

What Will Motivate You To Travel After COVID-19?: The Effects of Online Social Identity,
Social Comparison, Conspicuous Consumption, and Self-construal on Choosing a Tourist
Destination

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Recreation and Leisure Studies

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Abstract

Background: From the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic had devastating impacts on the tourism industry. However, the number of tourists seemed to recover in the summer of 2021 and even surpassed 2019 arrivals. Tourism practitioners and marketers should better understand and predict new trends in the tourism industry and prepare for the post-COVID-19 era. A strong desire for “revenge tourism” was forecast by tourism observers, where tourism demand would sharply rebound after the exhausting and protracted period of lockdowns and travel restrictions. Recent research suggests that young adults (e.g., 18 to 34-year-olds) report higher social media usage compared to the pre-COVID-19 era, indicating that they may develop a higher level of online social identity. This new phenomenon could lead social media users to engage in increased social comparisons and conspicuous consumption, especially in tourism contexts. The psychosocial mechanism that ultimately leads to conspicuous consumption behavior was examined to comprehend the decision-making process and motivations for choosing particular tourist destinations.

Objectives: The purpose of this research was to investigate if online social identity induces social comparisons among social media users and thus influences the decision-making process of choosing a tourist destination from the perspective of conspicuous consumption. This research also examined the possibility of tourists from different ethnic groups (i.e., East Asians and Westerners) being more subject to social comparisons and conspicuous consumption.

Methods: To better understand tourists’ motivations to travel, two surveys were utilized to first identify the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations and then statistically analyze why tourists choose to visit the conspicuous destinations. Survey One was distributed to students and employees at the University of Alberta ($N = 54$) to determine the conspicuousness of each

international tourist destination, and Survey Two was distributed to a new set of participants ($N = 321$) in Canada to measure the levels of online social identity, self-construal, social comparison, and conspicuous consumption. All the participants in this study belonged to the age cohorts of Millennials and Generation Z. Path analysis was used to analyze the psychosocial motivators that galvanize consumers into choosing a conspicuous tourist destination.

Outcomes: Survey One showed that of the top 20 international tourist destinations, Paris, Dubai, and Rome were identified as the most conspicuous destinations, while Delhi, Denpasar, and Ho Chi Minh were found to be the least conspicuous destinations. Based on the findings in Survey Two, online social identity and the emotional outcomes generated by social comparison (i.e., benign envy and hubristic pride) played significant roles in galvanizing people into engaging in conspicuous consumption and intending to visit conspicuous destinations. Furthermore, materialistic hedonism and ostentation, which are the two dimensions of conspicuous consumption, had mediating effects on the relationship between the intention to visit international conspicuous destinations and its predictors. There was no significant difference in the level of intention to visit conspicuous destinations between East Asians and Westerners, although East Asians intended to visit *inconspicuous* destinations more than Westerners. Ethnicity moderated the relationship of the intention to visit international conspicuous destinations with the two dimensions of conspicuous consumption, interpersonal mediation and status demonstration. When East Asians engage in interpersonal mediation and status demonstration, they are more likely to intend to visit international conspicuous destinations than Western people. As a result, in the post-COVID-19 era, depending on each international destination's level of conspicuousness, social media-based envy-and-pride-eliciting marketing strategies should be engaged to attract Millennials and Generation Z, which are the

two age cohorts that are substantially influenced by social media.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Seung Jin Cho. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “What Will Motivate You To Travel After COVID-19?: The Effects of Online Social Identity, Social Comparison, Conspicuous Consumption, and Self-construal on Choosing a Tourist Destination”, Pro00114765, March 11, 2022.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background

In *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Veblen (1899) coined the term conspicuous consumption to illustrate the phenomenon of purchasing goods and services for the specific purpose of displaying one's status and wealth. Traditionally, material goods have been playing a significant role in conspicuous consumption, but with the advancement of technology such as social media, there is a mushrooming interest in immaterial experiences or experiential purchases (Heffetz, 2011; Josiassen & Assaf, 2013). In the past few years, the proliferation of social media has been playing a pivotal role in diversifying the communication landscape for businesses (O'Brien, 2011), especially in the tourism industry. Marketers utilize social media as a highly effective and cost-efficient promotional tool to disseminate necessary information about their brands, products, and services to prospective consumers (Giglio et al., 2020; Park et al., 2016; Stieglitz et al., 2013).

Among different types of social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram are the most visited social media in the world, boasting over three billion users worldwide in total (Statista, 2019). There are other social media platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, Pinterest, Reddit, and more, which suggests social media's popularity in today's society. Social media users can effectively develop their online social identities (OSI) by interacting with their friends, colleagues, and others (Barker, 2009; Davis, 2012). Pegg et al. (2018) defined online social identity (OSI) as a "self-concept that results through identification with social groups or categories that individuals experience online" (p. 51). Understanding OSI has been considered increasingly significant as constructing one's OSI is closely related to shaping the way one behaves in society (Latif et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2012). There are a growing number of leisure

travelers who harness the information on social media to plan their travel (Torres, 2010). Thus, the tourism industry is increasingly taking advantage of this online power to promote its products and services, strengthen customer relationship management (CRM), and reshape customer experiences (Park & Oh, 2012; Leung et al., 2013). Particularly, luxury tourism has grown substantially over the past few decades (Allied Market Search, 2019), and understanding the relationship between social media usage and luxury-seeking behaviors has gained considerable attention from both scholars and practitioners (Thirumaran et al., 2021).

Past research has extensively discussed the meanings of push and pull factors in comprehending tourist motivations and the intention to choose a tourist destination (Crompton, 1979). Push factors are the socio-psychological needs that intrinsically motivate a tourist to travel, whereas pull factors are associated with the tangible features or attractiveness of a tourist destination. As different travel motivations elicit the intention to visit a certain tourist destination, a number of empirical studies have examined travel motivations as a source of market segmentation in tourism (Andreu et al., 2005). Even though intrinsic motivations of tourism (i.e., tourism demand) that lead to self-enhancement have been extensively researched in the current literature (Peng et al., 2014), how extrinsic motivations, such as conspicuous consumption, impact tourists' intention to visit a certain destination has not gained enough attention (Phillips & Back, 2011). Extrinsic motivation refers to a type of behavior regulation that is driven by external rewards, such as wealth, achievement, praise, and fame (Teo et al., 1999).

Researchers have also investigated the relationships among social media usage, personality traits (e.g., narcissism), and emotional experiences (e.g., envy; Liu et al., 2019; Taylor & Strutton, 2016). The findings suggest that both upward and downward social

comparisons, which generate envy and narcissism, respectively, may drive conspicuous consumption behaviors in an attempt to maintain or improve one's self-image and perceived social status (Tesser, 1988). Even though narcissism can be operationalized as an emotional experience, narcissism itself does not have inherent emotional states as envy does. Accordingly, pride, which is an emotional byproduct of narcissism should be compared with envy (Tracy et al., 2009). This new approach of subsuming both pride and envy as emotional outcomes of social comparisons is important because no research has directly investigated the relationship between pride and social media usage in relation to tourism, to the best of my knowledge.

Furthermore, Lisitsa et al. (2020) found that young adults (i.e., 18 to 34-year-olds) reported higher social media usage compared to the pre-COVID-19 era. This implies that young adults could have developed a higher level of OSI during the pandemic, making them more susceptible to social comparisons on social media than before. When individuals possess a high level of OSI, they are more likely to define themselves by their online social communities and assimilate into members of their online communities (Reicher et al., 2010). Accordingly, there could be a strong desire for revenge tourism among prospective travelers because they have been extremely tired of going through a prolonged period of lockdowns and travel restrictions and therefore might be easily influenced by the tourism-related content on social media. The concept of revenge tourism¹ is based on the belief that tourists will actively participate in tourism activities after the reopening of international borders as a compensatory mechanism (Abdullah, 2021; Choudhary & Manda, 2021; Oktaviani & Sutisna, 2021; Panzer-Krause, 2022;

¹ Even though revenge tourism/travel has negative connotations, this term is widely used on the Internet these days, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the term has also been used in the academic literature (Abdullah, 2021; Choudhary & Manda, 2021; Oktaviani & Sutisna, 2021; Panzer-Krause, 2022; Shadel, 2020).

Shadel, 2020). Consequently, to better understand and predict a change in the tourism industry, researchers should provide a more in-depth examination of tourists' motivations and reactions in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Problem Statement

From the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry was devastating. According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (2021), international arrivals in 2020 plummeted by 74% which would translate into an estimated loss of 1.3 trillion USD. The year 2020 was recorded as the worst year in tourism history with approximately 1 billion fewer international arrivals (UNWTO, 2021) compared to the previous year, but tourism practitioners and marketers do not have a clear understanding of possible scenarios for the post-pandemic recovery. There is also a need for conducting more empirical studies on how to prepare for the impact of future pandemic outbreaks on the tourism industry for practitioners and marketers.

Global tourism has been influenced by a broad spectrum of crises in the past (Gössling et al., 2020), but no crisis in the past has been devastating enough to make a long-term transition in the tourism industry because tourism has always managed to rebound from previous crises successfully (Hall et al., 2020). For instance, major unsettling and disruptive events such as the 9.11 terrorist attacks (2001), the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak (2003), the global economic crisis (2008), and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) (2015) outbreak occurred during the first 15 years of the twenty-first century. However, none of these events led to a noticeable decline in the global development of tourism in the long term (World Bank 2020a, 2020b). This observation highlights the resilience of tourism as a system from

external influences.

According to Dr. Jennifer Thomas (Insider, 2020), travel shaming is a relatively new concept on social media with the advent of COVID-19. During the pandemic, tourists were afraid of feeling guilty or getting criticized by others, so they chose to curb their online presence or not share travel-related content on social media (Insider, 2020). Therefore, a number of people may have been reluctant to travel because of travel shaming. Even though some researchers speculated on the possibility of tourism not rebounding as before due to the magnitude and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2021), recent statistics in the United States show a noticeable surge in the number of tourists as the vaccine rollout sped up (TSA, 2021). Importantly, the number of tourists has been skyrocketing since July 2021, reaching approximately 70% to 80% of the number of tourists in 2019. For instance, the number of domestic and international tourists on July 1st, 2019, was 2,088,760, and it plummeted to 764,761 on July 1st, 2020. However, the number of tourists on the same day in 2021 reached 2,147,090, implying that tourists are on the move again and recent research did not accurately predict the market trend in the tourism industry.

To better prepare for the post-COVID-19 era, tourism practitioners and marketers should remain resilient in the midst of rapid fluctuations and unexpected eventualities. Accordingly, having a clear grasp of the tourists' motivations for choosing a certain destination would be of importance. The present study aimed to address this broad issue from the perspectives of conspicuous consumption, social media, and other relevant factors. This study can be used to discern the psychosocial mechanisms of OSI, benign envy, and hubristic pride having an impact on choosing a tourist destination from the perspective of conspicuous consumption in the post-COVID-19 era.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

I identified OSI, social comparison theory, self-construal, and conspicuous consumption as key factors that impact social media experiences and conspicuous tourism motivations. However, my literature review indicated no single study included all of the four important variables that may lead tourists to choose a conspicuous destination. For this reason, more research on tourism that applies the concepts of OSI, social comparison theory, self-construal, and conspicuous consumption was required to better understand the psychosocial mechanism of choosing a tourist destination, especially in the post-COVID-19 era. Below, I review each of these four factors one by one.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Online Social Identity (OSI)

Social media have reconstructed the nature and framework of social networks, allowing users to express, maintain, and expand their virtual social identities (Ellison et al., 2007). Facebook, which is one of the most visited social media websites, is a particularly powerful tool for the construction of OSI, empowering its users to selectively share their experiences and engender a new awareness of how, to whom, and for what purpose they want their social image to be presented (Van Dijck, 2013). Pegg et al. (2018) defined online social identity (OSI) as a “self-concept that results through identification with social groups or categories that individuals experience online” (p. 51). Social media users can effectively develop their OSIs by virtually interacting with their friends, colleagues, and others (Barker, 2009; Davis, 2012). Understanding OSI has increasingly been considered important as one’s OSI is closely related to the way one

behaves in society (Latif et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2012). Latif et al. (2020) also suggested that OSI can moderate the way people engage in social comparisons on social media. Their results showed that when one's level of OSI is high (i.e., more involved in social media usage), the positive relationship between social media use and social comparison (benign envy; see below) is likely to be more powerful.

It is notable that Facebook usage is linked to higher levels of envy and lower life satisfaction (Krasnova et al., 2013). Facebook users also believe that others are happier and more satisfied with their lives than themselves (Chou & Edge, 2012). Furthermore, Facebook usage could reduce one's self-esteem (Chen & Lee, 2013). Based on the findings that a large proportion of Facebook users incessantly compare themselves with others (Steers, 2014), both pride and envy can be the byproducts of engaging in social media. Bauman (1996) described a postmodern problem of identity in a way that one's identity can be constantly reshaped and reframed due to its unencumbered and ethereal characteristics. Similarly, this trend of constantly rewriting and reconstructing one's social identity has been prevalent in the context of social media.

Latif et al. (2021) argued that travel consumers' OSI can have a moderating effect on the relationship between the exposure to travel-related content on social media and the intention to visit a tourist destination. When individuals possess a high level of OSI, they are more likely to define themselves by their online social communities and assimilate into their online social groups (Reicher et al., 2010). The present literature bolsters this moderation effect of OSI by suggesting that adolescents with a high level of OSI (i.e., those who are more involved in social media usage) are easily influenced by alcohol-related exposure on social media, whereas the same exposure does not predict alcohol use for those with a low level of OSI (Pegg et al., 2018).

In addition, Lisitsa et al. (2020) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, young adults (e.g., 18 to 34-year-olds) reported increased social media usage compared to the pre-pandemic era. This implies that young adults could have developed a higher level of OSI during the pandemic, making them more susceptible to social comparisons on social media.

To summarize, having a high level of OSI can make social media users more susceptible to the influence of Internet trends and predispose them to engage in a higher level of social comparisons (envy and pride; e.g., Latif et al., 2021). Furthermore, research suggests that one's social identity is correlated with engagement in conspicuous consumption (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015). Therefore, based on the discussion about the relationship between travel-related content exposure on social media and the intention to visit a certain tourist destination (Latif et al., 2021), the role of OSI in the decision-making process was further investigated in my study with the tourism context.

2.1.2 Social Comparison Theory

The social comparison theory presupposes that people have an intrinsic need to compare themselves with others for the purpose of determining their relative self-evaluation (Festinger, 1954). Individuals are more inclined to compare themselves with others who share similar traits such as age and gender in a bid to procure a more accurate self-evaluation (Wood, 1989). Depending on the comparison target's social status, individuals may engage in either upward social comparison or downward social comparison. Upward comparison occurs when the comparison target is considered to be superior to oneself, whereas downward social comparison occurs when the comparison target is perceived to be inferior to oneself (Wood, 1989).

Past research indicated that travel pictures posted by friends on Facebook can elicit social

comparison processes among users of the platform, as individuals selectively display their positive sides (Krasnova et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2019; Lyu, 2016; Pera, 2018; Wong et al., 2019). Other researchers have documented that the use of social media increased travel consumption (Luo & Zhong, 2015; Narangajavana et al., 2017) and have clarified the positive relationship among social media usage, personality traits (e.g., narcissism), and emotional experiences (e.g., envy; Liu et al., 2019; Taylor & Strutton, 2016). Therefore, in an attempt to maintain or improve one's self-image and perceived social status, both upward and downward social comparisons may drive conspicuous consumption behaviors (Tesser, 1988).

Tourists take selfies at a tourist attraction as a means of garnering evidence that they had unique and exclusive experiences (Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). Travelers upload selfies on social media as a form of conspicuous consumption to make themselves appear more attractive, thus maintaining and enhancing their perceived social status (Bronner & de Hoog, 2021). Since immaterial experiences such as travel and tourism are increasingly considered as more conspicuous emblems of success and prosperity than material possessions (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006), a growing number of tourists strive to take perfect selfies and even end up getting into fatal accidents (Jain & Mavani, 2017). Therefore, there may be certain catalysts (i.e., emotions or motives) stimulating tourists to overlook the risks of getting into a fatal accident, and there is a need to explore the psychosocial mechanisms and motivations that lead to the ubiquitous social trend of displaying one's unique experiences (Lo & McKercher, 2015).

Smith (2000) introduced a model for social comparison emotions, demonstrating the types of social comparison-based emotions that can vary depending on the direction of the emotion-eliciting comparison target (i.e., superior or inferior). The list of social comparison emotions

encompasses inspiration, optimism, admiration, depression, shame, envy, resentment, contempt, scorn, schadenfreude, pride, pity, fear, worry, and sympathy. As illustrated by Smith (2000), the direction of social comparison has heuristic value for comprehending affective reactions, and I hypothesized that pride and envy are the most powerful and influential emotions that may motivate tourists to engage in conspicuous consumption.

2.1.2.1 Upward Social Comparison: Envy

As a social emotion, envy represents feelings of inferiority that result from upward social comparison (Van de Ven, 2016; Van de Ven et al., 2009). Envy “occurs when a person lacks another’s superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it” (Parrott & Smith, 1993, p. 906), and social media users reported that they commonly experience this social emotion (Krasnova et al., 2015; Lim & Yang, 2015; Wallace et al., 2017). Envy can be conceptualized as a group of emotional elements such as benign envy (i.e., the desire to possess what others have or move up to the level of the person eliciting envy) and malicious envy (i.e., the desire for others to lose the comparative advantages) (Van de Ven et al., 2009). While malicious envy tends to elicit extreme emotional outcomes such as animosity and abhorrence, benign envy induces more positive and productive emotional outcomes in everyday life. For example, schadenfreude, the pleasure of witnessing the suffering and misfortune of the envied person, is the ensuing emotion from malicious envy (Smith et al., 1996), whereas benign envy does not generate schadenfreude. It is important to note that the majority of strategies used in marketing are designed to elicit benign envy (Belk, 2011; Liu et al., 2019; Van Tran et al., 2022). Malicious envy generally leads to more criminal and psychopathic behaviors (Belk, 2011). Accordingly, malicious envy seems irrelevant to

conspicuous consumption behaviors as one's consumption behaviors—especially tourism consumption—are unlikely to cause any harm to others.

Previous research showed that benign envy is associated with a positive attitude toward the comparison target and a desire to resemble the target's superior qualities, accomplishments, and wealth through hard work or conspicuous consumption (Van de Ven, 2016). The concept of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899) is predicated on eliciting envy as a motivation for purchasing and displaying goods that represent one's self-concept and social status. For instance, individuals who experience benign envy are willing to pay more for a product owned by the comparison target who shares similar characteristics (Van de Ven et al., 2011). Accordingly, benign envy toward the comparison target is likely to trigger one's intention to visit the conspicuous tourist destinations that the target has visited. To put it simply, upward social comparison is an antecedent of benign envy (van de Ven & Zeelenberg, 2020), and benign envy can lead to conspicuous consumption when choosing a tourist destination. Therefore, the present study focused on benign envy as a motivation to visit a conspicuous destination to maintain or enhance one's self-image and social status as malicious envy does not necessarily lead to conspicuous consumption.

2.1.2.2 Downward Social Comparison: Narcissism and Pride

Narcissism is a personality trait characterized by a sense of grandiosity and an overly positive self-conception (Buss & Chiodo, 1991). Individuals with higher levels of narcissism tend to have a need for admiration and a sense of inflated self-worth (Oltmanns & Emery, 1995). Narcissism is also characterized by a constant interaction between exaggerated “pride and shame”, which are self-conscious emotions (Tracy et al., 2011). Past research has found positive

correlations among narcissism, envy, and social media usage (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Sorokowski et al., 2015; Taylor & Strutton, 2016), but the major concern here is that narcissism and benign envy cannot be deemed as comparable outcomes of social comparison as the former is more of a personality trait than an emotional state. Therefore, there was a need to compare an emotional state related to narcissism with benign envy. As aforementioned, upward social comparison is an antecedent of envy (van de Ven & Zeelenberg, 2020), but downward social comparison is not necessarily an antecedent of narcissism. More specifically, narcissism can precede a social comparison and predispose individuals to make downward comparisons (Krizan & Bushman, 2011). Pride, on the other hand, is deemed to be an emotional outcome of a downward social comparison (Tesser, 1991), which may lead people to engage in conspicuous consumption when choosing a tourist destination. Friedman and Ostrov (2008) also pointed out that conspicuous consumption can be formalized as two forms of interdependent preferences: envy and pride.

Although little research explores the relationship between pride and social media usage, extant research suggests that narcissism is associated with both authentic pride and hubristic pride (Rogoza et al., 2018). The authentic and hubristic model of pride introduced by Tracy and Robins (2007) highlights the role of emotional processes rooted in narcissistic self-esteem (see below for details). In addition, Malkin (2015), a clinical psychologist, described narcissism as a “spectrum of self-importance”, and everyone falls somewhere on the spectrum. This conceptualization implies that pride can be seen as a universal emotional state that ensues from narcissism, and it is reasonable to hypothesize that there is a relationship between pride and social media usage as well. Even though a moderate degree of narcissism is considered healthy and desirable as it regulates normal self-esteem (Bibring, 1953; Joffe et al., 1967), an

excessively high level of narcissism can lead to a pathologic condition known as narcissistic personality disorder and create a considerable number of societal issues (Guha, 2014). The current study was not designed to focus on pride that arises from the pathological degree of narcissism, but rather from the normal level of narcissism as a regular personality trait.

To sum up, everyone is narcissistic to a certain degree and may be more willing to engage in conspicuous consumption when choosing a tourist destination (Malkin, 2015). Tourists can boast of their unique experiences on social media and enhance their self-esteem and perceived social status. Furthermore, narcissistic individuals are likely to seek attention and are usually concerned with their physical appearance (Vazire et al., 2008), signifying a direct impact of narcissism and pride as its emotional proxy on their decision-making process when engaging in conspicuous consumption.

2.1.2.3 Downward Social Comparison: Authentic and Hubristic Pride

Pride is a complicated construct that can be conceptualized either in a positive or negative manner (i.e., pride as a positive emotion based on personal success versus negative, conceited feelings; Dickens & Robins, 2020). Based on this dichotomy, the literature suggests that pride can be conceptualized as a group of emotional elements such as authentic and hubristic pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Tracy and Robins (2007) argued that authentic pride originates from the efforts made towards specific accomplishments or mastery-oriented goals, and it is a fundamental self-conscious emotion (Carver et al., 2010) that motivates people to persevere even without extrinsic rewards or punishments (Williams & DeSteno, 2008). People with authentic pride are likely to cultivate the pursuit of altruistic and valued goal-oriented behavior (Cheng et al., 2010).

