Self-esteem and Materialistic Value Orientation as Predictors of Compulsive Buying in
British and Polish samples

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Abstract

This project investigates the relationship between self-esteem and materialistic value orientation (MVO) as possible predictors of compulsive buying behaviour in British and Polish samples. The role of MVO as a likely mediator between self-esteem and compulsive buying is examined. This project also investigates whether Polish and British participants differ on success, centrality, or happiness dimensions of materialism. One hundred and seventy-six participants took part in this study, answering on-line questionnaires measuring materialism, self-esteem and compulsive buying behaviour. The results were analysed using, amongst others, multiple linear regression and a t-test. It was found that MVO scores predicted compulsive buying levels in both samples, and self-esteem only in the British. Moreover, Polish participants had higher materialism scores on the centrality aspect than the British. It had been suggested that these differences might be due to the influence of the culture, media, and economic environment.
Acknowledgements

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# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgments ......................................................................................................... ii

**Introduction** ............................................................................................................. 1

**Method** .................................................................................................................... 6
  - Participants .............................................................................................................. 6
  - Ethics ....................................................................................................................... 6
  - Materials .................................................................................................................. 6
  - Design ...................................................................................................................... 8
  - Procedure ............................................................................................................... 8

**Results** ..................................................................................................................... 9

**Discussion** ............................................................................................................... 16

**References** ............................................................................................................. 20

**Appendices** .............................................................................................................. 25
  - Appendix I: Statistical Analyses
  - Appendix II: Stimulus Materials
  - Appendix III: Letter from DERP
  - Appendix IV: Information given to Participants
  - Appendix V: Supervision Learning Contract
  - Appendix VI: PDP
Self-esteem and Materialistic Value Orientation as Predictors of Compulsive Buying in British and Polish samples

Compulsive buying is a form of acquisitive desire, which involves an uncontrollable urge to purchase and is in some way destructive to the individual (Faber & O’Guinn, 1992). It is an experience that routinely leads a person to a powerful and involuntary urge to buy (Edwards, 1993). Although, compulsive buying had been present for almost a century, only more recently it began to receive an increasing amount of attention from both media and researchers (Holmstrom, 1985). Engaging in this kind of shopping behaviour seems to be currently on the increase in developed countries, such as the USA, the UK and Germany (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004), however greater awareness of the compulsive buying problem might have also contributed to an increase in the number diagnoses (Kasser & Kanner, 2005).

In the world, where consumers are constantly bombarded with advertising messages, easily available credit cards, and media creating perfect images of unachievable fame, wealth and beauty, pursuing after material possessions became prevalent (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Maturing consumer societies, e.g. Germany, create an environment in which compulsive and compensatory buying is promoted (Neuner, Raab & Raisch, 2005). Many people consume, desire and buy products and services to become exemplary members of consumer culture (Eren, Eroglu & Hacioglu, 2012), which is often keenly supported by governments to boost the economy (Featherstone, 2007). However, if buying goods becomes uncontrollable and impulsive it may severely affect individuals’ social and occupational functioning (Faber & O’Guinn, 1992).

Compulsive buyers face many difficulties, e.g. problems in interpersonal relationships, potential involvement in embezzlement, or commonly getting into debt when making purchases with easily accessible credit cards (Roberts & Jones, 2001). As the number
of people suffering from shopping addiction around the world is rising, investigating compulsive buying behaviour in a cross-cultural setting is a current concern of not only psychology, but also other scientific disciplines, such as sociology or economics (Eren, Eroglu & Hacioglu, 2012). However, research on the different types of acquisitive desire and its management is currently very limited (Kottler, Shepard & Montgomery, 2004).

The research suggests that people with high materialistic value orientation (MVO) are more prone to become addicted to shopping (Richins & Dwason, 1992). Yurchisin and Johnson (2004) argue that the value which people attach to material goods is one of the possible predictors of shopping addiction. According to Belk (1984, p.291) materialism is “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions.” Materialistic people tend to value material possessions and their acquisition more than other aims in their life, such as personal relationships (Richins & Dawson, 1992). In addition, most of the compulsive buyers are people who have high MVOs (Mowen & Spears, 1999) and usually low self-esteem, which is an individual’s evaluation of self-worthiness (Elliott, 1994). The causes underlying compulsive buying behaviour have not been fully explained yet, but higher materialism levels (Dittmar, 2000) and lower self-esteem (O’Guinn & Faber, 1989) are some of the factors commonly mentioned in the literature. However, further evidence is required to confirm these findings on compulsive buying behaviour (Jansson-Boyd, 2010).

