almayı bekledikleri hizaya göre fiyat hassasiyeti geliştirme eğiliminde olduklarını göstermektedir. Bu durumun özellikle lüks veya özel ürünler tercih eden tüketiciler için geçerli olabileceği düşünülmektedir; çünkü bu tüketiciler ürünün maksimum fayda sağlayacağına inanarak daha fazla ödeme yapmaya istekli olabilmektedir. Beklentinin aksine, bu çalışmada fiyat hassasiyeti ile bilişsel uyumsuzluk arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmamıştır.

Bu çalışma, farklı kuram ve teorileri tek bir modelde entegre ederek araştırma değişkenleri arasındaki pozitif ve negatif ilişkileri yansıtması bakımından teoriye katkı sağlamaktadır. Araştırma, ürünle ilgilenim, fiyat hassasiyeti ve bilişsel uyumsuzluğu bir modelde bütünlüğe getirerek değişkenler arasındaki karmaşık ilişkileri incelemektedir. Çalışma, tüketici davranışının duygusal ve psikolojik boyutlarına dair kapsamlı bir bakış açısı sunmakta ve fiyatı, dinamikleri değiştiren aracı bir faktör olarak ele almaktadır. Ayrıca, genellikle dürtüsel satın alma ile ilişkilendirilen bilişsel uyumsuzluğun gösterişçi tüketim bağlamında araştırılması tüketici davranışının duygusal ve rasyonel boyutları arasındaki etkileşimi anlamaya yönelik yeni ve değerli bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, teorik katkılarının yanında uygulayıcılara pratik katkılar da sunmaktadır. Satın alma deneyiminde tüketici duyguları ve psikolojisi arasındaki karmaşık ilişkilerin açıklanması karar alıcılarla etkili stratejiler geliştirebilmeleri açısından önemli bilgiler sağlamaktadır. Özellikle statü ve gösteriş eğilimli tüketici-

ler için satın almın sonrası bilişsel uyumsuzluğu azaltmak için algılanan değere vurgu yapılabilir. Farklı tüketici segmentlerine yönelik özelleştirilmiş fiyatlandırma stratejileri satın alma deneyimini iyileştirebilir.