On the other hand, hubristic pride refers to pride in a global sense of self (e.g., being proud of oneself), and typically derives from internal, stable, and global causes (e.g., believing one is good at everything). In comparison with authentic pride, hubristic pride is less associated with actual achievements (Tracy & Robins, 2007), and it is more related to narcissism than to genuine self-esteem (Cheng et al., 2009). More precisely, hubristic pride is an emotional outcome generated by self-enhancement and an inauthentic sense of self (Tracy & Robins, 2014). It is important to note that the majority of strategies utilized in marketing are not typically designed to make consumers feel authentically proud of themselves as they do not require mastery-oriented goals. With this understanding, hubristic pride, which is associated with extrinsic values of public recognition and social status, is more pertinent to conspicuous consumption than authentic pride is. Hubristic pride is closely tied to narcissism (Tracy & Robins, 2007) and possibly to conspicuous consumption as the feelings of superiority are directly headed towards the comparison target (i.e., feeling proud of oneself and superior to others), whereas people with authentic pride mainly focus on mastery-oriented accomplishments and goals.

To recapitulate, narcissistic individuals are psychologically insecure and more likely to defend their perceived social status and self-esteem (Raskin et al., 1991). Therefore, the present study is predicated on the assumption that those individuals who feel hubristic pride, which appears to be defensive (McGregor et al., 2005) and compulsive in nature (Gershman, 1947; Tracy & Robins, 2007), might be more willing to travel to a conspicuous destination that may gain more attention and popularity on social media. In this manner, they may be able to maintain or enhance their self-presentation and social standing as a defensive mechanism in the real world.

2.1.3 Conspicuous Consumption

Conspicuous consumption describes the consumption of a product signaling the superior status and affluence of the individual to other consumers (Packard, 1959). The desire to gain social status through the consumption of conspicuous products is one of the notable motives that influence the decision-making process of consumers (Goldsmith et al., 1996). Accordingly, this socioeconomic and cultural phenomenon has a meaningful impact on how and why consumers expend their money on a certain product and service in their daily lives. Consumers engage in conspicuous consumption to impress others with an ostentatious display of wealth, thus maintaining or improving their self-esteem and social status (Veblen, 1934). The present literature points out that experiential purchases are becoming increasingly significant for consumers (Yang & Mattila, 2017). Conspicuous consumption plays a powerful role not only in material purchases but also in immaterial experiences (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Veblen (1934) was the trailblazer of conspicuous consumption theory, and the theory posits that consumers who engage in conspicuous consumption are rewarded with an advantageous social position. This can partially explain why researchers in leisure and tourism have recently started to examine the effects and psychological mechanisms of status-seeking behaviors in luxury tourism (Yang & Mattila, 2017).

One of the paramount characteristics of conspicuous consumption is its visibility, indicating that the consumption of a product or service needs to be witnessed by others to satisfy the consumer's desire (Bourne, 1957). Conspicuous consumption can be applied to choices of tourism destinations because the concept can help explicate a tourist's desire to boast of their economic success and perceived social status and to impress others by taking a trip to luxurious destinations (Phillips & Back, 2011). Traditionally, the rich did not have an effective means to

instantaneously boast of their unique but immaterial experiences at a tourist destination, but with the advancement of technology, tourists are now capable of sharing travel-related content and brag about their personal experiences through social media such as Facebook and Instagram during or after a trip (Kang & Schuett, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). As a result, sharing the evidence of immaterial experiences with others has become accessible. Sirgy and Su (2000) coined the term “destination conspicuousness” to represent the type of conspicuous consumption in the tourism context. Ergo, a conspicuous destination is a place that generates aspirations from others.

To reiterate, demonstrating the economic ability to visit a conspicuous destination can represent one’s social status to others, and those who place great value on their OSI and self-image will be more likely to visit destinations that are more prestigious and conspicuous (Liu et al., 2019; Van Tran et al., 2022). Phillips and Back (2011) suggested that one tourism destination can be perceived to be more conspicuous than another, but no study has examined the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations, to the best of my knowledge. Paying a visit to international destinations is usually deemed to be more conspicuous than going to domestic destinations (Phillips & Back, 2011), so identifying the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations would be essential to further studies of conspicuous consumption in the tourism context. This line of research can have meaningful theoretical and practical implications, such as explaining the overall psychosocial mechanism that ultimately leads to the intention of visiting an international conspicuous destination and suggesting a new approach to promoting international destination marketing strategies in the post-COVID-19 era.

2.1.3.1 The Five Dimensions of Conspicuous Consumption

To better understand the different elements of conspicuous consumption, Marcoux et al. (1995) formulated the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption: *materialistic hedonism*, *communication of belonging*, *interpersonal mediation*, *status demonstration*, and *ostentation*. Materialistic hedonism corresponds to the pleasant aspects of consumption; communication of belonging is related to a sense of involvement in a community; interpersonal mediation suggests the influence of social relations that generates respect and popularity from others; status demonstration indicates success, social status, and wealth; and ostentation signals the consumption of costly products (Marcoux et al., 1997).

Phillips and Back (2011) applied four of the five dimensions to tourist destinations, identifying that tourists who are driven to maintain and enhance their self-image have a propensity to visit destinations that: can make tourists feel unique and experience pleasure (*materialistic hedonism*); can make tourists feel a sense of involvement with their social groups (*communication of belonging*); can generate respect, value, and popularity from others (*interpersonal mediation*); and represent success, prestige, and wealth (*status demonstration*). Phillips and Back (2011) did not include the dimension of ostentation (i.e., destinations that are known to be expensive and luxurious) in their survey as the variable had low reliability in Marcoux et al.'s (1995) original study. However, ostentation was incorporated in my research because this aspect of conspicuous consumption is arguably more pertinent to my investigation of international destinations that tend to be more expensive than domestic counterparts (Phillips & Back, 2011). Marcoux et al.'s (1995) study primarily focused on the conspicuousness of actual products (e.g., sunglasses) from the perspective of consumer behavior, and Phillips and Back's (2011) study only measured the conspicuousness of domestic tourist destinations. There

is no study about the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations to the best of my knowledge.

Furthermore, it is important to point out that the dimensions of conspicuous consumption (Marcoux et al., 1995) are the only existing scale that measures conspicuous consumption (Chen et al., 2008), so there is a need for investigating the relatively underexplored construct. Even though Phillips and Back (2011) were the only researchers who applied the dimensions of conspicuous consumption to tourist destinations, they did not fully consider the advancement of Internet technology such as social media and emotional factors (i.e., benign envy and hubristic pride). In this sense, there was a need to study the dimensions of conspicuous consumption as the factors to predict tourists' intention to visit international conspicuous destinations, while also examining how the conspicuous consumption dimensions were affected by OSI and social comparison outcomes. Specifically, the current study aimed to identify which dimension(s) has a more significant impact on motivating tourists to visit an international conspicuous destination.

2.1.4 The Moderating Role of Self-Construal and Culture

The theory of self-construal refers to how a person thinks about oneself in relation to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), one noticeable distinction between people in Western and Eastern cultures is the degree to which the self is defined in relation to others at a fundamental level. This distinction has been understood as egocentric and sociocentric selves (Schweder & Bourne, 1984), individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1989), and independence and interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Regardless of these different conceptualizations, on one end, people view themselves as autonomous and unique individuals, whereas on the other end, individuals see themselves as

fundamentally and indistinguishably embedded in a larger social network.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) also pointed out that the cultural differences between the two self-construals can have an impact on cognitive and motivational processes when one seeks to achieve their goal. For instance, a large proportion of people in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe have independent or individualistic self-construal, indicating that they prioritize being unique, expressing their inner characteristics, and developing their own goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, people with independent self-construal are likely to view themselves as separate entities from others and emphasize autonomous decisions to garner independent success and prestige. As a result, people influenced by Western cultures are likely to express their feelings and highlight their positive qualities because they can display their preferences or attributes (Kim, 2003). In this sense, individual achievement and success are closely associated with one's happiness in Western cultures because achievement generally signals positive internal attributes (Kitayama et al., 2009). To put it simply, the individual is the source of thought, feeling, and behavior, and positive disengaging emotions (e.g., pride) are preferred in individualistic cultures (Kitayama et al., 2000).

On the contrary, people in Asia, Africa, and Southern Europe are more likely to possess interdependent or collectivistic self-construal, suggesting that they prioritize belonging, maintaining harmony, and achieving others' goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Accordingly, if the self is construed as socially embedded in a larger social network, then one is likely to achieve their goal as an integral part of social relationships and then maintain connectedness with surrounding others. With interdependent self-construal, people deem individual behaviors as dependent on or organized by the behaviors of others, and positive engaging emotions (e.g., friendly) are more valued in interdependent cultures than in individualistic cultures. Envy is a

socially engaging negative emotion, and this emotional outcome may have a different impact on the decision-making process of visiting a conspicuous destination among tourists with interdependent self-construal than among those with independent self-construal (Kitayama et al., 2006).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) argued that these two types of self-construal “are among the most general and overarching schemata of the individual’s self-system” (p. 230). Not only did Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggest that the type of self-construal an individual possesses has an impact on their cognitions, emotions, and motivations, but also Triandis (1995) made an argument analogous to theirs. In addition, Walker and Wang (2008) speculated that self-construal influences leisure motives, which applies to tourism motivations as well. The difference between independence and interdependence as foundational self schemata has been a useful guide to conducting research regarding how different socio-cultural contexts can represent self-functioning (i.e., the ability to understand one’s emotions and establish trust in their own intuition and desire) and psychological functioning (i.e., the ability to achieve one’s goal within their selves and the external environment; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007). For instance, Markus and Kitayama (1991) assessed the relative importance of psychological needs in satisfactory experiences among American and South Korean college students. One noticeable difference between American and Korean students was that the satisfaction of relatedness need was the most powerful predictor of positive affect among Koreans, whereas the satisfaction of self-esteem was prioritized among American students.

Another important point that Markus and Kitayama (1991) made was that culture may have an impact on psychological processes not only by providing priming stimuli that bias one’s responses in a certain way but also by affording a systematic context for the development of

different response tendencies. They suggested that a wide range of cultural differences in cognition, emotion, and motivation could be explained by cultural differences in self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). First, self-construal influences the way people engage in counterfactual reasoning or abstract conceptualization. Interdependent individuals tend to think about their role in the relationship with surrounding others and respond to ambiguous questions in a different manner in comparison to independent individuals who are less concerned about how their answer would be understood. Second, Markus and Kitayama (1991) postulated that “emotional experience should vary systematically with the construal of the self” (p. 235). To be more precise, the same emotion may be generated by different circumstances, and people with different types of self-construal may experience and display different emotions even in the same or similar social contexts. For example, people with independent self-construal tend to express and experience ego-focused emotions (e.g., anger, pride), whereas those with interdependent self-construal are more inclined to experience and display other-focused engaging emotions (e.g., shame, friendly) (Aaker & Williams, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In this sense, people may feel different types or levels of emotions when engaging in conspicuous consumption. Lastly, people with interdependent self-construal (e.g., East Asians) are more likely to be motivated by socially-oriented goals than those with independent self-construal (Yamaguchi & Kim, 2015). It does not necessarily mean that interdependent people have a higher level of desire for affiliation (Sheldon et al., 2001), but they are more susceptible to fulfilling their roles within a larger social network. For instance, self-esteem for interdependent people is based on the ability to assimilate into surrounding others, whereas for independent people, it is based on the ability to demonstrate uniqueness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

As shown in the previous examples, including the difference in culturally preferred

emotions between American and Korean students, self-construal can influence motivations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Walker and Wang (2008) speculated that self-construal could influence leisure motives, but the concept of self-construal was relatively underexplored in leisure and tourism contexts. Moreover, the review of the literature suggests that even though some studies examined how one's ethnicity and self-construal influence their conspicuous consumption behaviors (Chen et al., 2005; Fazeli et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Ryabov, 2016). For instance, Lee et al's (2020) study found that materialistic consumers with independent self-construal are more likely to purchase inconspicuous luxury brands because of their high need for uniqueness, whereas non-materialistic consumers with interdependent self-construal are more inclined to acquire conspicuous luxury products because of high self-monitoring. However, there was no empirical research regarding whether the relationships between the intention to visit international conspicuous destinations and its predictors can be moderated by ethnicity and self-construal. Therefore, investigating whether different types of self-construal are associated with higher levels of motivation to engage in conspicuous consumption in the tourism context would be valuable. I hypothesized that people influenced by the Western and East Asian cultures have different motives to engage in conspicuous consumption.

2.2 Purpose Statement

My review of the extant literature identified four important factors that lead tourists to intend to visit conspicuous destinations: OSI, social comparisons, self-construal, and conspicuous consumption. However, to the best of my knowledge, no study included all of the four important variables to explain the intention to visit conspicuous destinations. In addition, no

researcher examined the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations. Doing so would be essential to further studies of conspicuous consumption in the international tourism context. This is because paying a visit to international destinations is usually deemed to be more conspicuous than visiting domestic ones (Phillips & Back, 2011), and expanding the scope of research can generate both theoretical and practical implications. For instance, such research can result in identifying the psychosocial mechanism that ultimately leads to the intention of visiting an international conspicuous destination and suggesting alternative ways of international destination marketing strategies for different ethnic groups in the post-COVID-19 era.

As tourism is not a necessity of life, one's tendency to travel varies depending on their emotions or societal atmosphere (Epperson, 1983). There is a need for tourism researchers to understand how visiting a conspicuous destination can satisfy tourists' desire to demonstrate their social status and enhance their self-image to others by engaging in conspicuous consumption (Phillips & Back, 2011). Also, Kitayama et al. (2006) argued that socially engaging emotions are closely connected with subjective well-being (Kitayama et al., 2006) and performance motivation (Savani et al., 2013). This implies that certain emotions (i.e., pride and envy) may or may not be considered as ideal affect depending on cultural contexts, such as in East Asia and North America (Gui et al., 2020), indicating that different forms of social comparisons (i.e., downward and upward) may have different impacts on the decision-making process across cultural groups. However, research on OSI, social comparison, and conspicuous consumption, in general, has failed to examine potential cultural differences.

To summarize, my thesis examined if one's OSI induces emotions generated by social comparison (i.e., pride and envy) related to social media use and thus influences the decision-making process of choosing an international conspicuous tourist destination. Moreover, the

present study investigated if people in different ethnic groups are disparately motivated to visit international conspicuous tourist destinations.

Below are the seven hypotheses that were tested in this study along with its theoretical framework:

Hypothesis (1): International cities can be categorized into conspicuous, neutral, or inconspicuous destinations. [not included in the theoretical framework in Figure 2.1 as this hypothesis is a precursor to testing the model]

Hypothesis (2): OSI is positively correlated to the emotional outcome of an upward social comparison (benign envy).

Hypothesis (3): OSI is positively related to the emotional outcome of a downward social comparison (hubristic pride).

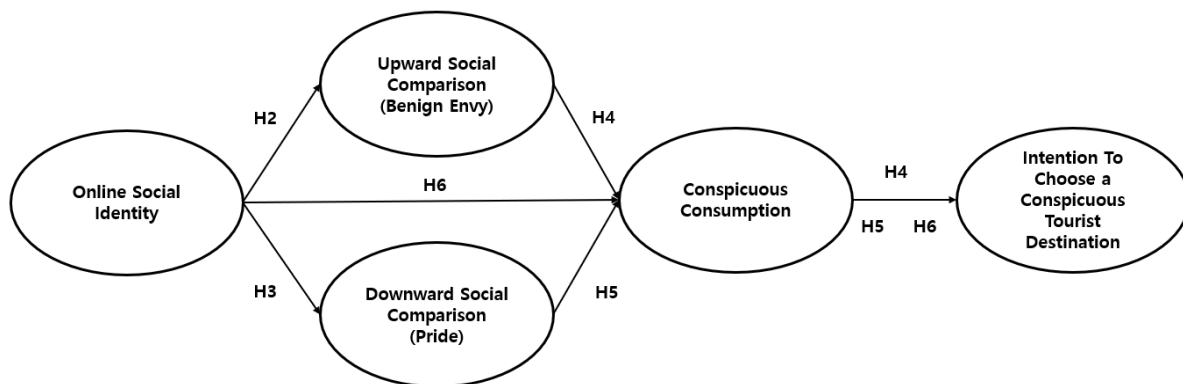
Hypothesis (4): Benign envy is positively correlated to the intention to engage in conspicuous consumption and visit a conspicuous tourist destination.

Hypothesis (5): Hubristic pride is positively correlated to the intention to engage in conspicuous consumption and visit a conspicuous tourist destination.

Hypothesis (6): OSI is positively correlated to the intention to visit conspicuous destinations through mediating variables (i.e., benign envy, hubristic pride, and the dimensions of conspicuous consumption).

Hypothesis (7): East Asians are more likely to intend to visit a conspicuous destination compared to Westerners.

Figure 2.1
The Guiding Theoretical Framework



Chapter 3 – Methods and Results of Survey One

3.1 Population & Sampling

To identify the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations and understand the relationships among OSI, social comparison, self-construal, conspicuous consumption, and the intention to visit a conspicuous destination (ITVCD), I conducted two rounds of online surveys in my research. The first survey, which is focused on assessing the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations, is discussed in Chapter 3. See Chapter 4 for the information about Survey Two.

Since little research has been done on conspicuous consumption in tourism contexts, it was difficult to identify the information necessary to determine the appropriate sample size for this survey (e.g., effect sizes) based on past studies. Therefore, I decided to choose an article that has similar objectives to guide my decision on Survey One's sample size. Phillips and Back (2011) randomly selected 50 respondents at a major Midwestern university to identify the conspicuousness of tourist destinations within the United States. The sample was comprised of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and employees from the business and hospitality management departments.

Table 3.1

The List of the Most Visited International Cities in the World (Euromonitor, 2019)

1. Hong Kong	11. Rome
2. Bangkok	12. Tokyo
3. London	13. Taipei
4. Singapore	14. Prague
5. Paris	15. Seoul
6. Dubai	16. Amsterdam
7. New York City	17. Ho Chi Minh
8. Kuala Lumpur	18. Denpasar
9. Istanbul	19. Barcelona
10. Delhi	20. Vienna

My first survey was designed to explore the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations. Based on Phillips and Back (2011), I set my target sample size as 50. I recruited my participants at the University of Alberta, including employees and students, via convenience sampling. An important difference between my sampling and Phillips and Back's (2011) was that the former was not limited to a specific academic unit. My participants were limited to those who were 40 years of age or younger — mainly Millennials and Generation Z — and resided in Canada. The rationale for choosing people younger than 41 years old for both Surveys 1 and 2 is further explained in Chapter 4.1. I recruited participants in person by circulating a flyer with the study's information at main campus hubs, such as cafeterias, social spaces, and study spaces for four weeks (i.e., between January 24, 2022, and February 18, 2022). I terminated the recruitment when 54 participants completed Survey One. Those who completed Survey One received a \$5 Amazon gift card through their University of Alberta email addresses. Because the target respondents were students and employees who were 40 years old or younger at the institution, the survey was directly distributed through the University of Alberta mail lists, using the Qualtrics' distribution function.

3.2 Survey Instrument

Survey One listed the top 20 most visited cities in the world based on Euromonitor (2019). When multiple cities from a country (or region) were within the top 20, I took only the highest ranked city in that country and replaced the other cities from that country with the first city outside of the top 20 until I reached 20 cities. This approach was done to make the list representative of different countries. Table 3.1 provides the list of the top 20 cities used in the survey.

For each of the 20 international destinations, participants choose the extent to which they perceived each destination to be conspicuous or inconspicuous based on their past experiences or knowledge. The survey questions in Survey One were all answered with 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (very inconspicuous) to 2 (inconspicuous) to 3 (neutral) to 4 (conspicuous) to 5 (very conspicuous) adapted from Phillips and Back's (2011) study, except for demographic information questions. Phillips and Back (2011) used a dichotomous scale (i.e., conspicuous or inconspicuous) to identify the conspicuousness of tourist destinations, and they discovered that destinations can be categorized as neutral destinations in terms of conspicuousness. Based on their findings, it appears that conspicuousness exists as a continuum, whereupon I adopted a 5-point Likert scale to better assess the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations in my study. Using a binary scale can cause several issues: (a) it can create an artificially inflated level of conspicuousness or inconspicuousness for each destination and (b) identifying neutral destinations by forcing respondents to choose between the two options (i.e., conspicuous or inconspicuous) does not have statistical implications.

In the survey, each destination was accompanied by three landmark pictures of the city See Appendix A, which covers the information about Survey One. The three pictures for each city were selected after searching for the landmarks on Google Images. Before participants assessed the conspicuousness of each destination, the following definition of a conspicuous destination was given: A conspicuous destination is a place that can signal one's social status and prestige, thus generating aspirations and envy from others (Sirgy & Su, 2000).

In the demographic information section of Survey One, there was one screening question about age to identify qualified participants (i.e., people who were younger than 41 years old). The other demographic questions were concerned with sex, education level, annual individual

income, ethnicity, and marital status. At the end of Survey One, participants were asked to select the destinations they had visited from the list of the same 20 international destinations. This question was added because participants' perception of destination conspicuousness might be influenced by their travel experiences. For example, people may not consider destinations that they have visited as highly conspicuous.

3.3 Data Collection & Survey Design

Before Survey One was conducted, I obtained research ethics approval from the University of Alberta (Pro00114765). This ethics approval encompassed both Surveys 1 and 2 as the information of Survey Two was added as an amendment to the existing case. Once the data of Survey One were analyzed, the conspicuous and inconspicuous international destinations were included in Survey Two. The information about research ethics was included at the beginning of Survey One, and the respondents were informed that submitting the survey would be considered an overt action to indicate their informed consent to participate in the study. The online survey for Survey One was designed and conducted on the Qualtrics platform.