There is a considerable amount of empirical evidence supporting the relationship between low self-esteem, and compulsive buying (e.g. Roberts, 1998), but to date there is no research investigating the role of materialistic value orientation as a possible mediator between low self-esteem and vulnerability to shopping addiction. As Richins and Dawson (1992) suggest, the partial explanation of the link between materialistic value orientations and shopping addiction could lead through the notion of self-esteem, where individuals may perceive owning certain material possessions as potentially making them feel more confident.
In Dittmar, Beattie and Friese’s (1996) study, participants with high compulsive buying scores were more likely to buy impulsively, and amongst others, the reason for buying was to improve their mood, which could be associated with the desire to boost their self-esteem through that kind of shopping behaviour. Some individuals may develop a coherent picture of their self-esteem not based on their self-worthiness, but on other factors, such as owning material possessions (Kasser & Kanner, 2005). For them, the appearance of affluence and wealth is crucial to their image of self-worthiness Kottler, Shepard & Montgomery, 2004).

Furthermore, highly materialistic people consider material possessions as the best way to express their sense of self to others (Dittmar et al., 1996). The sense of self consists of a number of self-definitions, which are people’s characterisations of themselves, based on some personal attributes, e.g. individual’s qualities or skills, such as being a creative person (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1992). To achieve the completion for a particular self-definition that people strive to, there is a requirement to engage in behaviours related to the symbols of this self-definition, e.g. buying and displaying things associated with creativity, to the extent of convincing others and ourselves that we possess those characterisations. Individuals, who have not reached that completion, continue to participate in behaviours related to the specific characterisation until other people acknowledge it, or when another concern arises. According to Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1992), most people stop their self-symbolising efforts at some point, however there are individuals who continue their efforts determinedly. Those individuals try to define themselves in terms of what they own, rather than their genuine personal qualities, and require others to acknowledge that state (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). If these people do not realise that they have reached an appropriate level of material possessions to express their self to others, they may engage in compulsive buying behaviour (Dittmar, Beattie & Friese, 1995).
Moreover, research suggests that highly materialistic people or those who engage in compulsive buying activities are generally not happy (Manolis & Roberts, 2012). Even excessive thinking about materialistic matters can lead to subjective feelings of unhappiness (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002). There is some evidence in the literature supporting the link between general well-being and materialistic value orientation (Jansson-Boyd, 2011). Those with higher materialistic values tend to be less satisfied with themselves (Richins & Dawson, 1992) and try to compensate for their feelings of insecurity and fulfil the missing things in their lives through consumption (Rindfleisch, Burroughs & Wong, 2009). Richins and Dawson (1992) argue that people with high materialistic value orientation are more prone to become addicted to shopping.

In addition, a novel focus of this study was to investigate whether there are some cross-cultural differences in levels of materialism reported by the British and Polish participants. The concept of material values exists across different cultures presenting different value profiles, and it had been suggested that the influence of the culture and economic environment might be the factors affecting the variability in levels of reported materialism (Griffin, Babin & Christensen, 2004). Great Britain and Poland seem to be at considerably different stages of transition to consumer societies. After the Second World War, Great Britain experienced a rapid growth of prosperity and in spite of recession, it currently maintains a crucial role in world’s economy as the USA do. In Poland, the significant economic changes happened more recently, in the late 1980s, when the centrally controlled economy was transformed into the capitalistic market economy (Eichengreen, 2008).

As Griffin, Babin and Christensen (2004) suggested, the lack of material goods experienced by the consumers might influence their responses on the materialistic values scale in a dichotomous way. On one hand, if consumers were deprived material goods and
therefore the average consumption levels were low, these levels would be maintained low, on the other hand it might result in material possessions being defined as central values in the consumers’ lives (Griffin, Babin & Christensen, 2004). In this study, the second possibility was considered as according to Cohen and Cohen (1996), being socio-economically disadvantaged during childhood increases the likelihood of becoming materialistic later in life. This subjective feeling of being disadvantaged might had been magnified by the parallel development of the private media sector in Poland in the late 1990s (Krol, 1999), which allowed Poles to compare themselves with others on a greater scale. It would be beneficial to investigate whether those claims might be applicable to the Polish sample.

This project aimed to explore the relationship between materialistic value orientation, low self-esteem and compulsive buying behaviour and the possible differences in the reported materialism levels in the British and Polish samples. High materialistic value orientation and low self-esteem were suggested to be possible vulnerability factors to compulsive buying behaviour. Additionally, this research investigated the relationship between materialistic value orientation as a possible mediator between low self-esteem and compulsive buying. The two independent variables were: materialism score and self-esteem score. The dependent variable was the measure of compulsive buying behaviour. There were three hypotheses to this experiment:

First, MVO and self-esteem will predict compulsive buying tendencies in both samples.
Second, the Polish sample will have higher materialism scores than the British sample.
And third, MVO is a likely mediator between self-esteem and compulsive buying behaviour.
Method

Participants

One hundred and seventy-six participants took part in this study. Half of the participants were British born undergraduate psychology students, who received participation credits for their time. Twenty-seven were male, with the age range 18-40 (mean age= 20.30 years). The other half were Polish born acquaintances of the researcher, mostly young professionals and students. Seven were male, with the age range 19-55 and (mean age=26.17 years). The opportunistic sampling method was used in this study.

Ethics

Ethics approval was granted by the Chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Panel under the terms of Anglia Ruskin University’s Policy and Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research with Human Participants. The study was considered low risk, informed consent was sought from all participants, and for anonymity purposes ID numbers were assigned to each person.

Materials

The questionnaire created for the purposes of this study contained 38 items from three previously used and standardised measurements scales, such as: the short version of the measure of materialism (Richins, 2004), the self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and the compulsive buying scale (Edwards, 1993). Participants’ materialism scores were calculated on a 5-point-Likert scale using the materialistic value measure (Richins, 2004). The scale contains eighteen items in total and is a short version of the original materialistic value orientation scale developed by Dawson and Richins (1992). This scale has been shown to be
a reliable measure of materialistic value orientation (Richins, 2004) and been repeatedly employed by numerous researchers (e.g. Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). The self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was used to assess the level of participants’ evaluation of self-worthiness. This scale has been frequently used in previous research (e.g. d’Astous, 1990) investigating compulsive buying tendencies, and has been shown to be a highly reliable measure of self-esteem amongst student participants (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). The compulsive buying scale developed by Edwards (1993) consists of thirteen items representing five elements of compulsive buying behaviour: the tendency to spend, guilt after purchase, the drive to spend, dysfunctional spending and feelings about shopping and spending. It has been shown that Edward’s scale is highly reliable measure of compulsive buying (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). For the Polish sample, materialism (Richins, 2004) and compulsive buying scales (Edwards, 1993) were translated to Polish (Appendix II), as there were no versions of these scales already available, and Laguna, Lachowicz-Tabaczek and Dzwonkowska’s (2007) Polish version of translated Rosenberg’s (1965) self-esteem scale were used. Laguna et al.’s (2007) translation has been shown to be a highly reliable and valid instrument. To optimise the translation process of the other two scales, guidelines and recommendations mentioned in previous research on cross-cultural translation were taken into account (Hambleton, Yu & Slater, 1999). The translation was initially conducted by the researcher, reflected upon, and then revised by two native Polish speakers, educated to a degree level, with a proficient level of English. The translation was kept as close to the original versions as possible, retaining the original grammatical voice of the sentences. There were no major issues raised in this process, and minor differences were discussed and adjusted efficiently. With regards to the format, on-line questionnaires were chosen over the traditional paper-based versions for a number of reasons. First, to provide more convenience for respondents and enable them to answer questions at any time, at their own pace, and to ensure privacy, while sharing their
personal information (Flemming & Bowden, 2009). Secondly, to allow the researcher to collect a large amount of data in a time and cost-efficient manner (Katsirikou & Skiadas, 2009). Finally, as suggested by O’Neill (2004) online questionnaires have an advantage over the paper-based versions in obtaining higher number of responses and reducing respondent errors.

**Design**

Scores on materialistic value scale and self-esteem scale were collected in both samples as predictors of compulsive buying, using a within-subject design. Materialism scores in British and Polish samples were then compared using a between-subjects design.