3.4 Data Cleaning

There was no inferential statistical analysis conducted for Survey One, which reduced the amount of data cleaning. I did, however, manually checked the data to discern if there were any quality issues. First, I confirmed that there were 11 missing values in the dataset in terms of assessing the conspicuousness of international destinations and one missing value about asking for one's demographic information (i.e., sex). The missing values were from five different respondents, and as it was not mandatory to answer all the questions in Survey One, having

some missing values was an expected result. Second, I checked if there were duplicate observations or structural errors (e.g., typos, open-ended questions, strange naming, etc.). Nothing seemed problematic. Third, I checked the data for potential outliers. Each variable was sorted in descending order to highlight any unusual values. There was no unusually high or low value, and every variable was within the range of 1 to 5. In terms of univariate outliers, z -scores for each main variable were examined. Z -scores were computed by the SPSS Descriptives function. Cases with absolute values of z -scores greater than 2.675 are considered as potential outliers (Altman, 2013). In my data, no participant had a z -score over ± 2.675 . Fourth, I eye-ball examined problematic survey response patterns, such as straight-lining (i.e., responding with the same number across many questions) and zigzagging (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2 ...). No issues were detected. Lastly, I checked the survey completion time for each participant as completing a survey unusually fast could indicate disengagement and untrustworthy responses (Leiner, 2019). Leiner (2019) suggests that researchers can use a speeding factor calculated by dividing each individual's completion time by the median completion time of a sample. The speeding factor of three means that the respondent completed the survey three times as fast as the typical respondent. Leiner (2019) recommends using a cut-off of 3.0 to identify particularly suspicious records. No value was above the speeding factor of 3.0 in my data.

3.5 Data Analysis

The overall score of conspicuousness for each international tourist destination was averaged to create a list of 20 international tourist destinations depending on their conspicuousness. Then, the destinations were ordered based on the mean scores. According to Phillips and Back (2011), if more than 70% of respondents label a tourist destination to be

conspicuous, it can be categorized as a conspicuous destination. I did not adopt this 70-to-30 ratio because Phillips and Back (2011) used a dichotomous scale, which could not be applied to a 5-point Likert scale used in Survey One. In addition, this approval ratio was arbitrarily designed to identify conspicuous and inconspicuous destinations without having solid statistical grounds. In Table 3.3, the total number of people identifying a destination as conspicuous, neutral, and inconspicuous was counted for the 20 destinations along with the mean scores.

3.6 Results

Demographic characteristics of the Survey One sample ($N = 54$) are reported in Table 3.2. The mean age of the participants was 28.89 years ($SD = 4.29$); this was intended, as I aimed to recruit people in the Millennials and Generation Z cohorts (i.e., people who were 40 years old or younger in 2021). As participants were younger than 41 years old, I specifically asked for their annual individual income because many of them would be economically inactive (e.g., students). As expected, a great proportion (72.22 %) of the participants had an annual individual income below \$30,001.

Table 3.2

Demographic Characteristics of the Survey One Sample ($N = 54$)

		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex	Male	26	49.06
	Female	27	50.94
	Other	0	0
Education level	High school diploma	1	1.85
	Some college credit, no degree	1	1.85
	Bachelor's degree	15	27.78
	Master's or professional degree	31	57.41
	Doctoral degree	6	11.11

Annual individual income	Less than \$20,000	16	29.63
	\$20,000 - \$30,000	23	42.59
	\$30,001 - \$40,000	3	5.56
	\$40,001 - \$50,000	6	11.11
	\$50,001 - \$60,000	1	1.85
	\$60,001 - \$70,000	1	1.85
	\$70,001 - \$80,000	0	0
	\$80,001 - \$90,000	1	1.85
	\$90,001 +	0	0
	Prefer not to answer	3	5.56
Ethnicity	Asian	40	74.07
	White	11	20.37
	Hispanics of any race	2	3.7
	Other	2	3.7
	Prefer not to answer	1	1.85
Marital status	Single	36	66.67
	In a relationship	6	11.11
	Married/common law	12	22.22
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age (years)		28.89	4.29

One noticeable finding was that a large proportion of participants were Asian (74.07%) because they were recruited via convenience sampling. The primary goal of Survey One was to simply evaluate the approval rate (e.g., mean scores) of each destination in terms of conspicuousness and create a list of conspicuous and inconspicuous tourist destinations. As the level of conspicuousness was reverified in Survey Two with a large sample size (see Table 4.1), this issue of having a high percentage of Asians in Survey One appeared to be ameliorated. In terms of marital status, 36 participants (66.67%) were single, whereas 12 (22.22%) were married or common law. Considering the relatively young age group of the participants, I included the “in a relationship” option, with which six (11.11%) individuals identified.

The ranking of the 20 international destinations by the level of conspicuousness is displayed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

The Order of International Destinations Based on Their Conspicuousness

City name	<i>M</i>	Conspicuous	Neutral	Inconspicuous
1. Paris	4.38	44 (84.62%)	8 (15.38%)	0 (0%)
2. Dubai	4.19	41 (77.36%)	10 (18.87%)	2 (3.77%)
3. Rome	4.11	40 (74.07%)	12 (22.22%)	2 (3.70%)
4. London	4.09	41 (77.36%)	8 (15.09%)	4 (7.55%)
5. Tokyo	4.02	40 (74.07%)	13 (24.07%)	1 (1.85%)
6. Barcelona	3.98	41 (75.92%)	12 (22.22%)	1 (1.85%)
7. New York City	3.96	35 (66.04%)	15 (28.30%)	3 (5.66%)
8. Singapore	3.92	38 (71.70%)	11 (20.75%)	4 (7.55%)
9. Hong Kong	3.77	37 (69.81%)	11 (20.75%)	5 (9.43%)
10. Amsterdam	3.70	34 (62.96%)	14 (25.93%)	6 (11.11%)
11. Vienna	3.59	31 (57.41%)	16 (29.63%)	7 (12.96%)
12. Istanbul	3.43	26 (48.14%)	19 (35.19%)	9 (16.66%)
13. Seoul	3.42	22 (41.51%)	24 (45.28%)	7 (13.21%)
14. Bangkok	3.36	23 (43.39%)	19 (35.85%)	11 (20.76%)
15. Kuala Lumpur	3.34	24 (45.28%)	19 (35.85%)	10 (18.87%)
16. Prague	3.31	23 (42.59%)	21 (38.89%)	10 (18.51%)
17. Taipei	3.28	18 (33.96%)	25 (47.17%)	10 (18.87%)
18. Delhi	3.11	21 (38.89%)	16 (29.63%)	17 (31.48%)
19. Denpasar	2.89	14 (25.93%)	20 (37.04%)	20 (37.04%)
20. Ho Chi Minh	2.59	9 (16.67%)	16 (29.63%)	29 (53.7%)

Note. The questions were all answered with 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (very inconspicuous) to 2 (inconspicuous) to 3 (neutral) to 4 (conspicuous) to 5 (very inconspicuous). The options 1 and 2 were counted as the ‘inconspicuous’ group, whereas the options 4 and 5 were counted as the ‘conspicuous’ group.

Of the 20 international destinations, Paris, Dubai, and Rome were selected as the most conspicuous destinations (i.e., $M = 4.38, 4.19,$ and $4.11,$ respectively), whereas Ho Chi Minh, Denpasar, and Delhi were identified as the most inconspicuous destinations (i.e., $M = 2.59, 2.89,$

and 3.11, respectively).

The list of destinations that participants visited before is shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

The Numbers of Participants Who Visited Each Destination (N = 54)

	<i>n</i>	%
Paris	7	4.90
Dubai	2	1.40
Rome	6	4.20
London	9	6.29
Tokyo	15	10.49
Barcelona	4	2.80
New York City	18	12.59
Singapore	8	5.59
Hong Kong	12	8.39
Amsterdam	6	4.20
Vienna	4	2.80
Istanbul	4	2.80
Seoul	18	12.59
Bangkok	8	5.59
Kuala Lumpur	3	2.10
Prague	2	1.40
Taipei	10	6.99
Delhi	3	2.10
Denpasar	0	0.00
Ho Chi Minh	4	2.80
Total	143	100

New York City, Seoul, and Tokyo were the most visited international destinations ($n = 18$, 18, and 15, respectively) in Survey One. A visual examination indicated no clear patterns between past visits to certain destinations and the perceived conspicuousness. For instance, even though only a few people visited Dubai ($n = 2$) and none went to Denpasar ($n = 0$), the

difference in the conspicuousness level between the two destinations was substantial (Dubai: $M = 4.19$; Denpasar: $M = 2.89$).

Chapter 4 – Methods and Results of Survey Two

4.1 Population & Sampling

Recent research shows that 90% of travel decisions by Generation Z (i.e., those born between 1995 and 2010; Seemiller & Grace, 2016) are influenced by social media, followed by Millennials (i.e., those born between 1981 and 1999; Condor, 2020). Also, Generation Z and Millennials are the highest spenders at tourist destinations (Condor, 2020). Peer-to-peer communication on social media is a prevalent trend for the younger generations, and with an estimated total population of two billion social media users (Sillman et al., 2016), the Millennial generation has become one of the largest market segments that have a far-reaching influence on the global tourism industry (Skift, 2019).

Millennials and Generation Z are the two age cohorts that are the most frequent social media users (Statista, 2021). Furthermore, across different age cohorts, Millennials are most likely to go into debt for travel (Condor, 2020), which is related to conspicuous consumption behaviors to an extent. These social media users are more susceptible to Internet trends and are likely to engage in a higher level of social comparisons, which can generate benign envy and hubristic pride (Liu et al., 2019; Rogoza et al., 2018; Taylor & Strutton, 2016). Accordingly, to better understand the relationships among OSI, social comparison, self-construal, conspicuous consumption, and ITVCD, the Millennials and Generation Z cohorts were selected as the target populations that would be most pertinent to the variables in my research.

As mentioned in Chapter 3.3, Survey Two also received ethics approval from the

University of Alberta. In this survey, my sampling was stratified in that approximately 50% of the respondents were set to be people who self-identified as Westerners in Canada, whereas the other 50% were limited to those who self-identified as East Asians in Canada. According to the United Nations (1999) geoscheme, East Asians include people whose ancestry is from China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and other qualified countries. Westerners have backgrounds associated with Ukraine, Portugal, Greece, Finland, Germany, Romania, Germany, Switzerland, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, England, and other qualified countries (United Nations, 1999). One of my screening questions in Survey Two listed these ethnic categories with example background countries.

Having the ratio of 20 respondents per observed variable is usually recommended for a path analysis (Klein, 1998), although Surhr (2008) argues that a ten-to-one ratio may be a realistic target. This target is because the accuracy and stability of a path analysis dwindle as the sample size decreases. Hence, I deemed having 310 respondents for nine variables in my theoretical model was sufficient.

Dr. Shintaro Kono and I communicated with Qualtrics to recruit 310 respondents for this survey. The survey was distributed to Qualtrics' survey panelists. Qualtrics works with a diverse set of panel partners to ensure maximum feasibility across hard-to-reach populations, so it was a logical decision to utilize Qualtrics panels as there were certain qualifications required to participate in Survey Two. Using Qualtrics panels allowed me to have a more generalized sample (i.e., not limited to a city, university, etc) for my study.

Survey Two was administered between March 16, 2022, and March 30, 2022. Qualtrics sent an email invitation to 1,415 potential respondents, informing them of my research purpose, the expected length of the survey, and incentives. To circumvent possible self-selection bias, the

survey invitation did not include specific details about the contents of the survey. The Qualtrics respondents received one of the following types of rewards: cash, airline miles, gift cards, redeemable points, sweepstakes entrance, or vouchers.

Information about research ethics was included in this survey, and the respondents were informed of how I planned to use the data collected from them. There were two screening questions about their age and ethnicity/race to identify qualified participants. In terms of age, people who self-identified as 41 years or older were excluded. In addition, according to the categorization presented by the United Nations' geoscheme, people who did not belong to any of these two ethnic groups were excluded: East Asians (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, and people in other qualified countries) or Westerners (e.g., Ukrainian, Portuguese, Greek, Finn, German, Romanian, German, Swiss, Estonian, Irish, Spanish, French, English, and people in other qualified countries) (United Nations, 1999). Everyone had to be a person who resided in Canada to be eligible to participate in this survey.

To exclude duplication and ensure data quality, address validation, evaluation against blacklists, bot check, double opt-in confirmation, social connect/validation, GeoIP and postcode validations risk scoring, and manual reviews were checked by Qualtrics. Speedsters who straight-lined through surveys or finished in less than one-third of the average survey completion time were automatically eliminated. Accordingly, suspect respondents were flagged in the system and redirected or completely filtered out of my survey.

Then, Qualtrics conducted two rounds of data scrubs based on the exclusion criteria explained above, and approximately 20 responses were excluded from the data. I had the opportunity to review the results for seven days to detect any responses that need to be replaced. No issues were found, and as I had an additional number of 11 responses from Qualtrics, I had

321 responses in total for Survey Two.

4.2 Survey Instrument

My path model included nine variables of interest: OSI, benign envy, hubristic pride, the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption (i.e., materialistic hedonism, communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, status demonstration, and ostentation), and ITVCD. OSI was identified as the exogenous variable, and the rest of the variables were all endogenous. See Appendix C for the revised path diagram used in Survey Two.

Latif et al. (2021) adopted the OSI scale based on Oyserman et al.'s study (2006) about social identity and revised the survey items in the social media context. Therefore, I used the measurement scale derived from Latif et al.'s study (2021) to measure one's level of OSI in this study. The OSI scale entailed three survey items. An example item included: "I feel close to my online social groups on social media." The Cronbach's *alpha* was .910. The survey items for OSI were implemented with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

To measure benign envy and hubristic pride as emotional states associated with upward and downward social comparisons, respectively, I utilized a modified version of Lange and Crusius's (2015) and Taylor's (2020) scales. The modifications made the items fit the social media context of this study. Even though Taylor's (2020) scale does not measure hubristic pride per se, I decided to use his measurement of narcissism because extant research suggests that narcissism is associated with hubristic pride (Rogoza et al., 2018) Furthermore, the only existing measurement scale of hubristic pride by Tracy and Robins (2007) was negatively connoted. For instance, arrogant, conceited, egotistical, pompous, smug, snobbish, and stuck-up are the seven

words that were used in Tracy and Robins' (2007) scale. These negative words are not consistent with the definition of hubristic pride in my study (Cheng et al., 2009; McGregor et al., 2005). Using such negative words could have caused a strong social desirability bias, meaning that respondents would disagree with these items, not because they do not represent their behaviors and emotions, but because they do not want to be associated with the negative phrasing. Therefore, Taylor's (2020) items to measure narcissistic traits were modified to represent the narcissistic emotional states (hubristic pride) in this study. The hubristic pride scale comprised four survey items. An example item was: "I tend to feel like I am an extraordinary person on social media." The Cronbach's *alpha* was .867. The benign envy scale consisted of five survey items. For instance, one item read: "When I envy others on social media, I focus on how I can become equally successful in the future." The Cronbach's *alpha* was .910. My items for benign envy and hubristic pride were both implemented with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The survey instruments for the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption (i.e., materialistic hedonism, communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, status demonstration, and ostentation) were primarily based on the research conducted by Phillips and Back (2011). It is important to note that Phillips and Back's (2011) measurement items of conspicuous consumption were adapted from Marcoux et al.'s (1995) study about consumer behavior, indicating that the items were not originally designed for tourism destinations.

First, the scale for *materialistic hedonism* (i.e., the pleasant aspects of consumption) included four survey items. For example, one item stated: "I would like to travel to these destinations for uniqueness, to have travel experience others do not have." The Cronbach's *alpha* was .650. Second, the scale for *communication of belonging* (i.e., a sense of involvement in a

community) had four survey items. The following was an example item: “I want to travel to these destinations because my friends and colleagues have been to.” The Cronbach's *alpha* was .853. Third, the scale for *interpersonal mediation* (i.e., the influence of social relations that generates respect and popularity from others) involved four survey items. An example item was: “Traveling to these destinations would make me more popular among my friends and colleagues.” The Cronbach's *alpha* was .871. Fourth, the scale for *status demonstration* (i.e., the demonstration of success, social status, and wealth) was comprised of three survey items. To illustrate, one item read: “Traveling to these destinations can symbolize success and prestige.” The Cronbach's *alpha* was .839. Lastly, the scale for *ostentation* encompassed three survey items, including the following item: “I want to visit these destinations because they are more expensive than others.” The Cronbach's *alpha* was .688.

Phillips and Back (2011) did not include the dimension of *ostentation* (i.e., the consumption of costly products) in their study because the variable had low reliability in Marcoux et al.'s (1995) original study. Visiting an international destination is usually deemed to be more luxurious and conspicuous than visiting a domestic destination (Phillips & Back, 2011), whereupon ostentation was included in my research. I revised the survey items of ostentation from Marcoux et al.'s (1995, 1997) studies to better identify the decision-making process of choosing a conspicuous tourist destination. Because Marcoux et al.'s (1995, 1997) studies had only two survey items for ostentation, I added one survey item based on Park et al.'s (2008) measurement of ostentation. See Appendix B for further information about the survey items for the dimensions of conspicuous consumption. The survey items for the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption were all measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores for each dimension were averaged to create one

variable per dimension.

The scale for the intention to visit a conspicuous destination (ITVCD) was adapted from Ajzen's study (2002) for measuring behavioral intention. The following survey statement was presented to my respondents followed by the names of conspicuous and inconspicuous destinations along with their representative images: "I want to visit this destination after the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over." Respondents were asked about the three conspicuous destinations first, and then the three inconspicuous destinations, while the order of the destinations within each type was randomized. The Cronbach's *alpha* for ITVCD was .706. Participants responded to this survey item by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). ITVCD was measured for the top three conspicuous destinations (i.e., Paris, Dubai, and Rome) based on the results of Survey One. The intention to visit *inconspicuous* destinations was also examined for the top three inconspicuous destinations (i.e., Ho Chi Minh, Denpasar, and Delhi) based on the results of Survey One. In Survey Two, the level of conspicuousness for the six conspicuous and inconspicuous destinations was reverified with 321 participants. The conspicuousness level for the six destinations was consistent with the results in Survey One. See Chapter 4.5.1 for detailed information. Hence, ITVCD and the intention to visit *inconspicuous* destinations were measured with these six destinations (i.e., conspicuous destinations: Paris, Dubai, and Rome; inconspicuous destinations: Ho Chi Minh, Denpasar, and Delhi). At the end of the survey, participants were also asked to select the destinations they had visited before from the list of six international destinations. I incorporated this question because I suspected that past visits could weaken people's intention to re-visit them.

In addition to the above main variables, a shortened 14-item version of Kitayama et al.'s

(2014) self-construal scale was included in Survey Two because self-construal, along with ethnicity (i.e., East Asian vs. Westerner), was identified as a potential moderator of the associations in my path model (see Chapter 4.5). This scale measures independent self-construal (e.g., “I prefer to be direct and straightforward when dealing with people I have just met.”) and interdependent self-construal (e.g., “It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.”). Participants responded to these items by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Lastly, demographic information was collected in terms of sex, education level, annual individual income, ethnicity, marital status, age, and social media usage per day (hours). There were two screening questions about age and ethnicity to identify qualified participants. First, people who were younger than 41 years at the time of data collection were recruited. Second, approximately 50% of the respondents were set to be people who self-identified as Westerners (e.g., Ukrainian, Portuguese, Greek, Finn, German, Romanian, German, Swiss, Estonian, Irish, Spanish, French, English, and people in other qualified countries) in Canada, whereas the other 50% were limited to those who self-identified as East Asians (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, and people in other qualified countries) in Canada.

To enhance the quality of survey responses, I added two attention-check questions (e.g., select strongly agree or strongly disagree for this statement) in Survey Two. Respondents who failed these attention-check questions were flagged by the Qualtrics project manager and filtered out of my survey data.

4.3 Data Cleaning

As Qualtrics soft-launched my Survey Two, I detected some straight-lining and completion time issues in the initial data from approximately 30 panelists. I requested the Qualtrics project manager in charge of my survey to exclude participants who displayed any suspicious response patterns. My request was based on Leiner's (2019) relative completion time metric, which is an individual completion time divided by the whole sample's median completion time. A factor of three means that a given respondent completed the survey three times as fast as the typical respondent. Leiner (2019) suggests using the upper threshold of 3.0 as respondents with a score of three or higher would most likely be disengaged cases and their responses are not trustworthy. Qualtrics has its criteria in terms of detecting speedsters who finished in less than one-third of the average survey completion time, but I asked the project manager to use Leiner's (2019) relative completion time metric, which is predicated on the whole sample's median completion time instead of the average completion time. After going through two sets of data scrubs, around 20 responses were removed (e.g., people who completed the survey within two minutes, while the median completion time was around seven minutes).

Once data from 321 responses were collected, data cleaning was conducted with the 12 variables required for the main statistical analyses: OSI, benign envy, hubristic pride, the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption (i.e., materialistic hedonism, communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, status demonstration, and ostentation), ethnicity, independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, and ITVCD. No missing values existed in the data because participants were required to respond to these main variables in the online survey. Given that my main analysis method was path analysis, I checked the following five assumptions: normality, absence of outliers, linearity and homoscedasticity, independence

of observation, and absence of multicollinearity. As path analysis is a statistical technique based on multiple regression (Garson, 2004; Spaeth, 1975), the assumptions of multiple regression were thoroughly checked using SPSS version 27 and following Tabachnick and Fidell's (2013) recommendations.

4.3.1 Assumption of Normality

Univariate normality was assessed using the SPSS Frequencies function. I examined the skewness and kurtosis scores as well as histograms that represented distributions of the main variables. Statistical tests to check normality, such as Shapiro-Wilk's and Kolmogorov-Smirnov's tests, are known to be overly sensitive with a large sample size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Thus, these tests were not used to clean the data of Survey Two with a sample size of 321. I adopted the relatively conservative criterion that the absolute values for skewness and kurtosis should be lower than two (Field, 2009). Across the 12 variables, the absolute values of skewness ranged from 0.006 to 0.784, while the absolute values of kurtosis ranged from 0.212 to 1.057, except that ethnicity had a kurtosis value of slightly over two (i.e., -2.013). A high kurtosis score for ethnicity was expected as it is a binary variable. Some scholars also suggested more liberal cutoff points for skewness and kurtosis (e.g., less than an absolute value of three for skewness and less than an absolute value of seven for kurtosis; Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, I concluded that my data did not violate the univariate normality assumption.