**Procedure**

The participants were recruited in two ways: British born, Anglia Ruskin students took part via the on-line study sign up Sona system, Polish born, were recruited through social network websites (facebook.com & nk.pl) and filled out the survey on eBadania.pl psychological survey website. The same instructions were given to all participants in a written form as instructed by the scale authors. Participants in both samples answered the questionnaires in the following order: first materialism scale, then self-esteem and compulsive buying last, by choosing one out of four or five Likert scale answers. Questions were put in a random order to counterbalance any order effects. Randomisation process, in the British sample, was conducted automatically by the Sona system, in the Polish sample, an online tool for random numbers generation was used at random.org website. The participants were provided with the study information, consent form and informed about their right to withdraw. Each participant was assigned a unique number to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, Polish participants were asked to create their own IDs in case of withdrawal.
requests. All participants were provided with researcher’s email address for contact if they had any questions regarding the study.

**Results**

There was a large number of analyses used, therefore only significant results will be reported in this section. Multiple linear regression analyses were used to analyse the data from British and Polish samples and determine whether materialistic value orientation and self-esteem are possible predictors of compulsive buying behaviour. In the British sample, using the enter method, a significant model emerged: $F(2,85)= 30.033, p< .0001$. The model explains 30.4% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .304$). In the Polish sample, using the enter method, a significant model emerged: $F(2,85)= 26.508, p< .0001$. The model explains 37.0% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .370$). Table 1 gives information for the predictor variables entered into the model. Self-esteem in Polish sample was not a significant predictor, but the other variables were all significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.536*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>-.186*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.574</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.640*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates a significant $p$ value

*Table 1.* The unstandardized and standardised regression coefficients for the variables entered into the model.

Another multiple linear regression was used to determine which of the three aspects of materialistic value orientation and self-esteem predict compulsive buying behaviour. In the British sample, using the enter method, a significant model emerged: $F(4,83)= 10.36, p< .0001$. This model explains 30.1% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .301$). In the Polish sample,
using the enter method, a significant model emerged: \( F(4,83) = 14.229, p < .0001 \). The model explains 37.8\% of the variance (Adjusted \( R^2 = .378 \)). MVO centrality aspect in British sample was not a significant predictor of compulsive buying, but all the other variables were. In Polish sample, only MVO centrality aspect was a significant predictor. Table 2 gives information for the predictor variables entered into the model. Moreover, figures 3 and 4 at the end of this section illustrate the overall relationship between all three variables and their different levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>MVO Success</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.370*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MVO Centrality</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MVO Happiness</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.244*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>-.206*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>MVO Success</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MVO Centrality</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.382*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MVO Happiness</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates a significant \( p \) value.

Table 2. The unstandardized and standardised regression coefficients for the variables entered into the model with three MVO aspects.

An independent samples t-test was used to analyse the overall materialism scores in both samples to determine whether Polish sample was more materialistic than British. There was no significant difference found, \( p < .0745 \). Another independent samples t-test was used to analyse the three aspects of materialism in both samples to determine whether Polish sample had higher scores on some aspects than British. Higher materialism scores were found for centrality aspect in Polish sample (mean= 2.3) than in the British sample (mean= 2.03). The mean difference between samples was .26 and the 95\% confidence interval for the estimated population mean difference is between .43 and .1. The effect size was medium (\( d = \))
An independent t-test results (presented in Figure 1) showed that the difference between two samples was significant ($t = 3.139$, $df = 174$, $p = .001$, one-tailed). The other two aspects of materialism were not significant.

![Mean scores of materialism centrality aspect in British and Polish sample. Error bars represent Standard Error.](image)

*Figure 1. Mean scores of materialism centrality aspect in British and Polish sample. Error bars represent Standard Error.*

Five linear regressions were used in each sample to determine which specific aspects of compulsive buying behaviour, i.e. the tendency to spend, feelings about shopping and spending, the compulsion/drive to spend, guilt after purchase and dysfunctional spending, are predicted by MVO and self-esteem. In the British sample, using the enter method, a significant model emerged for the tendency to spend aspect: $F(2,85) = 14.920$, $p < .0001$. This model explains 24.2% of the variance ($Adjusted R^2 = .242$). A significant model also emerged for the feelings about shopping and spending: $F(2,85) = 7.324$, $p < .001$. The model explains 12.7% of the variance ($Adjusted R^2 = .127$). Moreover, model for the drive to spend was significant: $F(2,85) = 11.073$, $p < .0001$. It does explain 18.8% of the variance ($Adjusted R^2 = .188$). Another significant model emerged for the guilt after purchase dimension: $F(2,85) = 8.307$, $p < .001$. This model explains 14.4% of the variance ($Adjusted R^2 = .144$). The final
model for the dysfunctional spending aspect was also significant: $F(2, 85) = 18.278, p < .0001$. The model explains 28.4% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .284$). Table 3 gives information for the predictor variables entered into each model. MVO was not a significant predictor only in the model using guilt after purchase dimension, but self-esteem was. Self-esteem was not a significant predictor in four other aspects of compulsive buying.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to spend</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.499*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>-.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about shopping and spending</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.383*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>-.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsion/Drive to spend</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>1.014</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.453*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt after purchase</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.398*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional spending</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>.530*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>-.145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates a significant $p$ value.