In terms of multivariate normality, the P-P plot in Appendix D was generated by using the SPSS Regression function. In this regression, ITVCD was designated as the dependent variable, while OSI, benign envy, hubristic pride, and the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption (i.e., materialistic hedonism, communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, status

demonstration, and ostentation) were assigned as the independent variables. Then, the standardized residuals (ZRESID) were placed on the Y-axis and the standardized predicted values (ZPRED) were positioned on the X-axis. A visual examination of the plot found that the standardized residuals were largely distributed along the diagonal line, which suggested that the assumption of multivariate normality was not violated in the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

4.3.2 Assumption of Outliers

Potential multivariate outliers were explored by examining standardized residuals and Cook's distance values that were computed by the SPSS Regression function. Standardized residuals that exceed an absolute value of 3 are considered as potential outliers (Simon & Young, 2018). The values in my data ranged from -3.836 to 2.553, with two cases showing the absolute standardized residuals above 3. I also checked the Cook's distance scores, which estimate the influence of a data point on the fitted response values (Kim & Storer, 1996). Cook's distance scores greater than 1 are deemed as an indication of a potential multivariate outlier (Roberts et al., 2015). According to Simon and Young (2018), the data point is worthy of further investigation if D_i (Cook's distance) is greater than 0.5 as it may be influential. If D_i is greater than 1, the data point is likely to be influential. In my data, the maximum Cook's distance score was 0.046, which indicated that it was unlikely that there was an unusual response pattern in the dataset that would exert substantial multivariate influences. Consequently, I retained the two cases identified as potential multivariate outliers based on the standardized residuals.

In terms of univariate outliers, z -scores for each main variable were examined. Z -scores were computed by the SPSS Descriptives function. Cases with absolute values of z -scores greater than 2.675 are considered as potential outliers (Altman, 2013). In my data, no participant

had a z-score beyond ± 2.675 .

4.3.3 Assumptions of Homoscedasticity and Linearity

To examine homoscedasticity and linearity, I generated the scatter plot of standardized residuals using the SPSS Regression function (see Appendix E). If heteroscedasticity or non-linearity is present in the data, the plot will show an uneven distribution along the regression line (Rosopa et al., 2013). In my plot, the variance of errors was almost identical across all levels of independent variables. Because the residuals are normally distributed and homoscedastic, the results indicate that the independent variables in the regression have a straight-line relationship with the outcome variable (Meuleman et al., 2015). Therefore, the assumptions of homoscedasticity and linearity were met in Survey Two data.

4.3.4 Assumption of Independence of Observation

The assumption of independence of observation is violated when each participant provides more than one data point, resulting in repeated measures (Bakdash & Marusich, 2017). There is no conventional statistical test to examine the independence of observations (Christensen & Bedrick, 1997), whereupon I checked the participants' IP addresses and IDs provided by Qualtrics to check if there were any duplicates. Because there was no redundancy in the dataset, I considered that as the evidence for satisfying the assumption of independence of observation.

4.3.5 Assumption of Multicollinearity

Variance inflation factor (VIF) scores were used to examine multicollinearity. VIF values beyond 10 indicate the presence of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2006). In my data, across the 11

main predictors including the three moderators, the maximum VIF score was 4.099 for interpersonal mediation, which suggested the absence of multicollinearity. In addition, if the absolute value of Pearson's correlation coefficient is less than 0.8, multicollinearity is generally unlikely to exist (Young, 2018). As shown in Table 4.2, the highest correlation coefficient was .791 between status demonstration and interpersonal mediation, which also suggests that my data were free of serious multicollinearity.

4.4 Data Analysis

4.4.1 Descriptive Analysis

After the data cleaning process explained above, descriptive analyses were conducted. Specifically, the final sample's ($N = 321$) demographic characteristics were assessed, using sex, level of education, annual individual income, ethnicity, marital status, age, and social media usage per day. Then, means and standard deviations were computed for the 12 main variables: ethnicity, independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, OSI, benign envy, hubristic pride, the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption (i.e., materialistic hedonism, communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, status demonstration, and ostentation), and ITVCD. For the same set of variables, I also generated bivariate correlation coefficients and Cronbach's *alphas*, except that there was no *alpha* for a single-item ethnicity measure.

4.4.2 Independent *T*-Test and Correlation Analysis

A series of independent *t*-tests were conducted to ascertain if ITVCD was different between East Asian and Westerner participants. I also implemented bivariate correlation

analyses to examine whether the visiting intention was associated with the levels of independent and interdependent self-construal. Additional independent *t*-tests were performed to examine whether a certain type of self-construal was more prevalent among East Asians or Westerners.

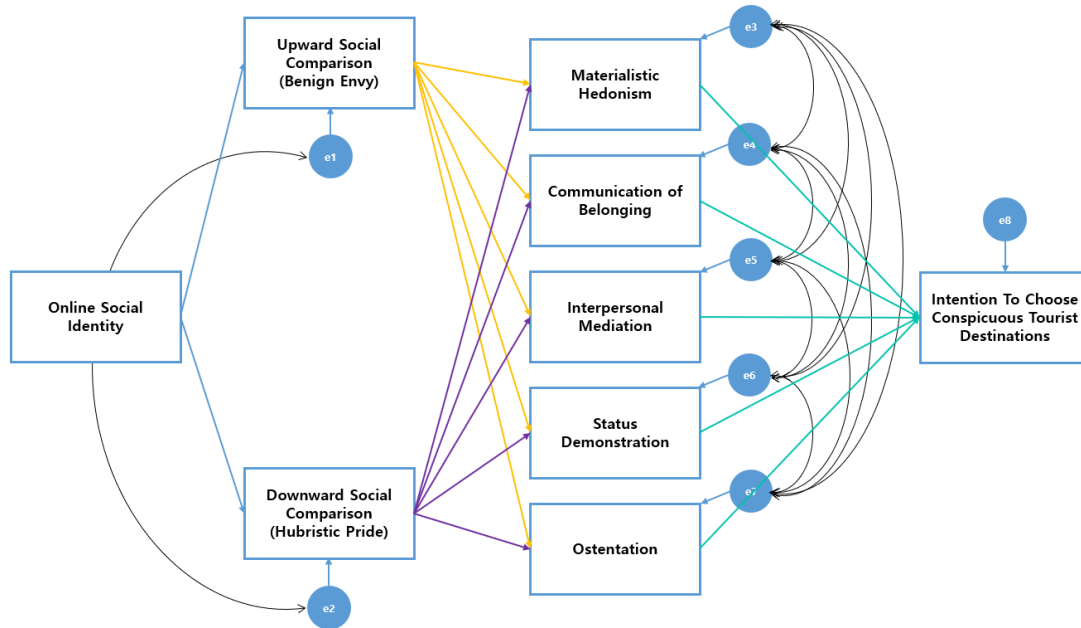
4.4.3 Path Analysis

Path analysis was used as the main analysis method in this study to determine the psychosocial motivators and dimensions of conspicuous consumption that stimulate consumers to choose a conspicuous tourist destination. Path analysis is a statistical technique based on multiple regression that allows users to examine patterns of relationships among multiple variables, including mediators, and to evaluate the fit of causal models against data (Garson, 2004; Spaeth, 1975). The purpose of path analysis is to test the significance of hypothesized relationships and to estimate the magnitude of these relationships by using path diagrams (Stage et al., 2004).

A path diagram displays the theoretical causal mechanisms by using arrows connecting variables that represent mathematical algorithms (Stage et al., 2004). Even though Lea (1997) noted that path analysis does not guarantee the direction of causality, it can support the hypothetical relationships expressed within the path model. In this study, a path analysis was conducted to discern the impact of OSI on ITVCD and how social comparisons and conspicuous consumption mediate this decision-making process. I used SPSS AMOS version 28 to run my path analysis. See Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

The Original Path Diagram for Survey Two Analysis



Note: The five variables in the column second from the right are the dimensions of conspicuous consumption.

Fit indices, which represent how consistent a theoretical model is with information from a correlation matrix, are of importance for path analysis (Suhr, 2008). I assessed my models by inspecting chi-square, degree of freedom, probability level, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), confidence intervals for RMSEA, standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR), and comparative fit index (CFI). Researchers generally use a cutoff value of 0.08 for the SRMR (e.g., Hu & Bentler 1999), 0.05 for the RMSEA (Fabrigar et al., 1999), and 0.95 for the CFI (Hu & Bentler, 1999) to indicate there is a relatively good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data.

The degree of freedom in a path model determines whether a path analysis is executable with the hypothesized model (Murthi, 2020). In my path model, the degree of freedom was: (the

number of observations – the number of parameters) = $45 - 37 = 8$. Here, the number of observations indicates $k(k+1)/2$, wherein k refers to the number of observed variables (i.e., nine in my model). The number of parameters consists of the numbers of structural paths, correlations, error terms, and exogenous variables. As the degree of freedom was greater than 0, path analysis was executable for my model.

4.4.4 Phantom Model Approach

Path analysis often involves a mixture of direct and indirect effects. A direct effect refers to an exogenous variable's effect on an endogenous variable, whereas an indirect effect is an exogenous variable's effect on an endogenous variable through a mediating variable(s) (Zhao et al., 2010). Because my model involves multiple parallel mediators (e.g., the two social comparison variables), an indirect effect consists of multiple specific indirect effects. Even though SPSS AMOS provides empirical significance tests of total indirect effects, it does not estimate and test specific indirect effects (Mallinckrodt et al., 2006). There was the AMOS plug-in that enabled users to easily estimate and test specific indirect effects (Gaskin, 2022); however, it was not compatible with SPSS AMOS version 28 at the time of my analyses. Hence, I decided to use the phantom model approach (Macho & Ledermann, 2011).

The phantom model approach, proposed by Macho and Ledermann (2011), is a programmatic technique that forces AMOS to estimate specific indirect effects and conduct robust tests of them based on the bootstrap procedures. The fundamental mechanism underlying the phantom model approach is that a specific indirect effect in a model is reestablished as a total effect by drawing an independent phantom model comprised of dummy latent variables and structural paths, wherein some of the variances and path coefficients are constrained to represent

the specific indirect effect of interest (Macho & Ledermann, 2011). This approach provides information about bootstrap point estimates (unstandardized coefficients), bootstrap standard errors, probability levels, and confidence intervals of specific indirect effects (Ledermann et al., 2011).

In this study, the phantom approach was applied to all the specific indirect effects in my model that involved ITVCD as the final outcome variable. First, five specific indirect effects involved the relationships between benign envy and ITVCD mediated by each of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption. Second, another set of five specific indirect effects was concerned with hubristic pride and ITVCD mediated by each of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption. Third, additional five specific indirect effects represented the relationships between OSI and ITVCD mediated only by each of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption. The links between OSI and the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption were not present in my original path diagram (Figure 4.1) but were added based on the model modifications described below. Lastly, ten specific indirect effects involved the relationships between OSI and ITVCD mediated by two serial mediators (i.e., envy or pride followed by one of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption).

4.4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis with Moderators

The review of the literature suggested that even though some studies examined how one's ethnicity and self-construal influence their conspicuous consumption behaviors (Chen et al., 2005; Fazeli et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Ryabov, 2016), there was no empirical research regarding whether the relationships between ITVCD and its predictors were moderated by ethnicity and self-construal. Therefore, there was a need to explore these moderation effects. A

moderator variable is a specification variable that systematically adjusts the strength of an association, whether positive or negative, between predictor variables and a criterion variable (Prescott, 1986; Sharma et al., 1981). To test the potential moderation effects, I broke down the path analysis into a series of multiple regressions with each endogenous variable being the dependent variable. In each regression, all associations between the dependent variable and its direct predictors were moderated by one of the following moderators: ethnicity (East Asian vs. Westerner), independent self-construal, and interdependent self-construal.

I created interaction variables by multiplying each predictor and moderator. However, the issue of multicollinearity evidenced by high VIF scores was detected as the interaction terms were merely linear combinations of two other variables in the same regression model. As a result, I centered all the predictor variables to suppress multicollinearity by subtracting a grand mean of each predictor from individual scores of the same variable. After centering, no VIF score was above five, which is well under the criterion value of 10 (Hair et al., 2006).

Significant moderating effects were then submitted to a simple slope analysis to better interpret the results. The steps involved: focusing on each moderation effect (i.e., a predictor, moderator, and dependent variable); using the SPSS legacy dialogs function to generate separate regression lines for the two ethnic groups (i.e., East Asian and Westerner) or three groups for independent and interdependent self-construal (i.e., low, moderate, and high on the moderator variable) on scatterplots; and visually examining how the relationship between the predictor and dependent variable varied across the different levels of the moderating variable.

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Results of The Descriptive Statistics

To begin with, I checked if the three conspicuous tourist destinations identified in Survey One were still considered as conspicuous by Survey Two respondents while assessing the inconspicuousness of the three destinations as well. Results show that the mean scores for the conspicuousness level for the six destinations were consistent with the results in Survey One (i.e., conspicuous destinations: Paris: $M_1 = 4.38$ vs. $M_2 = 4.05$; Dubai: $M_1 = 4.19$ vs. $M_2 = 4.00$; Rome: $M_1 = 4.11$ vs. $M_2 = 3.83$; inconspicuous destinations: Ho Chi Minh: $M_1 = 2.59$ vs. $M_2 = 2.75$; Denpasar: $M_1 = 2.89$ vs. $M_2 = 3.11$; Delhi: $M_1 = 3.11$ vs. $M_2 = 2.94$). Therefore, the distinction between conspicuous and inconspicuous tourist destinations was partially confirmed based on the Survey Two data. See Table 3.3 for detailed information.

The final sample's ($N = 321$) demographic characteristics are reported in Table 4.1. As our sampling was stratified, the number of Western people ($n = 161$) is almost equal to that of East Asian people ($n = 160$). However, there were somewhat more females who participated in the survey (58.6%). Approximately 56% of the participants had at least a bachelor's or higher degree ($n = 181$). The mean age of the participants was 31.23 years ($SD = 6.38$, min = 17, max = 40), and this was purposeful in that we aimed to recruit people in the Millennials and Generation Z cohorts (i.e., those who were 40 years old or younger at the time of data collection). As participants were younger than 41 years old, I specifically asked for their annual individual income because many of them would be economically inactive (e.g., students). However, a notable proportion of participants earned more than \$90,001 annually ($n = 87$, 27.1%). In terms of marital status, 144 participants (44.9%) were single when they participated in my study, whereas 118 (36.8%) were married or common law. On average, my respondents used their social media for 3.34 hours per day ($SD = 2.51$).

Table 4.1*Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 321)*

		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex	Male	126	39.3
	Female	188	58.6
	Other	7	2.2
Education level	Less than a high school diploma	8	0.02
	High school diploma	45	14
	Some college credit, no degree	40	12.5
	Technical or associate degree	47	14.6
	Bachelor's degree	139	43.3
	Master's or professional degree	37	11.5
	Doctoral degree	4	0.01
	Prefer not to answer	1	0.003
Annual individual income	Less than \$20,000	36	11.2
	\$20,000 - \$30,000	23	7.2
	\$30,001 - \$40,000	22	6.9
	\$40,001 - \$50,000	22	6.9
	\$50,001 - \$60,000	26	8.1
	\$60,001 - \$70,000	28	8.7
	\$70,001 - \$80,000	26	8.1
	\$80,001 - \$90,000	29	9.0
	\$90,001 +	87	27.1
	Prefer not to answer	22	6.9
Ethnicity	Western	161	50.2
	East Asian	160	49.8
Marital status	Single	144	44.9
	In a relationship	53	16.5
	Married/common law	118	36.8
	Divorced/separated/widowed	5	1.6
	Prefer not to answer	1	0.3
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age (years)		31.23	6.38
Social media usage per day (hours)		3.34	2.51

Table 4.2 shows the bivariate correlation matrix that consists of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption (i.e., materialistic hedonism, communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, status demonstration, and ostentation), emotions generated from social comparisons (i.e., benign envy and hubristic pride), OSI, independent and interdependent self-construal, ethnicity (i.e., Westerner vs. East Asian), and ITVCD. The Cronbach's α for each main variable was close to or greater than .70, which indicates good internal consistency. A visual examination of the correlation matrix suggested that correlation patterns were largely consistent with expectations. For instance, the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption had positive and significant correlations with one another as they represent the same underlying variable, conspicuous consumption. Both hubristic pride and benign envy had a positive and significant correlation ($r_s = .318$ and $.256$, $p < .01$, respectively) with ITVCD.

Table 4.2
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations of the Main Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Materialistic hedonism	3.21	0.83	.650											
2. Communication of belonging	2.70	1.06	.853	.641**										
3. Interpersonal mediation	2.75	1.05	.871	.713**	.729**									
4. Status demonstration	2.82	1.09	.839	.693**	.616**	.791**								
5. Ostentation	2.94	0.97	.688	.757**	.654**	.688**	.637**							
6. Online social identity	2.96	1.15	.910	.602**	.579**	.547**	.506**	.521**						
7. Benign envy	2.60	1.07	.910	.622**	.580**	.694**	.658**	.588**	.631**					
8. Hubristic pride	2.56	1.03	.867	.600**	.577**	.631**	.588**	.568**	.693**	.740**				
9. Independent self-construal	3.44	0.69	.658	.320**	.198**	.276**	.274**	.219**	.320**	.289**	.385**			
10. Interdependent self-construal	3.55	0.68	.706	.211**	.208**	.190**	.152**	.138*	.257**	.224**	.193**	.144**		
11. ITVCD	3.74	0.90	.706	.508**	.309**	.317**	.286**	.445**	.314**	.318**	.256**	.159**	.128*	
12. Ethnicity	1.5	0.50	---	.005	-.090	.013	0.032	-.024	.017	-0.059	-.045	.201**	-.094	-.007

Note. $N = 321$. ITVCD refers to the intention to visit conspicuous destinations. All the variables were measured with a 5-point Likert scale except for ethnicity, which was a binary variable (1 = East Asian, 2 = Westerner)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Therefore, these emotional outcomes generated from social comparisons could play a significant role in galvanizing people into choosing conspicuous tourist destinations.

4.5.2 Results of The Path Analysis

As shown in Table 4.3, the results of the path analysis indicated satisfactory fit indices; except for RMSEA: $\chi^2 = 41.112$, $df = 8$, $p < .001$; CFI = .984; SRMR = .037; and RMSEA = .114, 90% CI [.081, .149]. The model modification indices suggested that the model fit could improve by adding direct effects of OSI on communication of belonging and of OSI on materialistic hedonism.

Table 4.3

Model Fit Summary

Fit Index	Original Model	Modified Model
Chi-square	41.112	3.951
Degrees of freedom	8	3
Probability level	< .001	.267
Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR)	.037	.007
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.984	1.000
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.114	.031
	90% CI [.081, .149]	90%CI [.000, .104]

Theoretically speaking, communication of belonging and materialistic hedonism represent conspicuous consumption along with the three other dimensions. Thus, linking only the former two dimensions to OSI was not logically sound, whereupon I decided to add the path arrows for the direct effects of OSI on all the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, research suggests that one’s social identity is correlated with engagement in conspicuous consumption (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015). Social identity can be defined as how a person sees oneself in relation to their cultures, communities, and groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Turner et al., 1987), whereas OSI indicates a “self-concept that results through identification with social groups or categories that individuals experience online” (Pegg et al., 2018). As the survey items

for OSI were adopted from the measurement scale of social identity, there can be a relationship between OSI and conspicuous consumption, considering the similarity in the definitions. The revised model achieved a good model fit: $\chi^2 = 3.951$, $df = 3$, $p = .267$; CFI = 1.000; SRMR = .007; and RMSEA = .031, 90% CI [.000, .104].

Table 4.4 summarizes the path coefficients of the hypothesized relations based on the revised model. The majority of the predictors were positively and significantly correlated with their outcome variables, as hypothesized.

Table 4.4
Results of the Path Analysis

Dependent variables	Independent variables	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
ITVCD $R^2 = .283$	Hedonism	0.501	0.089	< .001
	Belonging	-0.020	0.062	.787
	Mediation	-0.068	0.080	.464
	Status	-0.127	0.067	.117
	Ostentation	0.206	0.073	.009
Hedonism $R^2 = .470$	Envy	0.319	0.048	< .001
	Pride	0.165	0.054	.014
	OSI	0.286	0.042	< .001
Belonging $R^2 = .424$	Envy	0.263	0.064	< .001
	Pride	0.185	0.072	.008
	OSI	0.285	0.056	< .001
Mediation $R^2 = .517$	Envy	0.475	0.058	< .001
	Pride	0.208	0.065	.001
	OSI	0.103	0.051	.063
Status $R^2 = .459$	Envy	0.470	0.064	< .001
	Pride	0.183	0.072	.007
	OSI	0.083	0.056	.160

Ostentation $R^2 = .399$	Envy	0.324	0.060	< .001
	Pride	0.209	0.068	.003
	OSI	0.172	0.053	.006
Envy $R^2 = .380$	OSI	0.631	0.041	< .001
Pride $R^2 = .480$	OSI	0.693	0.036	< .001

Note. $N = 321$. ITVCD = the intention to visit conspicuous destinations; Hedonism = materialistic hedonism; Belonging = communication of belonging; Mediation = interpersonal mediation; Status = status demonstration; Envy = benign envy; and Pride = hubristic pride.

ITVCD was positively predicted by two of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption: materialistic hedonism ($\beta = 0.501, p < .001$) and ostentation ($\beta = 0.206, p = .009$), whereas the other three dimensions were not significantly associated with the dependent variable. Each of these conspicuous consumption dimensions was positively predicted by both benign envy and hubristic pride, but more strongly by benign envy. The path coefficients of benign envy to materialistic hedonism, communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, status demonstration, and ostentation were as follows and all significant at a .001 level: β s = 0.319, 0.263, 0.475, 0.470, and 0.324, respectively. The relationships between hubristic pride and the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption were also all significant at a .05 level, but weaker than those of benign envy: β s = 0.165, 0.185, 0.208, 0.183, and 0.209. Of the direct effects of OSI on the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption, which were added in the model modification process, three showed significant and positive relations: materialistic hedonism ($\beta = 0.286, p < .001$), communication of belonging ($\beta = 0.285, p < .001$), and ostentation ($\beta = 0.172, p = .006$). Noticeably, OSI had a strong and positive impact on both benign envy and hubristic pride (β s = 0.631 and 0.693, $p < .001$, respectively).

4.5.3 Results of The Phantom Model Approach – Specific Indirect Effects

Table 4.5 shows the statistical results using the phantom model approach. To begin with, the relationship between benign envy and ITVCD was mediated by materialistic hedonism ($b = .135, p < .001$) and ostentation ($b = .056, p = .007$) as they were the only significant direct predictors of ITVCD. Likewise, the relationship between hubristic pride and ITVCD was mediated by materialistic hedonism ($b = .073, p = .009$) and ostentation ($b = .028, p = .017$). The relationship between OSI and ITVCD was mediated by either one (i.e., only the conspicuous consumption dimensions) or two serial mediators (i.e., both benign envy/hubristic pride and conspicuous consumption dimensions). In terms of the indirect effects with one mediator, the one through materialistic hedonism reached significance ($b = .113, p < .001$). With regard to the serial mediations, the indirect effect of OSI on ITVCD through benign envy and then materialistic hedonism was significant ($b = .079, p < .001$). In addition, the indirect effect of OSI on ITVCD through benign envy and then ostentation remained significant ($b = .033, p = .007$). OSI's indirect effect on ITVCD through hubristic pride and then materialistic hedonism was also found significant ($b = .045, p = .009$). Finally, the indirect effect of OSI on ITVCD through hubristic pride and then ostentation became significant ($b = .024, p = .010$).

I ran an independent *t*-test to ascertain if ITVCD was different between East Asian and Westerner participants and correlation analyses to examine whether the visiting intention was associated with the levels of independent and interdependent self-construal. Unexpectedly, there was no significant difference in the level of intention to visit the conspicuous destinations between East Asians ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.94$) and Westerners ($M = 3.73, SD = 0.87$): $t(319) = 0.128, p = .898$.

Table 4.5

Results of the Specific Indirect Effects from the Path Analysis Predicting the Intention to Visit Conspicuous Destinations

Independent variables	1 st mediator	2 nd mediator	Point estimate	SE	95% CI		p
					LB	UB	
Benign envy	Hedonism		.135	.037	.074	.219	< .001
		Belonging	-.004	.018	-.042	.029	.756
		Mediation	-.027	.039	-.099	.056	.504
		Status	-.050	.034	-.123	.013	.110
		Ostentation	.056	.026	.015	.119	.007
Hubristic pride	Hedonism		.073	.031	.018	.135	.009
		Belonging	-.003	.014	-.035	.021	.733
		Mediation	-.012	.020	-.061	.020	.449
		Status	-.020	.018	-.073	.002	.086
		Ostentation	.038	.020	.008	.089	.010
Online social identity	Hedonism		.113	.033	.057	.191	< .001
		Belonging	-.004	.018	-.041	.029	.777
		Mediation	-.006	.010	-.034	.008	.316
		Status	-.008	.010	-.042	.003	.149
		Ostentation	.028	.018	.003	.074	.017
Online social identity	Benign envy	Hedonism	.079	.022	.043	.132	< .001
		Belonging	-.003	.010	-.025	.017	.757
		Mediation	-.016	.023	-.058	.033	.056
		Status	-.030	.020	-.072	.007	.103
		Ostentation	.033	.015	.009	.072	.007
Online social identity	Hubristic pride	Hedonism	.045	.019	.011	.085	.009
		Belonging	-.002	.009	-.022	.013	.735
		Mediation	-.008	.012	-.038	.012	.444
		Status	-.013	.011	-.046	.002	.088
		Ostentation	.024	.013	.005	.056	.010

Note. $N = 321$. Hedonism = materialistic hedonism, Belonging = communication of belonging, Mediation = interpersonal mediation, Status = status demonstration, Envy = benign envy, and Pride = hubristic pride. The point estimates are unstandardized. We generated 5,000 bootstrap samples, using the bias-corrected percentile method.

However, there was a significant difference in the level of intention to visit the *inconspicuous* destinations between East Asians ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.09$) and Westerners ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.18$): $t(319) = 2.016$, $p = .045$. East Asian respondents reported a greater intention to visit *inconspicuous* destinations than their Westerner counterparts.

With regard to the correlation analyses, interestingly, having higher levels of independent and interdependent self-construal both had a positive correlation with ITVCD ($r_s = .159$ and $.128, p < .001$, respectively). With the intention to visit the *inconspicuous* destinations, having a higher level of interdependent self-construal was positively correlated ($r = .184, p < .001$), whereas independent self-construal had no significant association with the intention to visit the *inconspicuous* destinations ($r = .100, p > .05$).

Since there are known cross-cultural differences in independent and interdependent self-construal (Kraus & Kitayama, 2019), I ran additional independent *t*-tests to examine whether a certain type of self-construal was more prevalent among East Asians or Westerners. Consistent with the cross-cultural insight (Kraus & Kitayama, 2019), the level of independent self-construal was higher among Westerners ($M = 3.575, SD = 0.693$) than among East Asians ($M = 3.298, SD = 0.666$): $t(319) = -3.661, p < .001$. Although not significant, there was an approaching tendency for East Asians to have a somewhat higher level of interdependent self-construal ($M = 3.614, SD = 0.640$) than Westerners ($M = 3.486, SD = 0.716$): $t(319) = 1.689, p = .092$.

After establishing the direct effects through the path analysis and conducting *t*-tests, I conducted a series of multiple regressions to test the moderation effects of these direct effects by each of the three moderators: ethnicity, independent self-construal, and interdependent self-construal. This was to understand whether there were any ethnic and cultural differences in the direct effects in my model explaining the decision-making process of choosing the conspicuous destinations.

4.5.4 Results of The Moderation Analysis

Table 4.6 shows the results of regressions predicting ITVCD with a moderator and interaction terms between the moderator and the predictors. Only ethnicity moderated the direct effects of interpersonal mediation ($\beta = 0.206, p < .025$) and of status demonstration ($\beta = -0.365, p < .001$).

Table 4.6

Results of the Regressions Predicting ITVCD by the Dimensions of Conspicuous Consumption, a Moderator, and Interactions

Predictors	M = Ethnicity			M = Independent_SC			M = Interdependent_SC		
	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p
Hedonism	0.534	0.088	< .001	0.493	0.093	< .001	0.499	0.091	< .001
Belonging	-0.026	0.062	.724	-0.014	0.064	.848	-0.030	0.064	.692
Mediation	-0.046	0.079	.612	-0.062	0.083	.514	-0.067	0.081	.479
Status	-0.181	0.067	.025	-0.126	0.069	.128	-0.125	0.069	.133
Ostentation	0.208	0.072	.008	0.208	0.075	.011	0.210	0.074	.009
Moderator (M)	-0.001	0.085	.990	0.021	0.068	.690	0.040	0.067	.429
M*Hedonism	0.126	0.177	.122	0.031	0.120	.700	-0.049	0.146	.591
M*Belonging	-0.079	0.125	.278	-0.065	0.097	.432	0.062	0.090	.438
M*Mediation	0.206	0.158	.025	0.044	0.104	.625	0.057	0.092	.471
M*Status	-0.365	0.134	< .001	-0.043	0.096	.600	-0.072	0.104	.396
M*Ostentation	-0.013	0.145	.869	-0.018	0.103	.824	0.018	0.097	.821
<i>F</i>	14.104 < .001			11.89 < .001			11.316 < .001		
<i>R</i> ²	.334			.535			.536		

Note. $N = 321$. ITVCD = intention to visit conspicuous destination, SC = self-construal, Hedonism = materialistic hedonism, Belonging = communication of belonging, Mediation = interpersonal mediation, Status = status demonstration. Ethnicity was coded as 1 = Westerner, 2 = East Asian.

Table 4.7 describes the results of regression predicting materialistic hedonism with a moderator and the interaction terms. Independent self-construal significantly moderated the direct effects of benign envy ($\beta = -0.185, p = .009$) and of OSI ($\beta = 0.159, p = .016$).

Table 4.7

Results of the Regressions Predicting Materialistic Hedonism by Benign Envy, Hubristic Pride, Online Social Identity, a Moderator, and Interactions

Predictors	M = Ethnicity			M = Independent_SC			M = Interdependent_SC		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Envy	0.319	0.050	< .001	0.353	0.049	< .001	0.304	0.049	< .001
Pride	0.194	0.056	.006	0.111	0.056	.108	0.171	0.055	.013
OSI	0.263	0.044	< .001	0.280	0.042	< .001	0.270	0.043	< .001
Moderator (M)	0.028	0.068	.499	0.103	0.053	.022	0.041	0.053	.346
M*Envy	0.057	0.100	.377	-0.185	0.076	.009	0.117	0.079	.114
M*Pride	-0.126	0.113	.070	0.014	0.084	.852	-0.023	0.083	.752
M*OSI	0.100	0.088	.101	0.159	0.064	.016	0.004	0.059	.945
<i>F</i>	40.955 < .001			43.209 < .001			41.454 < .001		
<i>R</i> ²	.478			.491			.481		

Note. *N* = 321. SC = self-construal, Envy = benign envy, Pride = hubristic pride, OSI = online social identity. Ethnicity was coded as 1 = Westerner, 2 = East Asian.

Table 4.8 summarizes the results of regressions predicting communication of belonging with a moderator and the interactions. Interdependent self-construal moderated the effect of benign envy ($\beta = 0.157, p = .042$).

Table 4.8

Results of the Regressions Predicting Communication of Belonging by Benign Envy, Hubristic Pride, Online Social Identity, a Moderator, and Interactions

Predictors	M = Ethnicity			M = Independent_SC			M = Interdependent_SC		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Envy	0.255	0.066	< .001	0.246	0.066	< .001	0.262	0.065	< .001
Pride	0.172	0.075	.019	0.205	0.075	.005	0.188	0.073	.008
OSI	0.303	0.059	< .001	0.292	0.057	< .001	0.261	0.057	< .001
Moderator (M)	-0.072	0.091	.093	-0.050	0.072	.292	0.028	0.070	.531
M*Envy	0.002	0.133	.981	0.075	0.102	.315	0.157	0.104	.042
M*Pride	0.038	0.150	.597	-0.018	0.114	.812	0.005	0.109	.951
M*OSI	-0.036	0.117	.566	-0.018	0.086	.799	-0.105	0.077	.088
<i>F</i>	33.765 < .001			33.571 < .001			35.087 < .001		
<i>R</i> ²	.430			.429			.440		

Note. *N* = 321. SC = self-construal, Envy = benign envy, Pride = hubristic pride, OSI = online

social identity. Ethnicity was coded as 1 = Westerner, 2 = East Asian.

Table 4.9 shows the results of the regressions predicting interpersonal mediation with a moderator and the interactions. No moderation effects were significant.

Table 4.9

Results of the Regressions Predicting Interpersonal Mediation by Benign Envy, Hubristic Pride, Online Social Identity, a Moderator, and Interactions

Predictors	M = Ethnicity			M = Independent_SC			M = Interdependent_SC		
	β	SE	<i>p</i>	β	SE	<i>p</i>	β	SE	<i>p</i>
Envy	0.460	0.060	< .001	0.483	0.060	< .001	0.471	0.059	< .001
Pride	0.223	0.068	< .001	0.194	0.068	.004	0.228	0.067	< .001
OSI	0.110	0.053	.058	0.096	0.052	.089	0.086	0.052	.130
Moderator (M)	0.048	0.082	.224	0.034	0.066	.434	0.007	0.064	.868
M*Envy	0.087	0.120	.155	-0.042	0.093	.538	0.121	0.095	.088
M*Pride	-0.055	0.136	.408	0.051	0.104	.478	-0.111	0.100	.114
M*OSI	-0.034	0.106	.559	-0.017	0.078	.791	-0.044	0.071	.438
<i>F</i>	48.917 < .001			48.166 < .001			49.083 < .001		
<i>R</i> ²	.522			.519			.523		

Note. *N* = 321. SC = self-construal, Envy = benign envy, Pride = hubristic pride, OSI = online social identity. Ethnicity was coded as 1 = Westerner, 2 = East Asian.

Table 4.10 describes the results of the regressions predicting status demonstration with a moderator and the interactions. Only independent self-construal moderated the direct effects of benign envy ($\beta = -0.145, p = .045$) and of hubristic pride ($\beta = 0.162, p = .031$).

Table 4.10

Results of the Regressions Predicting Status Demonstration by Benign Envy, Hubristic Pride, Online Social Identity, a Moderator, and Interactions

Predictors	M = Ethnicity			M = Independent_SC			M = Interdependent_SC		
	β	SE	<i>p</i>	β	SE	<i>p</i>	β	SE	<i>p</i>
Envy	0.482	0.066	< .001	0.493	0.065	< .001	0.477	0.065	< .001
Pride	0.194	0.075	.006	0.145	0.075	.041	0.176	0.074	.012
OSI	0.063	0.058	.308	0.068	0.056	.252	0.079	0.057	.192
Moderator (M)	0.068	0.090	.102	0.066	0.071	.151	-0.020	0.070	.655

M*Envy	-0.046	0.132	.480	-0.145	0.101	.045	0.068	0.105	.367
M*Pride	-0.018	0.149	.803	0.162	0.113	.031	0.046	0.110	.533
M*OSI	0.033	0.116	.594	0.002	0.085	.971	-0.072	0.078	.235
<i>F</i>	38.869	< .001	39.766	< .001	38.803	< .001			
<i>R</i> ²	.465		.471		.465				

Note. $N = 321$. SC = self-construal, Envy = benign envy, Pride = hubristic pride, OSI = online social identity. Ethnicity was coded as 1 = Westerner, 2 = East Asian.

Table 4.11 exhibits the results of the regressions predicting ostentation with a moderator and the interactions. Were no significant moderation effects found by these regressions, although ethnicity's moderating effect on the relationship between OSI and ostentation approached the significant level ($\beta = 0.126, p = .051$).

Table 4.11

Results of the Regressions Predicting Ostentation by Benign Envy, Hubristic Pride, Online Social Identity, a Moderator, and Interactions

Predictors	M = Ethnicity			M = Independent_SC			M = Interdependent_SC		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Envy	0.325	0.062	< .001	0.331	0.062	< .001	0.477	0.065	< .001
Pride	0.232	0.070	.002	0.194	0.071	.010	0.176	0.074	.012
OSI	0.151	0.054	.020	0.169	0.053	.007	0.079	0.057	.192
Moderator (M)	0.003	0.084	.954	0.002	0.068	.965	-0.020	0.070	.655
M*Envy	0.093	0.124	.172	-0.069	0.095	.366	0.068	0.105	.367
M*Pride	-0.128	0.140	.084	0.099	0.107	.213	0.046	0.110	.533
M*OSI	0.126	0.109	.051	0.029	0.081	.679	-0.072	0.078	.235
<i>F</i>	31.646	< .001	30.426	< .001	38.803	< .001			
<i>R</i> ²	.414		.405		.465				

Note. $N = 321$. SC = self-construal, Envy = benign envy, Pride = hubristic pride, OSI = online social identity. Ethnicity was coded as 1 = Westerner, 2 = East Asian.

Table 4.12 shows that ethnicity ($\beta = -0.088, p = .042$), independent self-construal ($\beta =$

0.094, $p = .030$), and interdependent self-construal ($\beta = 0.107$, $p = .015$) all moderated the direct effect of OSI on benign envy.

Table 4.12

Results of the Regressions Predicting Benign Envy by Online Social Identity, a Moderator, and Interactions

Predictors	M = Ethnicity			M = Independent_SC			M = Interdependent_SC		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
OSI	0.642	0.041	< .001	0.589	0.043	< .001	0.605	0.042	< .001
Moderator (M)	-0.070	0.092	.106	0.105	0.070	.021	0.087	0.071	.056
M*OSI	-0.088	0.081	.042	0.094	0.054	.030	0.107	0.056	.015
<i>F</i>	73.545 < .001			74.920 < .001			74.358 < .001		
<i>R</i> ²	.410			.415			.413		

Note. $N = 321$. SC = self-construal, OSI = online social identity. Ethnicity was coded as 1 = Westerner, 2 = East Asian.

Table 4.13 demonstrates that only independent self-construal moderated the relationship between OSI and hubristic pride ($\beta = 0.110$, $p = .005$).

Table 4.13

Results of the Regressions Predicting Hubristic Pride by Online Social Identity, a Moderator, and Interactions

Predictors	M = Ethnicity			M = Independent_SC			M = Interdependent_SC		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
OSI	0.696	0.036	< .001	0.623	0.037	< .001	0.684	0.037	< .001
Moderator (M)	-0.057	0.083	.158	0.191	0.061	< .001	0.028	0.064	.513
M*OSI	-0.017	0.073	.677	0.110	0.047	.005	0.061	0.050	.139
<i>F</i>	99.058 < .001			115.196 < .001			99.172 < .001		
<i>R</i> ²	.484			.522			.484		

Note. $N = 321$. SC = self-construal, OSI = online social identity. Ethnicity was coded as 1 = Westerner, 2 = East Asian.

To interpret the findings from the moderation analyses, I conducted simple slope analyses by creating regression slopes between the predictor and outcome variables across different levels of the moderators. See Figures 4.2 to 4.4. Ethnicity moderated the relationship between interpersonal mediation and ITVCD. In Figure 4.2 A, it appears that the positive association between interpersonal mediation and ITVCD was more pronounced among East Asians than among Westerners. The same trend is also visible in Figure 4.2 B about status demonstration, but the difference in the slopes seems even larger. Hence, these moderation effects indicate that when East Asian people engage in interpersonal mediation and status demonstration (two aspects of conspicuous consumption), they are more likely to intend to visit the conspicuous destinations than Western people.

Figure 4.2
Moderating Effects of Ethnicity

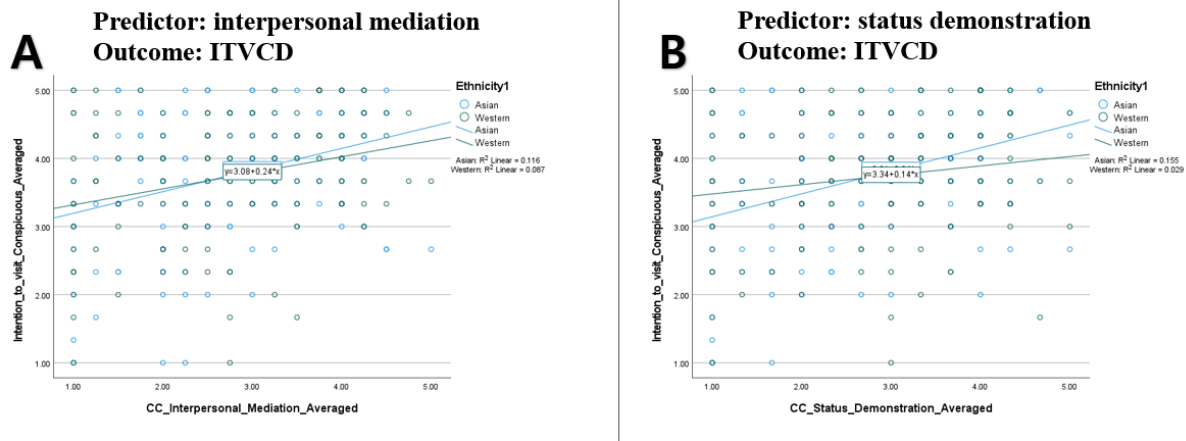
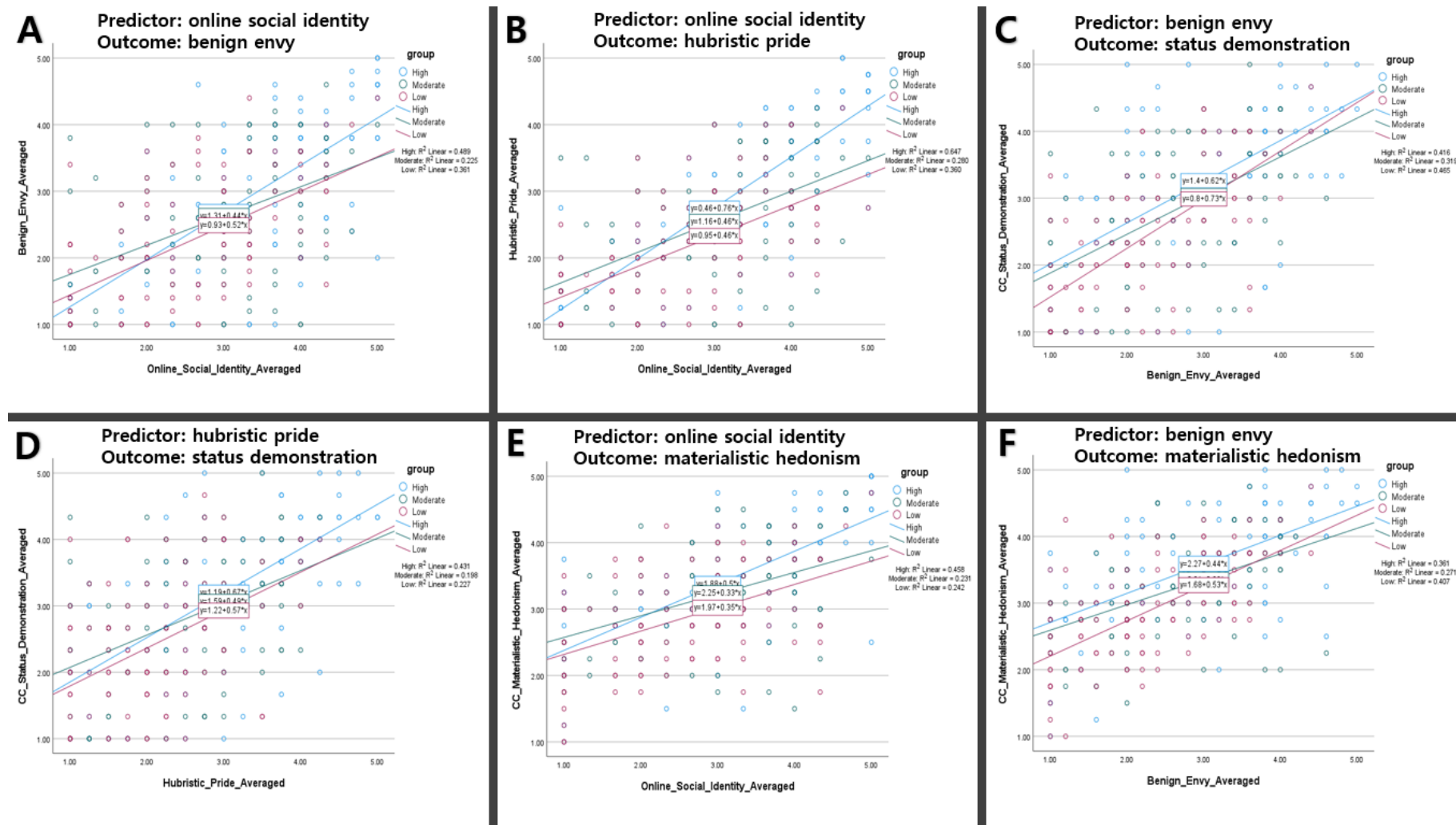


Figure 4.3 shows the six significant moderation effects of independent self-construal on the relationships among the different sets of the variable. Panels A, B, and E showed a consistent pattern: the positive relationships of OSI with benign envy, hubristic pride, and

materialistic hedonism were stronger among participants with a higher level of independent self-construal. Similarly, Panel D indicated that the positive link between hubristic pride and status demonstration was more pronounced among those with a higher level of independent self-construal. In contrast, the positive associations of benign envy with status demonstration and materialistic hedonism were stronger among those with a *lower* level of interdependent self-construal (Panels C & F).

Figure 4.3

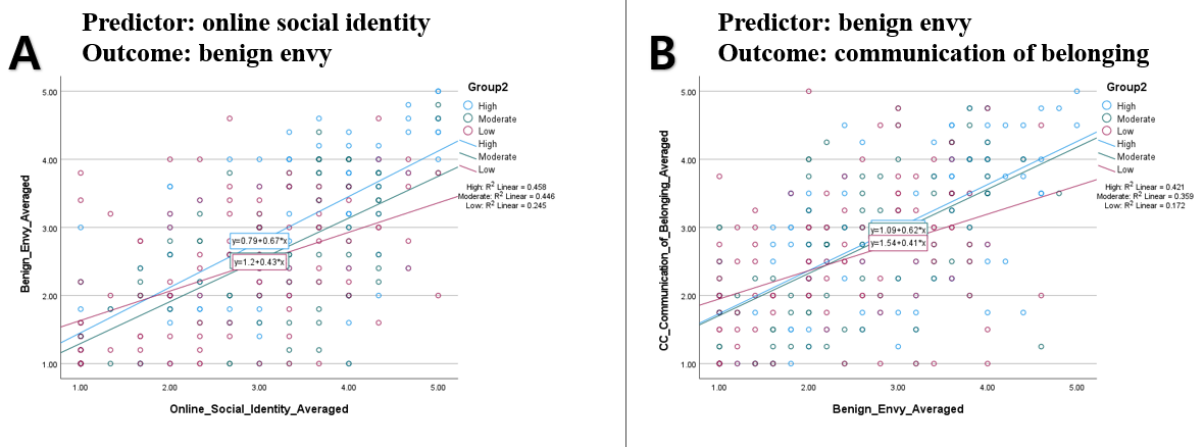
Moderating Effects of Independent Self-Construal



Interdependent self-construal moderated the positive relationship between OSI and benign envy. Figure 4.4 A shows that having higher levels of interdependent self-construal strengthens the relationship between OSI and benign envy.

Figure 4.4

Moderating Effects of Interdependent Self-Construal



Also, as shown in Figure 4.4 B, having higher levels of interdependent self-construal made the relationship between benign envy and communication of belonging more positive.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

There were two purposes for my study: (a) to study conspicuous consumption in the international tourism context and (b) to examine if one's OSI induces emotions generated by social comparison (i.e., benign envy and hubristic pride) among social media users and thus influence their decision-making process of choosing a conspicuous international tourist destination. In addition, this study investigated if people in different ethnic groups were disparately motivated to visit a conspicuous international tourist destination. Data from two surveys were quantitatively analyzed to test the seven hypotheses presented in the study. Each of these hypotheses is discussed in the following section.

5.1 H1: International cities can be categorized into conspicuous, neutral, or inconspicuous destinations.

This research applied the construct of conspicuous consumption to the tourism context in order to examine if international tourist destinations can be categorized as conspicuous or inconspicuous destinations. Phillips and Back (2011) found that conspicuous consumption can be applied to choices of vacation destinations as the decision-making process demonstrates the discretion of a consumer. Visiting luxurious destinations (e.g., Paris, Dubai, and Rome) can signal the propensity for aggrandizing their economic success and social status to give an impression to others (Phillips & Back, 2011). Although Phillips and Back's (2011) study focused on domestic tourism within the U.S., they also speculated that paying a visit to international destinations could be deemed more conspicuous than going to domestic destinations. The present study is the first attempt to examine the conspicuousness of international tourist

destinations, to the best of my knowledge.

H1 is partially supported by the results shown in Table 3.3. Of the 20 international destinations listed in Survey One, Paris, Dubai, and Rome were identified as the most conspicuous destinations while Delhi, Denpasar, and Ho Chi Minh were considered the least conspicuous destinations by both East Asians and Westerners who resided in Canada. My findings partially support H1 because even though the degrees of conspicuousness for Paris, Dubai, and Rome were substantially higher compared to those of Ho Chi Minh, Denpasar, and Delhi, it is difficult to argue that those destinations can be clearly categorized into conspicuous or inconspicuous destinations. It is important to note that the 20 destinations shown to participants were the most visited cities in the world, which implies that participants can consider all of them conspicuous to an extent when compared with other international cities that are not frequently visited by international tourists. If the participants were presented with cities that they had never heard of, then the results could have been somewhat different. For instance, people may perceive Ho Chi Minh to be a more conspicuous international destination compared to Chiang Mai, which is the second largest city in Thailand but unknown to numerous people in general. Therefore, it may be logically acceptable to state that international destinations can be perceived as more conspicuous or inconspicuous than others.

Recent research conducted among Chinese students also found that international coastal destinations (i.e., Hawaii and Dubai) were perceived as more conspicuous than domestic coastal destinations (i.e., Rizhao and Weihai) (Yao et al., 2021). Considering the fact that everyone who participated in the survey resided in Canada, it was relatively surprising to discover that the most *inconspicuous* destinations were all in Asia (Delhi, Denpasar, and Ho Chi Minh), whereas two out of three conspicuous destinations were located in Europe. This is because Westerners are

likely to perceive Asian countries as exotic and mysterious destinations (Shim et al., 2015). Given that a conspicuous destination is a place that generates aspirations from others (Sirgy & Su, 2000), I expected that visiting Asian countries could be perceived as a unique experience that could elicit aspirations from others for Westerners who resided in Canada.

Several destinations (e.g., San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles) in Phillips and Back's (2011) study were listed in both categories (conspicuous and inconspicuous). Because these neutral cities possess similar characteristics of both conspicuous and inconspicuous destinations, some participants could have perceived them as either conspicuous or inconspicuous. The international destinations that were ranked in the middle (e.g., Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Prague) in my list are generally recognized by numerous people, but simultaneously, they may not have the characteristics that could signal distinct conspicuous or inconspicuous consumption. This could be valuable information for destination marketers as destinations can be perceived as more conspicuous or inconspicuous destinations depending on what kind of marketing strategies (e.g., providing unique and differentiated experiences) they utilize.

Even though Phillips and Back (2011) argued that destinations that are neither conspicuous nor inconspicuous would be recognized as second-tier cities or suburbs of major cities, the findings in my study suggest that international destinations are not necessarily second-tier cities even if they are not perceived as very conspicuous (e.g., Seoul as the capital city of South Korea). Given that people are more likely to intend to visit conspicuous destinations compared to inconspicuous destinations once the pandemic is finally over (Abdullah, 2021), how destination marketers and managers understand and predict a new trend in the tourism industry and prepare for the post-COVID-19 era is deemed paramount.

Furthermore, having visited a certain place did not necessarily alter the way one perceived the destination in terms of the level of conspicuousness. For instance, in Survey One, 15 participants had been to Tokyo, but they still perceived Tokyo as a conspicuous tourist destination. Likewise, 18 participants had been to New York City, but the destination's level of conspicuousness was still relatively high compared to other destinations as shown in Table 3.3. Not having visited a certain place did not appear to have a relationship with the way one perceives a destination's conspicuousness. Even though only a few people have visited Dubai and Denpasar, the difference in the level of conspicuousness between the two destinations was substantial.

5.2 H2: OSI is positively correlated to the emotional outcome of an upward social comparison (benign envy).

Social media users tend to believe that others are happier and more satisfied with their lives than themselves (Chou & Edge, 2012). Latif et al. (2020) suggested that OSI can moderate the way people engage in social comparisons on social media. Their results showed that when one's level of OSI is high (i.e., more involved in social media usage), the positive relationship between social media and social comparison is likely to be more powerful. H2 was supported with a path coefficient of 0.631 ($R^2 = .380, p < .001$) in my path analysis, signifying that OSI is positively correlated to the emotional outcome of an upward social comparison, benign envy. This means that having a higher level of OSI can make one feel more envious of the superior possessions and achievements that others have on social media. My findings are consistent with results from previous studies that investigated the role of social media on social comparison and envy (Chou & Edge, 2012; Hong et al., 2012; Krasnova et al., 2013; Salovey & Rodin, 1986;

Tandoc et al., 2015) and with the fact that a large proportion of social media users incessantly compare themselves with others (Steers, 2014). My study adds new theoretical insight by identifying OSI as the factor related to social media leading to social comparison, specifically among Millennials and Generation Z, who are the most frequent social media users and highest spenders at tourist destinations (Condor, 2020; Statista, 2021).

5.3 H3: OSI is positively related to the emotional outcome of a downward social comparison (hubristic pride).

H3 was also supported with a path coefficient of 0.693 ($R^2 = .480, p < .001$) in my path analysis, suggesting that OSI is positively related to the emotional outcome of a downward social comparison, hubristic pride. This demonstrates the desire to be perceived as an extraordinary and capable person on social media when one has a higher level of OSI. My finding is consistent with the fact that a large proportion of Facebook users incessantly compare themselves with others (Steers, 2014). Bauman (1996) described a postmodern problem of identity in a way that one's identity can be constantly reshaped and reframed due to its unencumbered and ethereal characteristics. Similarly, this trend of constantly rewriting and reconstructing one's social identity in order to maintain a positive self-evaluation should be noted when creating destination marketing strategies because this trend has become prevalent in the context of social media and tourism (Liu et al., 2019). For instance, people with a low self-evaluation are likely to engage in luxury consumption because of the instant gratification they can enjoy (Chung et al., 2017; Lucas & Koff, 2017). Hence, people may want to visit conspicuous destinations if they are exposed to travel-related content on social media in an attempt to maintain or enhance their self-image.

5.4 The Relationship Between the Dimensions of Conspicuous Consumption and ITVCD

To test H4 and H5, it was necessary to analyze both direct and indirect effects of the path model as shown in Tables 4.4 and 4.5. With regard to the direct effects of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption on ITVCD, there are some similarities and differences between my findings and those of Phillips and Back's (2011) study. In my study, ITVCD was positively predicted by two of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption: materialistic hedonism ($\beta = 0.501, p < .001$) and ostentation ($\beta = 0.206, p = .009$), whereas the ITVCD's relationships with the other three dimensions (i.e., communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, and status demonstration) were not significant. The two dimensions of conspicuous consumption—materialistic hedonism and ostentation—are closely related to displaying one's social image and material possessions, and the correlations in my path analysis suggest that tourists focus on these two factors when choosing a conspicuous destination. Overall, my findings that people who were influenced by the dimensions of conspicuous consumption were more likely to intend to visit conspicuous destinations ($R^2 = .283$) are congruent with Phillips and Back's (2011) study. My study replicated Phillips and Back's (2011) results in the international tourism context. Moreover, the positive relationship between materialistic hedonism and ITVCD is consistent between my study and Phillips and Back's (2011) work.

Communication of belonging, interpersonal mediation, and status demonstration were not correlated with ITVCD in my study. In Phillips and Back's (2011) study, status demonstration was negatively correlated with ITVCD, whereas interpersonal mediation was positively correlated with ITVCD. Communication of belonging was not correlated with ITVCD in Phillips and Back's (2011) study, which is consistent with my findings. According to Correia et

al. (2007), visiting destinations that have not been visited by friends is a powerful predictor of the intention to visit exotic tourist destinations. As there is a correlation between conspicuous consumption and exotic goods/services (Roy et al., 2011; Sundie et al., 2011), this implies that people do not necessarily intend to visit international conspicuous destinations just because others (e.g., friends, colleagues) have visited them to feel a sense of belonging in their communities. Instead, tourists may prefer to enjoy unique and somewhat exotic experiences that others have not done, when engaging in conspicuous consumption.

This may explain why communication of belonging and interpersonal mediation were not correlated with ITVCD in my study. Interpersonal mediation did not correlate with ITVCD possibly because of the unique characteristics that tourist destinations hold. For instance, tourism products are generally embedded with the characteristics of intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability (George, 2021). These characteristics are what make tourism products different from regular commodities/products. Because the survey items were adapted from Marcoux et al.'s (1995) study, which primarily focused on the conspicuousness of actual products (e.g., sunglasses), gaining popularity (i.e., interpersonal mediation) may not be the primary reason for intending to visit conspicuous destinations.

One of the crucial characteristics of conspicuous consumption is its visibility, indicating that the consumption of a product or service needs to be witnessed by others to satisfy the consumer's desire (Bourne, 1957). Even though tourists are capable of sharing travel-related content through social media before, during, and after a trip (Kang & Schuett, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), commodity consumption (e.g., luxurious cars, bags, etc.) may be more effective when it comes to gaining popularity from others compared to sharing unique travel experiences on social media. The fact that status demonstration did not correlate with ITVCD remains

questionable, as the primary reason tourists visit conspicuous destinations would be to flaunt their success, social status, and wealth, which are the core values of status demonstration (Phillips & Back, 2011).

One possible reason why there was no correlation between status demonstration and ITVCD in this study would be the wording of survey items. For instance, Phillips and Back's (2011) study included a survey item for status demonstration as follows: "I travel to these destinations to show off, to be noted." Using such a negative word (show off) could have caused a social desirability bias, meaning that respondents would disagree with this survey item, not because it does not represent their behaviors and emotions, but because they do not want to be associated with the negative phrasing. I revised the survey items of status demonstration by eliminating these negative expressions, which may have led to the absence of a correlation between status demonstration and ITVCD.

In addition, status demonstration shares similar conceptual characteristics with ostentation (i.e., both signal the consumption of luxurious and expensive products). However, only ostentation was found to correlate with ITVCD. One possible reason is that the survey items for ostentation were based on hypothetical situations (e.g., "If I can afford to visit any places in the world, I would visit the most expensive and luxurious place." and "I feel like visiting these luxurious destinations in the near future."), whereas the survey items for status demonstration represented certain perceptions of conspicuous destinations (e.g., "Traveling to these destinations would be a social status symbol for me." and "Traveling to these destinations can symbolize success and prestige."). This could be the reason why status demonstration was not correlated with ITVCD despite the conceptual similarities between status demonstration and ostentation.

Moreover, one of the reasons why the results of my study were not entirely congruent with Phillips and Back's (2011) study may be that how people make a decision on why they travel to a conspicuous destination could be different given that the majority of people who participated in their study were between 41 and 60 years old (54.8%). It is important to note that Millennials and Generation Z are the two age cohorts that include the most frequent social media users and highest spenders at tourist destinations (Condor, 2020; Statista, 2021). Therefore, the participants in my study, who were highly influenced by the use of social media, would better represent the decision-making process of choosing conspicuous destinations for young adults. Phillips and Back (2011) also acknowledged that categorizing tourist destinations as conspicuous or inconspicuous destinations may be predicated on multiple factors such as culture, nationality, age, gender, income, and other socioeconomic characteristics. In this sense, the decision-making process of choosing conspicuous destinations could vary depending on one's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. For instance, senior citizens from different countries in Europe would possibly perceive Paris and Rome as less conspicuous based on their prior knowledge of the destinations and the destinations' proximity. Accordingly, considering the nature of different demographic characteristics and the list of destinations, this discrepancy in findings can be justified.

Phillips and Back (2011) did not include the dimension of ostentation in their survey because the variable had low reliability in Marcoux et al.'s (1995) original study. Yet, visiting an international destination is usually deemed to be more luxurious and conspicuous than visiting a domestic destination (Phillips & Back, 2011), whereupon ostentation was included in my study. Expectedly, ostentation emerged as a significant predictor of ITVCD in my study. For instance, one of the survey items to measure ostentation was "If I can afford to visit any places in the

world, I would visit the most expensive and luxurious place.”, and this signals the desire to visit conspicuous destinations. In addition, consumers engage in conspicuous consumption to impress others by an *ostentatious* display of wealth, thus maintaining or improving their self-esteem and social status (Veblen, 1934). Therefore, this study provides new insight into the literature by incorporating ostentation as an important factor when it comes to the decision-making process of choosing international conspicuous destinations.

5.5 Are OSI, benign envy, and hubristic pride correlated with the dimensions of conspicuous consumption?

Even though Phillips and Back (2011) were the only researchers who applied the dimensions of conspicuous consumption to the context of destination choice by tourists, they did not consider how the advancement of Internet technology such as social media, emotional factors (i.e., envy and pride) affect this mechanism. Thus, three extra variables—OSI, benign envy, and hubristic pride—were added to my study. Not surprisingly, all the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption were positively predicted by benign envy and hubristic pride. This is an important finding because these two emotional outcomes generated by social comparison play a significant and powerful role in motivating people to engage in every aspect of conspicuous consumption. These findings are consistent with past research that investigated the positive relationship between social media usage and emotional experiences (e.g., envy; Liu et al., 2019; Taylor & Strutton, 2016). Therefore, in an attempt to maintain or improve one’s self-image and perceived social status on social media, both upward and downward social comparisons may drive conspicuous consumption behaviors (Tesser, 1988). Of the direct effects of OSI on the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption, which were added in the model

modification process, three showed significant and positive relations: materialistic hedonism ($\beta = 0.286, p < .001$), communication of belonging ($\beta = 0.285, p < .001$), and ostentation ($\beta = 0.172, p = .006$). The two dimensions of conspicuous consumption—materialistic hedonism and ostentation—are closely related to displaying one's material possessions and social image, respectively. Thus, my findings are partially consistent with Dubois and Ordabayeva's (2015) results that one's social identity is correlated with engagement in conspicuous consumption.

5.6 H4: Benign envy is positively correlated to the intention to engage in conspicuous consumption and visit a conspicuous tourist destination.

To test whether benign envy is positively correlated with ITVCD, mediation effects were examined. The relationship between benign envy and ITVCD was mediated by materialistic hedonism and ostentation. Previous research has shown that benign envy is associated with a positive attitude toward the comparison target and a desire to resemble the target's superior qualities, accomplishments, and wealth through hard work or conspicuous consumption (Van de Ven, 2016). For instance, individuals who experience benign envy are willing to pay more for a product owned by the comparison target who shares similar characteristics (Van de Ven et al., 2011). Likewise, my findings reveal that feeling benign envy toward a comparison target is likely to trigger one's intention to visit conspicuous tourist destinations that the target has visited. Past research has shown that travel pictures posted by friends on social media can elicit social comparison processes among users of the platform, as individuals selectively display their positive sides (Krasnova et al., 2015; Lyu, 2016; Pera, 2018; Wong et al., 2019). Other researchers have documented that the use of social media increased travel consumption (Luo & Zhong, 2015; Narangajavana et al., 2017) and have investigated the positive relationship

between social media usage and emotional experiences (e.g., envy; Liu et al., 2019; Taylor & Strutton, 2016). Therefore, in an attempt to maintain or improve one's self-image and perceived social status, feeling benign envy may drive conspicuous consumption behaviors (Tesser, 1988), and therefore intend to visit conspicuous destinations. In addition, my findings are consistent with the extant research suggesting that conspicuous consumption is predicated on eliciting envy as a motivation for purchasing and displaying goods that represent one's self-concept and social status (Veblen, 1899; Van de Ven et al., 2011). To put it simply, feeling a higher level of benign envy can be considered as the underlying psychological mechanism or motivation to visit a conspicuous destination mediated by the desire to be fashionable, enhance one's self-image and social status (materialistic hedonism), and display one's luxuriousness (ostentation). Therefore, H4 was supported.

5.7 H5: Hubristic pride is positively correlated to the intention to engage in conspicuous consumption and visit a conspicuous tourist destination.

To test whether hubristic pride is positively correlated with ITVCD, mediation effects were examined. The relationship between hubristic pride and ITVCD was mediated by materialistic hedonism and ostentation. The findings that pride is associated with luxury and conspicuous consumption are consistent with past studies (Griskevicius et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2021). Hubristic pride is an emotional outcome generated by self-enhancement and an inauthentic sense of self (Tracy & Robins, 2014). My results imply that hubristic pride, which is associated with extrinsic values of public recognition and social status, is pertinent to the two dimensions of conspicuous consumption, materialistic hedonism and ostentation.

Hubristic pride is more related to narcissism than genuine self-esteem (Cheng et al., 2009).

One example item for measuring hubristic pride was “I tend to feel like I am an extraordinary (or special) person on social media.”, which implies that people who possess a higher level of hubristic pride may want to boast of their material possessions and luxuriousness by sharing their unique experiences at a conspicuous destination on social media to feel like an extraordinary person. For instance, Akanbi and Theophilus (2014) discovered that social media usage is positively correlated with enhanced self-image and closer relationships with friends, indicating that the more students spend time on social media connecting to their online friends, the better it boosts their self-image and friendships in the offline world. Therefore, the travel-related content on social media can allow tourists to gain more attention and consolidate their social status, thus defending or enhancing their self-presentation and social standing in the offline world (Kumar et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2019). Accordingly, H5 was corroborated.

5.8 H6: OSI is positively correlated to the intention to engage in conspicuous consumption and visit a conspicuous tourist destination.

The relationship between OSI and ITVCD was also mediated by materialistic hedonism and ostentation. Latif et al. (2021) argued that travel consumers’ OSI can have a moderating effect on the relationship between the exposure to travel-related content on social media and the intention to visit a tourist destination. Although OSI was used as the exogenous variable in my model, the positive correlation between OSI and ITVCD was consistent with Latif et al.’s (2021) study. With regard to the serial mediations, the indirect effect of OSI on ITVCD was mediated by benign envy or hubristic pride, and then materialistic hedonism or ostentation. These serial mediation effects on ITVCD were understandable as there was a positive and significant correlation between OSI and the two emotions generated by social comparison (i.e., benign envy

and hubristic pride) along with the two dimensions of conspicuous consumption in my path analysis, which was conducted to examine the overall relationships among main variables before the mediation analysis. Moreover, research suggests that social identity is correlated with conspicuous consumption (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015). Social identity can be defined as how a person sees oneself in relation to his or her cultures, communities, and groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Turner et al., 1987), whereas OSI indicates a “self-concept that results through identification with social groups or categories that individuals experience online” (Pegg et al., 2018, p. 51). When individuals possess a high level of OSI, they are more likely to define themselves by their online social communities and assimilate into their online social groups (Reicher et al., 2010). Lisitsa et al. (2020) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, young adults (e.g., 18 to 34-year-olds) reported increased social media usage compared to the pre-pandemic time. This implies that young adults could have developed a higher level of OSI during the pandemic, making them more susceptible to social comparisons on social media. Even though there was no comparison group in this study, research suggests that having a high level of OSI can make social media users more susceptible to the influence of Internet trends and predispose them to engage in a higher level of social comparison (Chusniah, 2020). As a result, OSI is positively correlated to the intention to engage in the emotions generated by social comparisons (i.e., benign envy and hubristic pride), the two dimensions of conspicuous consumption (i.e., materialistic hedonism and ostentation), and ITVCD.

Communication of belonging (i.e., a sense of involvement in a community), interpersonal mediation (i.e., the influence of social relations that generates respect and popularity from others), and status demonstration (i.e., symbols of success, social status, and wealth) did not have mediation effects on the relationship between the three predictor variables (benign envy,

hubristic pride, and OSI) and ITVCD. I expected that there would be no mediation effects as there were no correlations among the variables in the path analyses. The possible reasons for the insignificant correlations are discussed in Chapter 5.4.

5.9 H7: East Asians are more likely to intend to visit a conspicuous destination compared to Westerners.

People with independent self-construal tend to experience and express ego-focused emotions (e.g., anger, pride), whereas those with interdependent self-construal are more inclined to feel and display other-focused engaging emotions (e.g., shame, friendly; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). People with interdependent self-construal (e.g., East Asians) are more likely to be motivated by socially-oriented goals (Yamaguchi & Kim, 2015). It does not necessarily mean that interdependent people have a higher level of desire for affiliation (Sheldon et al., 2001), but they are more susceptible to fulfilling their roles within a larger social network (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For instance, self-esteem for interdependent people is based on the ability to assimilate into surrounding others, whereas for independent people, it is based on the ability to demonstrate uniqueness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, I set forth a hypothesis that East Asians are more likely to intend to visit a conspicuous destination compared to Westerners in a way that they want to assimilate into surrounding others in their community, especially on social media.

Unexpectedly, the results of *t*-tests showed no significant difference in the level of ITVCD between East Asians and Westerners. However, East Asians in my study were more likely to intend to visit *inconspicuous* destinations than Westerners. There are two possible reasons for these unexpected results. First, East Asians recruited in this study were those who resided in

Canada. This may indicate that these participants could have been influenced by Western cultures, even if they self-identified as East Asians, especially second-generation immigrants who may have experienced the process of acculturation (Berry, 2006). Therefore, they could have developed similar self-construal as Westerners do. That being said, there was a difference between East Asians and Westerners in terms of self-construal (i.e., East Asians in this study showed a somewhat higher level of interdependent self-construal), whereupon this assumption may not be true. Second, as East Asians prefer to maintain harmony within their social groups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), they might not feel comfortable visiting unnecessarily luxurious places, which could elicit envy from others. Sirgy and Su (2000) argued that tourists have a higher chance to be observed and noticed by others when they visit conspicuous destinations. For instance, Dr. Donald Hambrick argued that some narcissistic CEOs cannot stand to be outshined by their subordinates. CEOs do not necessarily feel jealous of their subordinates' possessions, but they may feel envy. He also mentioned the possibility of the employees of narcissistic CEOs who arrive in more expensive cars could suffer from denigration and dismissal (ABC News, 2022). The feeling of envy is shown to be more prevalent among people in collectivistic cultures (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2010). Understandably, there are people who worry about purchasing a more expensive car than their managers and bosses (ABC News, 2022). As people in collectivistic cultures are likely to have a higher level of interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), this phenomenon of not wanting to be noted may be more prevalent for people with a higher level of interdependent self-construal.

The correlation analyses showed that having higher levels of independent and interdependent self-construal both had a positive association with ITVCD. In terms of the intention to visit *inconspicuous* destinations, having a higher level of interdependent self-

construal was positively correlated, whereas having a higher level of independent self-construal had no significant association with this intention. Consistent with the existing cross-cultural research (Kraus & Kitayama, 2019), the level of independent self-construal was higher among Westerners than among East Asians in my data. Although not statistically significant, there was an approaching tendency for East Asians to have a somewhat higher level of interdependent self-construal than Westerners. These findings are noteworthy because research suggests that East Asians tend to possess a higher level of interdependent self-construal (Kraus & Kitayama, 2019), indicating that those individuals who have a high interdependent self-construal are likely to choose tourist destinations that East Asians prefer. Therefore, people with high interdependent self-construal (East Asians) were more likely to visit *inconspicuous* destinations possibly because they value belonging, fitting in, and maintaining harmony in their social groups, which could have restrained them from behaving in a noticeable way (e.g., visiting conspicuous destinations to share their unique experiences) compared to those with high independent self-construal (Westerners).

My moderation analyses further examined whether there were any ethnic and cultural differences in the direct effects in my model explaining the decision-making process of choosing conspicuous destinations. Doing so could offer further insights into why we did or did not observe the above ethnic and cultural differences. Ethnicity moderated the relationship of ITVCD with interpersonal mediation and status demonstration in such a way that when East Asians engage in interpersonal mediation and status demonstration (two aspects of conspicuous consumption), they are more likely to intend to visit conspicuous destinations than Western people. Therefore, one possible reason that people with higher levels of interdependent self-construal—who tend to be East Asians—are likely to intend to visit conspicuous destinations is

that there is a desire for belonging to their social groups and receiving respect from others among them. Therefore, people with higher levels of interdependent self-construal may want to visit conspicuous destinations to gain popularity (interpersonal mediation) and display their success and wealth (status demonstration) compared to those with higher levels of independent self-construal, who tend to be Westerners.

Tatzel (2002) found that East Asians, who are influenced by collectivist cultures, are more likely to be materialistic than Westerners. This is because they perceive material possessions or wealth as the public meaning of the self, whereas Westerners perceive materialistic possessions or wealth as the private meaning of the self (Liao & Wang, 2009; Webster & Beatty, 1997). For instance, East Asians are more likely to feel anxious about their self-image in public (Abe et al., 1996), and thus purchase goods that can display their wealth, social status, and reputation in public compared to Westerners (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). With this understanding, Westerners in my study could have chosen to visit conspicuous destinations not because of the perception of others, but for the private meaning of the self. Generally, East Asians are prone to regard their ability to consume products and services as a form of personal social status (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998), and my findings that ethnicity moderated the relationship of ITVCD with interpersonal mediation and status demonstration fit this trend. Therefore, my results of the moderation analyses suggest that there is a difference between East Asians and Westerners in terms of why people in each ethnic group choose to visit conspicuous destinations.

Still, H7 was not supported by this study because East Asians were not more likely to intend to visit a conspicuous destination compared to Westerners. One important finding is that people in this study intended to visit conspicuous destinations after the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over regardless of their ethnicity and self-construal. However, it is important to note

the reasons why East Asians and Westerners intend to visit conspicuous destinations are different. East Asians may want to gain popularity (interpersonal mediation) and display their success, prestige, and wealth (status demonstration) by visiting conspicuous destinations because they are concerned with their self-image perceived by others in their social groups, whereas Westerners tend to focus on the private meaning of the self (Liao & Wang, 2009) and make a decision on where they want to travel. Additionally, the concept of self-construal was relatively underexplored in the tourism context, so the findings can create new theoretical implications that different types of self-construal are not necessarily associated with higher levels of motivation to visit conspicuous destinations.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

The overall purpose of my Master's thesis was to investigate if OSI induces social comparisons among social media users and thus influences the decision-making process of choosing international tourist destinations from the perspective of conspicuous consumption. In addition, this research examined the possibility of tourists from different ethnic groups (i.e., East Asian and Western backgrounds) being more subject to social comparisons and conspicuous consumption. Moreover, my study also discovered if international cities can be perceived as more conspicuous or inconspicuous compared to other destinations. The results of this study can further expand the understanding of conspicuous consumption in the tourism context.

To summarize my results, Survey One showed that of the top 20 international tourist destinations, Paris, Dubai, and Rome were identified as the most conspicuous destinations, while Delhi, Denpasar, and Ho Chi Minh were found to be the least conspicuous destinations.

Based on Survey Two, one's level of OSI is positively associated with two emotional

outcomes of social comparison, benign envy and hubristic pride. Experiencing benign envy and hubristic pride leads to the two dimensions of conspicuous consumption, materialistic hedonism and ostentation, which can result in choosing conspicuous destinations. There was no significant difference in the level of intention to visit conspicuous destinations between East Asians and Westerners, although East Asians intended to visit *inconspicuous* destinations more than Westerners. Having higher levels of independent and interdependent self-construal both had a positive association with ITVCD. In terms of the intention to visit *inconspicuous* destinations, having a higher level of interdependent self-construal was positively correlated, whereas having a higher level of independent self-construal had no significant association with this intention. Ethnicity moderated the relationship of ITVCD with the two dimensions of conspicuous consumption, interpersonal mediation and status demonstration. When East Asians engage in interpersonal mediation and status demonstration, they are more likely to intend to visit conspicuous destinations than Western people. Independent and interdependent self-construal had no moderation effect on the association between ITVCD and the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption.

With the information above, destination organizations and marketers should be aware that people visit conspicuous destinations for specific purposes. As presented in this study, OSI, benign envy, hubristic pride, materialistic hedonism, and ostentation were the most notable factors that drive people to visit conspicuous destinations. Considering the moderation effects of ethnicity, interpersonal mediation and status demonstration also played important roles in motivating East Asians to visit conspicuous destinations.

One way to utilize the emotional outcomes generated by social comparison and OSI is to provide Millennials and Generation Z tourists with various opportunities to share their unique

experiences with their community members before, during, and after the visit on social media, especially on Facebook and Instagram as they are the most visited social media in the world (Statista, 2019). Because the two age cohorts tend to possess a high level of OSI, this will allow tourists to feel more satisfied with their travel because they can feel proud of their unique experiences and the attention they get from their friends and acquaintances. Enjoying special activities or lodging experiences in conspicuous destinations (e.g., Paris, Dubai, and Rome) could enhance the level of satisfaction for tourists. This is because posting travel-related content on social media allows tourists to flaunt their special experiences (hubristic pride) before, during, and after their trip with the help of social media, while fulfilling the motivations of materialistic hedonism and ostentation. Those splendid pictures on social media could then elicit benign envy from numerous people, and this could become a repetitive cycle that potentially stimulates more people to visit conspicuous destinations. Tourists take selfies at a tourist attraction as a means of garnering evidence that they had unique and exclusive experiences (Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). Travelers upload selfies on social media as a form of conspicuous consumption to make themselves appear more attractive, thus maintaining and enhancing their perceived social status (Bronner & de Hoog, 2021). Now that immaterial experiences such as travel and tourism have replaced material possessions as emblems of success and prosperity (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006), a growing number of tourists will be anticipated to visit conspicuous destinations in the post-COVID-19 era.

One of the paramount characteristics of conspicuous consumption is its visibility, indicating that the consumption of a product or service needs to be witnessed by others to satisfy the consumer's desire (Bourne, 1957). Tourists are now capable of sharing travel-related content and bragging about their personal experiences through social media such as Facebook and

Instagram before, during, and after a trip (Kang & Schuett, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). For instance, Paris is the second most expensive city to travel to in the world, but it is the second most visited city in the world and the most visited city in Europe (Travelness, 2022). This unusual phenomenon can be explained by the Veblen effect, which refers to the abnormal consumer behavior of conspicuous consumption, where people purchase more expensive goods even when similar low-priced goods are available (Leibenstein, 1950). The Veblen effect was named after Thorstein Veblen, who coined the term conspicuous consumption. As a result, the desire of sharing the evidence of immaterial but unique experiences with others can be observed in conspicuous destinations as well. Even though Bangkok is the second most visited international city in the world (Euromonitor, 2019), the perceived level of conspicuousness was relatively low. Therefore, the number of visits may not correlate with the level of conspicuousness or uniqueness. Rather, how an international destination is perceived by people seems more important in terms of conspicuousness. Because materialistic hedonism and ostentation are the two main dimensions of conspicuous consumption when choosing a conspicuous destination, destination organizations in conspicuous destinations may have the ability to increase the prices as long as their perceived conspicuousness surpasses that of other competing destinations. This is because there will be tourists who choose to visit certain destinations because of their high prices and prestige, which corresponds to ostentation in my study. If Bangkok, which is a less conspicuous international destination on the list, were to increase the prices of tourism products, then the number of visits may drastically decline, whereas the number of tourists would not significantly fluctuate if Paris were to increase the prices of tourism products. Tourists may want to defray a ludicrous amount of money on the rare opportunities that others cannot enjoy (e.g., opening a special place at a landmark that only a

certain group of tourists can enter by paying a premium price or taking videos of the tourists who visit conspicuous destinations so that they can share their unique experiences on social media).

Even though participants in this study did not show a high degree of intention to visit *inconspicuous* destinations after the pandemic, destination marketers in inconspicuous destinations should focus on providing their customers with differentiated services compared to those in conspicuous destinations. Destination organizations could classify tourists based on their motivational factors for visiting inconspicuous destinations, which may be useful for identifying the demographic or psychological patterns that tourists display. I suggest that all international destinations determine their perceived conspicuousness by conducting, for example, online surveys with a host of international tourists given that the way people perceive a destination could be different depending on their sociodemographic characteristics. This way, destination organizations can better target their market segments by offering exclusive or relaxing experiences depending on the perceived level of conspicuousness. Notably, the spectrum of activities tourists can enjoy should be based on the level of conspicuousness at a destination. It does not necessarily mean that inconspicuous destinations should not create activities that allow tourists to engage in conspicuous consumption, but the level of anticipated conspicuousness is different for people who visit Paris or Denpasar. This is because not many tourists would expect to have a grandiose plan for leisure activities at an inconspicuous destination. Therefore, devising the most efficacious marketing strategies that could potentially attract more tourists is the key to recovering from the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry.

Based on the findings that East Asians are more likely to intend to visit *inconspicuous*

destinations than Westerners, destination organizations that attract a multitude of East Asians can take an approach as follows: destination organizations in inconspicuous destinations can conduct a survey to investigate the primary reasons East Asians choose to visit their destinations. Then, based on the findings, they could come up with marketing strategies that prioritize and focus on those characteristics (e.g., family time in a peaceful environment or enjoying natural scenery).

Destination organizations in conspicuous destinations that attract a great number of East Asians should realize why they visit their conspicuous destinations is different from Westerners. Because East Asians are concerned with interpersonal mediation and status demonstration, providing them with various opportunities that can satisfy their need to display social status, wealth, and success (status demonstration) or their desire to feel a sense of belonging in their social groups by gaining popularity and respect (interpersonal mediation) could be an effective marketing strategy. East Asians are more likely to be materialistic than Westerners because East Asians perceive material possessions or wealth as the public meaning of the self (Liao & Wang, 2009), indicating that how East Asians consume products and services depends on the perceptions of others. As East Asians are prone to regard their ability to consume as a form of personal social status (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998), visiting conspicuous destinations could gratify the need for displaying one's social status and prestige.

People with independent self-construal (Westerners) are likely to view themselves as separate entities from others and emphasize autonomous decisions to garner independent success and prestige (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Westerners perceive material possessions or wealth as the private meaning of the self (Liao & Wang, 2009), which indicates that how they consume products and services does not depend on the perception of others. Therefore, destination organizations in conspicuous destinations could focus on providing Westerners with

opportunities that allow tourists to make autonomous decisions and enjoy leisure activities that bring about individual achievement and meaning throughout their trip to conspicuous destinations. This is because Westerners believe that individual achievement and success are associated with happiness in individualistic settings (Kitayama et al., 2009).

Lastly, I propose that destination organizations and marketers should understand that OSI, benign envy, and hubristic pride play a significant role in galvanizing people into engaging in conspicuous consumption and intending to visit conspicuous destinations. There are a growing number of leisure travelers who harness the information on social media to plan their travel (Torres, 2010). Thus, the tourism industry is increasingly taking advantage of this online power to promote its products and services, strengthen customer relationship management (CRM), and reshape customer experiences. Particularly, luxury tourism has grown significantly over the past few decades (Allied Market Search, 2019; Thirumaran et al., 2021), and understanding the relationship between social media usage and luxury-seeking behavior should be further investigated. In my study, benign envy and hubristic pride, which are the emotional outcomes of social comparison, were the strongest predictors of conspicuous consumption. As a result, in the post-COVID-19 era, creating envy-and-pride-eliciting marketing strategies for tourist destinations should be highlighted for young adults who are frequently influenced by social media.

6.1 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the above contributions of this study, there are several noteworthy limitations related to the study.

First, the sample for the first survey had some biases. In Survey One, although all the

participants met the recruitment criteria I proposed, the majority of them were Asian (74.07%) as I adopted convenience sampling. In addition, the participants recruited in Survey Two were people who resided in Canada. Because there were purposefully set limitations related to age and ethnicity, the findings in my study should be interpreted considering these contexts, and therefore the generalizability of my findings to other national, ethnic, and age groups should be carefully examined as well. This is because categorizing destinations as conspicuous or inconspicuous destinations may be influenced by one's sociodemographic characteristics. In consumer behavior research, several studies have found that the demographic characteristics of consumers impact the way people engage in conspicuous consumption (Chen et al., 2005; Quelch, 1999; Wong & Zhou, 2005). Future research can classify the tourists' demographic information and determine whether their demographic characteristics have an influence on the perception of a conspicuous destination. This is because residents from different countries in Europe would possibly perceive Paris, Dubai, and Rome as less conspicuous based on their prior knowledge of the destinations and the destinations' proximity.

Second, there were no scales to measure the conspicuousness of international destinations and the dimensions of conspicuous consumption in the tourism context. Phillips and Back (2011) used a dichotomous scale to identify conspicuous and inconspicuous destinations; however, they acknowledged that destination conspicuousness can exist as a continuum as there were neutral destinations. Even though I adopted a 5-point Likert scale to better assess the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations in my study, it is somewhat illogical to contend that the 20 international destinations can be explicitly categorized as conspicuous or inconspicuous destinations. It may be logically acceptable to argue that certain international destinations are perceived as more conspicuous or inconspicuous compared to other

destinations. The approval ratio (i.e., 70-to-30) used to identify the conspicuous and inconspicuous destinations in Phillips and Back's (2011) study was arbitrarily designed without having solid statistical grounds. Therefore, there is a need to create a method or boundary that can statistically differentiate between conspicuous and inconspicuous destinations in future research. In addition, I revised the 17 measurement items of conspicuous consumption from Marcoux et al. (1997). Even though the items were modified to fit the tourism context based on Phillips and Back's (2011) study, the measurement items originally borrowed from consumer behavior research may not reflect all the factors that tourists consider when choosing a conspicuous destination. Tourism products are generally embedded with the characteristics of intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability (George, 2021), whereupon these unique characteristics should be taken into account when developing a measurement scale that specifically assesses the dimensions of conspicuous consumption in the tourism context.

Third, the intention to visit conspicuous destinations does not necessarily guarantee that tourists will visit conspicuous destinations after the pandemic. Destination organizations could use the information in this study, but the participants' intentions could be somewhat different in real life considering the travel expenses and accessibility of the conspicuous destinations. My survey questions did not mention any economic and geographical barriers. Future research could conduct a follow-up study with the measurement of actual tourism behavior in the post-COVID-19 era.

Fourth, the list of destinations presented to the participants could vary. The list of destinations used in this study (Euromonitor, 2019) comprised the most visited cities in the world, which indicated that most of the destinations, if not all, may have been on the conspicuous side of the continuum. Therefore, future research could use a more balanced list of

destinations that are famous and not well-known.

Fifth, this study examined the motivational factors that drive tourists to visit conspicuous destinations, whereupon future research could investigate the motivational factors (e.g., quiet and peaceful time with family) that galvanize tourists into visiting inconspicuous destinations and duly create marketing strategies. Understanding the psychological mechanisms that drive tourists to inconspicuous destinations will create new theoretical implications and allow destinations organizations in inconspicuous destinations to devise apt marketing strategies in the post-COVID-19 era. Moreover, (in)conspicuous consumption is still relatively underexplored in the tourism context, and it requires a deeper examination through more formalized and sophisticated research.

Last but not least, investigating the relationship between the bandwagon effect (i.e., the desire to purchase a product or service because everybody else seems to be doing it; Leibenstein, 1950) and conspicuous consumption could generate fascinating insights as these two concepts share common characteristics to an extent. In this research, communication of belonging (i.e., a sense of involvement in a community), which is one of the five dimensions of conspicuous consumption, did not have a statistical correlation with ITVCD for both East Asians and Westerners. It remains unclear why this correlation was not found between the two variables because communication of belonging is closely related to the desire of belonging to their social groups. The survey items used to measure the bandwagon effect may better represent the intention to visit conspicuous destinations to feel a sense of belonging with one's social communities. Therefore, it would be interesting to test whether tourists are influenced by the bandwagon effect when choosing a tourist destination.

From the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry

was devastating. However, as expected, international tourism has continued its recovery, and the number of international tourist arrivals in January 2022 increased by 18 million (130%) compared to those in January 2021 (UNWTO, 2022). Even though some researchers speculated on the possibility of tourism not rebounding as before due to the magnitude and severity of COVID-19 (UNWTO, 2021), international tourism appears to have successfully recovered. For instance, international destinations welcomed almost three times as many international tourists in the first quarter of 2022 (i.e., 117 million international arrivals) as in the same period of 2021 (i.e., 41 million international arrivals) (UNWTO, 2021). This supports my expectation that there may be a strong desire for revenge tourism among prospective tourists after going through an exhausting and protracted period of lockdowns and travel restrictions. In addition, no crisis was historically significant enough to make a long-term transition in the tourism industry because tourism had always managed to rebound from previous crises successfully (Gössling et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2020; Stefan et al., 2020). Again, the tourism industry appears to be in the process of recovering from the devastating economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that international tourism is on the verge of prosperity again, it is imperative for destination organizations to prepare for the post-COVID-19 era. Hence, having a clear grasp of the tourists' motivations for choosing a conspicuous destination is of paramount importance. The present study addresses this broad issue from the perspectives of conspicuous consumption, social media, and other relevant factors. As the concept of conspicuous consumption, which could enhance one's self-image and social status, is significant for tourists, my findings are useful for destination marketing segmentation and for positioning tourist products and services.

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Appendix A – Survey One

┌

Title of the study: What Will Motivate You To Travel After COVID-19?: The Effects of Online Social Identity, Social Comparison, Conspicuous Consumption, and Self-construal on Choosing a Tourist Destination

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Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in this research study because you self-identify as a student or employee who is 40 years old or younger at the University of Alberta. You will not be able to participate in this study if you cannot read survey questions on a screen, do not have a device that allows you to access the Internet, or does not have access to some form of Internet connection. We obtained your contact information as you voluntarily contacted us and indicated your willingness to participate in this study.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to investigate how social identity, social comparison, conspicuous consumption, and self-construal have an impact on the decision-making process of choosing a tourist destination. This survey will be used to identify the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations. You will be able to see pictures of the most popular 20 international tourist destinations, and you will be asked to evaluate the conspicuousness of each destination. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

* A conspicuous destination is a place to travel that can signal one's social status and prestige, thus generating aspirations and envy from others.

Participation: If you wish to participate in this study, first please carefully read this information letter. If you understand and agree with it, please click "next" to move on to our online survey. We will consider your submission of the survey as an indication of giving us consent. You will receive a \$5 electronic gift card (Amazon.ca) about two weeks after the submission of your survey. We will send the gift card to your University of Alberta email address.

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Benefits: The findings from this study will help us better understand the psychosocial mechanism that ultimately leads to conspicuous consumption behavior and comprehend the decision-making process and motivations of choosing a conspicuous destination.

Risks: It is very unlikely that you feel uncomfortable in relation to the questions in this survey. However, please remember that you could skip any questions.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information that you will share will be used solely for the purposes of this research. All findings will be presented at the group level (e.g., average, percentage), so you will not be identified. The only people who will have access to the research data are Mr. Seung Jin Cho and Dr. Shintaro Kono. To minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your screen or device when you are no longer using them/when you have completed the study. Once you accept the electronic gift card, we will remove your email address from our data. All the information collected from our survey will be anonymized only with arbitrary participant IDs.

Data Storage: Survey data files will be encrypted and stored in the work computers of Seung Jin Cho and Dr. Shintaro Kono. These computers are password-locked and stored in key-locked safe places (e.g., office, home) for a minimum period of 5 years.

Voluntary Participation: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. Should you choose to withdraw midway through the survey, simply stop answering the survey and leave the page without clicking “submit.” If you would like to withdraw from the study after completing the survey, please communicate with Seung Jin Cho or Dr. Shintaro Kono via email within 7 days after submitting the survey.

Information about the Study Results: If you wish to obtain a summary of the results, please email or call Seung Jin Cho or Dr. Shintaro Kono.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or require more information about the study itself, you may contact any researchers through the emails mentioned herein.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or how the research is being conducted, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

If you understand the above research ethic issues and agree to participate in this study, please click “next” to move on to our survey. By submitting the survey, you indicate that you agree to participate in this study.

We recommend that you print this screen and keep it for your records.

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Thank you for participating in this study to identify the conspicuousness of international tourist destinations. All the information you provide in this survey will be kept confidential. The survey data will be reported in an anonymous manner.

This survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. We encourage you to take the survey on your computer or tablet computer.

* If you are not qualified to participate in the survey for the screening question, the survey will move to the last page.

Part A

Instruction: Please answer the following question by providing a number.

Demographic Information

1. (SCREENING) Age: What is your age? (You must be 40 years old or younger)

Answer: _____

Instruction: Please answer the following questions by choosing the option that best describes you.

2. Please specify your ethnicity:

- A. Hispanics of any race
- B. American Indian or Alaska Native
- C. Asian
- D. Black or African American
- E. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- F. White
- G. Two or more races
- H. Race and Ethnicity Unknown
- I. Other (please specify) _____
- J. Prefer not to answer

3. What is your gender?

- A. Male
- B. Female
- C. Transgender
- D. Other (Please specify) _____
- E. Prefer not to answer

4. What is your marital status?

- A. Single
- B. In a relationship
- C. Married/Common Law
- D. Divorced/Separated/Widowed
- E. Other (Please specify) _____
- F. Prefer not to answer

5. What is your total annual income before taxes? (Individual income)

- A. Less than \$20,000
- B. \$20,000 - \$30,000
- C. \$30,001 - \$40,000
- D. \$40,001 - \$50,000
- E. \$50,001 - \$60,000
- F. \$60,001 - \$70,000
- G. \$70,001 - \$80,000
- H. \$80,001 - \$90,000
- I. \$90,001 +
- J. Prefer not to answer

6. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

- A. No schooling completed
- B. Nursery school to 8th grade
- C. Some high school, no diploma
- D. High school graduate, diploma, or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- E. Some college credit, no degree
- F. Technical or associate degree
- G. Bachelor's degree
- H. Master's or professional degree
- I. Doctorate degree
- J. Prefer not to answer

Part B

* A conspicuous destination is a place that can signal one's social status and prestige, thus generating aspirations and envy from others.

Instruction: Based on your past experiences or knowledge, please choose the extent to which you perceive this destination to be conspicuous or inconspicuous.

1.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



2.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

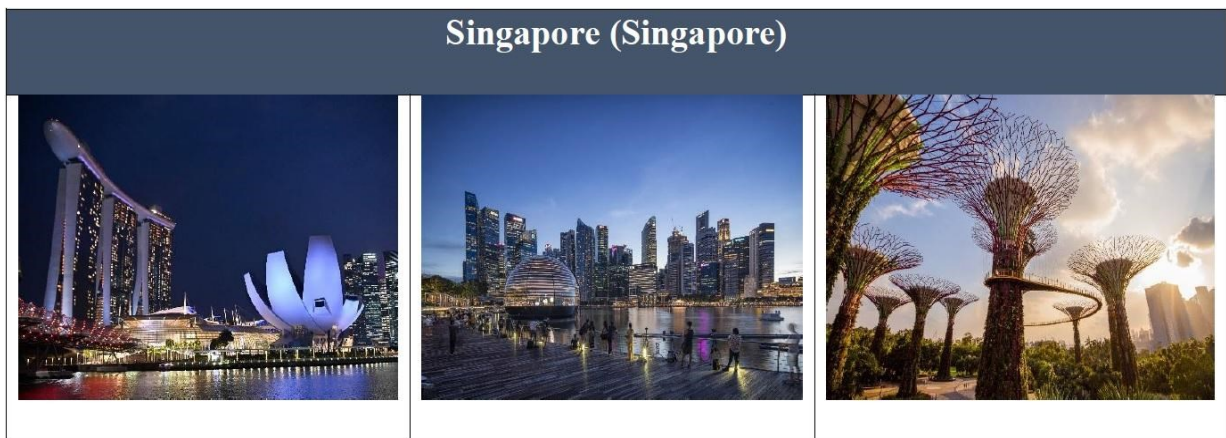


3.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

4.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

5.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

6.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

7.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



8.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



9.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



10.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



11.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



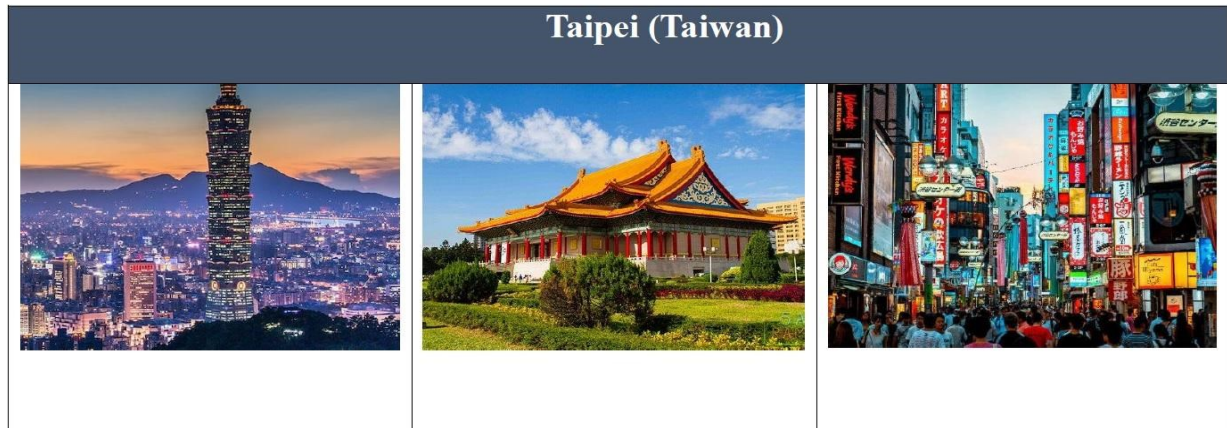
12.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



13.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

14.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

15.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



16.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



17.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

18.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

19.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

20.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

21. Which of the following destinations have you visited? (Choose all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amsterdam | <input type="checkbox"/> London |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bangkok | <input type="checkbox"/> New York City |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barcelona | <input type="checkbox"/> Paris |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Delhi | <input type="checkbox"/> Prague |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Denpasar | <input type="checkbox"/> Rome |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dubai | <input type="checkbox"/> Seoul |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ho Chi Minh | <input type="checkbox"/> Singapore |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hong Kong | <input type="checkbox"/> Taipei |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Istanbul | <input type="checkbox"/> Tokyo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kuala Lumpur | <input type="checkbox"/> Vienna |

* This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation. By clicking “submit,” you agree to give us consent to use your information. 』

Appendix B – Survey Two

┌

Title of the study: What Will Motivate You To Travel After COVID-19?: The Effects of Online Social Identity, Social Comparison, Conspicuous Consumption, and Self-construal on Choosing a Tourist Destination

Principal Investigators:

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Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in this research study because you self-identify as an East Asian or Western. You must be 40 years old or younger and currently reside in Canada. You will not be able to participate in this study if you cannot read survey questions on a screen, do not have a device that allows you to access the Internet, or does not have access to some form of Internet connection. As you are part of the Qualtrics' online panel, we would like you to answer our survey questions.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to investigate if online social identity induces social comparisons among social media users and thus influences the decision-making process of choosing a tourist destination from the perspective of conspicuous consumption. This research also examines the possibility of tourists from different ethnic groups (i.e., East Asian and Western backgrounds) being more subject to social comparisons and conspicuous consumption. This survey will be used to identify the intention to visit a conspicuous tourist destination and how online social identity, social comparison, conspicuous consumption, and self-construal have an influence on the decision-making process and motivations of choosing a conspicuous destination. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.

* A conspicuous destination is a place to travel that can signal one's social status and prestige, thus generating aspirations and envy from others.

Participation: If you wish to participate in this study, first please carefully read this information letter. If you understand and agree with it, please click "next" to move on to our online survey. We will consider your submission of the survey as an indication of giving us consent.

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Benefits: The findings from this study will help us better understand the psychosocial mechanism that ultimately leads to conspicuous consumption behavior and comprehend the decision-making process and motivations of choosing a conspicuous destination.

Risks: It is very unlikely that you feel uncomfortable in relation to the questions in this survey. However, please remember that you could skip any questions.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information that you will share will be used solely for the purposes of this research. All findings will be presented at the group level (e.g., average, percentage), so you will not be identified. The only people who will have access to the research data are Mr. Seung Jin Cho and Dr. Shintaro Kono. To minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your screen or device when you are no longer using them/when you have completed the study. The data will be stored in the Qualtrics server. Qualtrics has a Canadian server, which protects possible (albeit highly unlikely) data interception attempts from other countries (e.g., USA). As a major online survey company, Qualtrics has a professional standard of data security policies and protocols (<https://www.qualtrics.com/security-statement/>).

Data Storage: Survey data files will be encrypted and stored in the work computers of Seung Jin Cho and Dr. Shintaro Kono. These computers are password-locked and stored in key-locked safe places (e.g., office, home) for a minimum period of 5 years.

Voluntary Participation: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. Should you choose to withdraw midway through the survey, simply stop answering the survey and leave the page without clicking "submit." It is important to note that as the data will be completely anonymized, there is no option for data withdrawal after completing your survey.

Information about the Study Results: If you wish to obtain a summary of the results, please email or call Seung Jin Cho or Dr. Shintaro Kono.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or require more information about the study itself, you may contact any researchers through the emails mentioned herein.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or how the research is being conducted, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

If you understand the above research ethic issues and agree to participate in this study, please click "next" to move on to our survey. By submitting the survey, you indicate that you agree to participate in this study.

We recommend that you print this screen and keep it for your records.

Pro00114765

Thank you for participating in this study to identify the key factors in the relationships among online social identity, social comparisons, self-construal, and conspicuous consumption. All the answers you provide in this survey will be kept confidential. The survey data will be reported in an anonymous manner.

This survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. We encourage you to take the survey on your computer or tablet computer.

* If you are not qualified to participate in the survey for the screening question, the survey will move to the last page.

Part A

Instruction: Please answer the following question by providing a number.

Demographic Information

1. What is your age?

Answer: _____

2. Please specify your ethnicity:

A. East Asian (limited to China, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia)

B. Western (e.g., Ukraine, Portugal, Greece, Finland, Germany, Romania, Germany, Switzerland, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, England, and other qualified countries)

C. Other

3. How many hours do you spend on social media on a typical day?

Answer: _____

4. What kind of social media platform do you frequently use? (Choose all that apply)

A. Facebook

B. YouTube

C. Instagram

D. TikTok

E. Reddit

F. Snapchat

G. Pinterest

H. Twitter

I. Whatsapp

J. Other _____

5. What is your gender?

A. Male

B. Female

C. Transgender

D. Other (please specify) _____

E. Prefer not to answer

6. What is your marital status?

A. Single

B. In a relationship

- C. Married/Common Law
- D. Divorced/Separated/Widowed
- E. Other (please specify) _____
- F. Prefer not to answer

7. What is your total annual income before taxes? (Individual income)

- A. Less than \$20,000
- B. \$20,000 - \$30,000
- C. \$30,001 - \$40,000
- D. \$40,001 - \$50,000
- E. \$50,001 - \$60,000
- F. \$60,001 - \$70,000
- G. \$70,001 - \$80,000
- H. \$80,001 - \$90,000
- I. \$90,001 +
- J. Prefer not to answer

8. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

- A. No schooling completed
- B. Nursery school to 8th grade
- C. Some high school, no diploma
- D. High school graduate, diploma, or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- E. Some college credit, no degree
- F. Technical or associate degree
- G. Bachelor's degree
- H. Master's or professional degree
- I. Doctorate degree
- J. Prefer not to answer

Part B

Instruction: Imagine that the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over, and you can safely travel anywhere in the world. How do you want to visit the following cities?

1.



Question: I want to visit this destination after the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

2.



Question: I want to visit this destination after the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

3.



Question: I want to visit this destination after the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

Part C

Instruction: Please answer the following questions by choosing the option that best describes you.

In this section, you are asked to answer why you would like to visit the destinations you have previously seen (i.e., Paris, Dubai, and Rome).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I would like to travel to these destinations to be fashionable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to travel to these destinations for uniqueness, to have travel experience others do not have.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to travel to these destinations to enhance my image on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I could afford it, I would like to travel to these destinations more often.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to travel to these destinations because my friends and colleagues have been to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to travel to these destinations because my acquaintances have been to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to travel to these destinations to be noted.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I want to travel to these destinations because everyone has been to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traveling to these destinations would increase my value from the point of view of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traveling to these destinations would make me more popular among my friends and colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traveling to these destinations would make me feel more important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traveling to these destinations can induce respect from others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traveling to these destinations would be a social status symbol for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traveling to these destinations can symbolize success and prestige.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traveling to these destinations represents wealth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I can afford to visit any places in the world, I would visit the most expensive and luxurious place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I want to visit these destinations because they are more expensive than others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like visiting these luxurious destinations in the near future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Instruction: Please answer the following questions by choosing the option that best describes you.
 In this section, you are asked to answer the questions about your engagement in social media.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I feel close to my online social groups on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me to think of myself as a member of my online social group on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a part of my online social group on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Instruction: Please answer the following questions by choosing the option that best describes you.
 In this section, you are asked to answer the questions about your emotions induced by social media.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Envyng others on social media motivates me to accomplish my goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I envy others on social media, I focus on how I can become equally successful in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I notice that another person is better than me on social media, I try to improve myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If someone has superior achievements on social media, I try to attain them for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If someone has superior possessions on social media, I try to attain them for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I tend to feel like I am an extraordinary person on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to feel I am special on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to feel like I am a great person on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I tend to feel like I am more capable than other people on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
--	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Instruction: Please answer the following questions by choosing the option that best describes you.

In this section, you are asked to answer the questions about your overall social comparison orientation (i.e., the inclination to compare yourself with others).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) with other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how others are doing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Instruction: Please answer the following questions by choosing the option that best describes you.

In this section, you are asked to answer the questions about how you view yourself in relation to other people.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer to be direct and straightforward when dealing with people I have just met.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaking up during a class is not a problem for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Having a personal identity different from others is very important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.

It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

Select strongly disagree for this statement.

It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.

Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.

Part D

Instruction: Imagine that the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over, and you can safely travel anywhere in the world. How do you want to visit the following cities?

1.



Question: I want to visit this destination after the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

2.



Question: I want to visit this destination after the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

3.



Question: I want to visit this destination after the COVID-19 pandemic is completely over.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

Part E

Instruction: Based on your past experiences or knowledge, please choose the extent to which you perceive this destination to be conspicuous or inconspicuous.

* A conspicuous destination is a place that can signal one's social status and prestige, thus generating aspirations and envy from others.

1.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



2.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



3.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

4.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous

5.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



6.



very inconspicuous / inconspicuous / neutral / conspicuous / very conspicuous



7. Which of the following destinations have you visited? (Choose all that apply)

Delhi

London

Denpasar

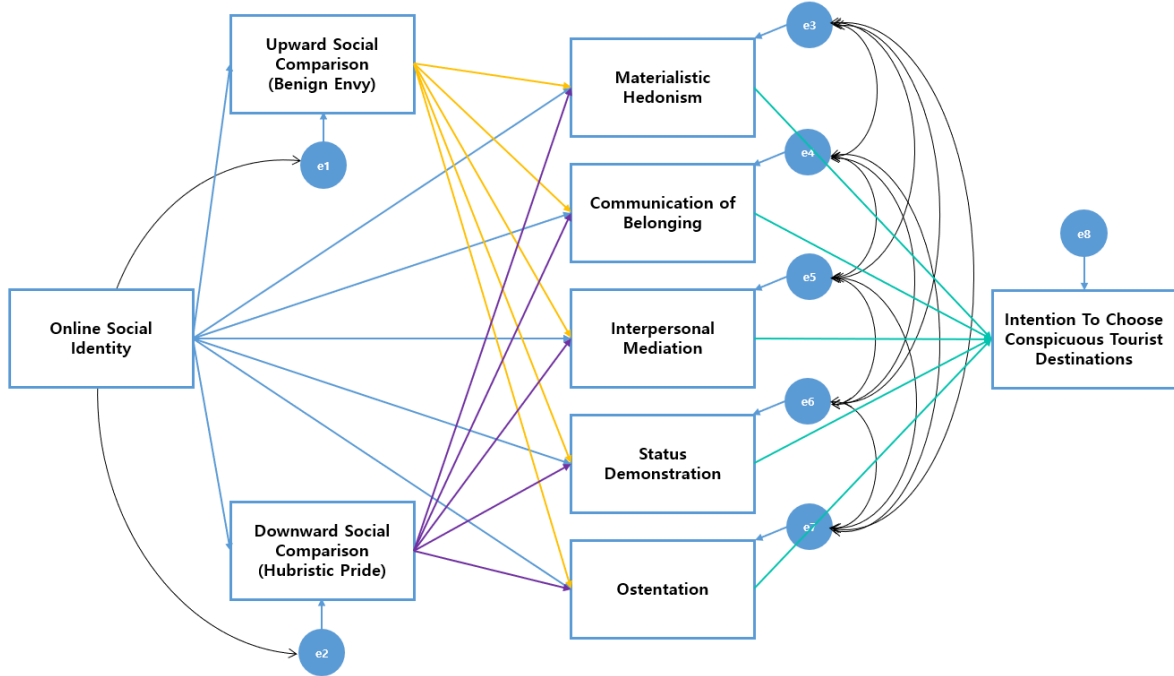
Paris

Dubai

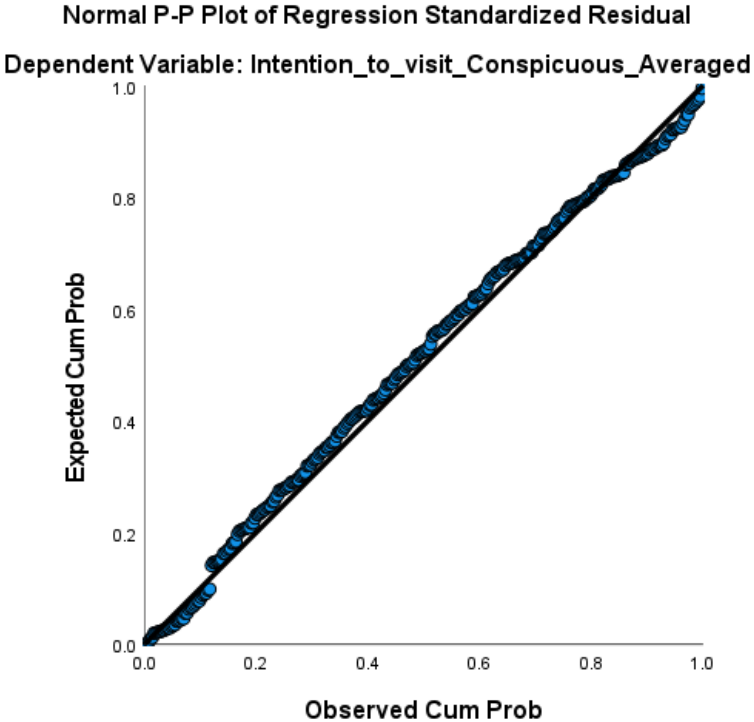
Rome

*This is the end of the survey. We thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded. 』

Appendix C – The Revised Path Diagram for Survey Two Analysis



Appendix D – Testing Multivariate Normality



Appendix E – Examining Homoscedasticity and Linearity