Table 3. The unstandardized and standardised regression coefficients for the variables entered into the five aspects of compulsive buying models.

In the Polish sample, using the enter method, a significant model emerged for the tendency to spend aspect: $F(2, 85) = 6.333, p < .003$. This model explains 10.9% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .109$). A significant model also emerged for the feelings about shopping and spending: $F(2, 85) = 22.511, p < .0001$. The model explains 33.1% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .331$). Moreover, model for the drive to spend was significant: $F(2, 85) = 12.123, p < .0001$. It does explain 20.4% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .204$). Further significant model emerged for the guilt after purchase dimension: $F(2, 85) = 3.299, p < .042$. This model explains 5% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .050$). No predictors were significant for this model, which might be due to multicolinearity, indicating that the two independent
variables correlate with each other. The last model for the dysfunctional spending aspect was also significant: $F (2,85) = 13.867, p < .0001$. The model explains 22.8% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .228$). Table 4 gives information for the predictor variables entered into each model. Similarly as in the British sample, in the Polish sample MVO was not a significant predictor only in the model using the guilt after purchase dimension, but in the other four models, it was. Self-esteem was a significant predictor only in the feelings about shopping and spending dimension, and it was not in four other aspects of compulsive buying. The general pattern of the relationships between all three variables and their different levels is presented in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to spend</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.384</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.373*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.057</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feelings about shopping and spending</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.615*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.193*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsion/Drive to spend</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.701</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.491*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt after purchase</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
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<td>.014</td>
<td>-.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional spending</td>
<td>MVO</td>
<td>.518</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.502*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates a significant $p$ value.

Table 4. The unstandardized and standardised regression coefficients for the variables entered into the five aspects of compulsive buying models.

Finally, a linear regression was used with self-esteem as a predictor of MVO and a correlation of all three variables to determine whether MVO is a likely mediator between self-esteem and compulsive buying. A significant regression model emerged only in the Polish sample for self-esteem and MVO: $F (1,86) = 7.922, p < .006$. The model explains 7.4% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .074$). In the British sample, there was a significant positive
correlation between MVO and compulsive buying ( \( r = .535, N = 88, p < .01, \) two-tailed). It is a moderate correlation: 28.6% of the variation is explained. In the Polish sample, there was a significant positive correlation between MVO and compulsive buying ( \( r = .613, N = 88, p < .01, \) two-tailed). It is a moderate correlation (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2009): 37.6% of the variation is explained. There was also a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and MVO ( \( r = -.290, N = 88, p < .01, \) two-tailed). It is a weak correlation: 8.4% of the variation is explained. From the above results, it can be inferred that MVO is a likely mediator between self-esteem and compulsive buying behaviour only for the Polish sample.

The path diagram in Figure 2 presents the relationship between all three variables.

Figure 2. Path diagram of the relationship and mediation between self-esteem, MVO and compulsive buying. Double-sided arrows represent correlations, single-sided arrows illustrate regressions.
Figure 3. Path diagram illustrating self-esteem and MVO with its three aspects as predictors of compulsive buying behaviour and its aspects in the British sample. Single-sided arrows illustrate regressions. The number on the arrow represents the amount of variance explained by the model.

Figure 4. Path diagram illustrating self-esteem and MVO with its three aspects as predictors of compulsive buying behaviour and its aspects in the Polish sample. Single-sided arrows illustrate regressions. The number on the arrow represents the amount of variance explained by the model.
Discussion

The first hypothesis, that MVO and self-esteem predict compulsive buying has been partially supported. The compulsive buying scores of both British and Polish participants were significantly predicted by MVO. However, self-esteem was found to be a predictor of compulsive buying only in the British sample. These findings, established using the convenience samples of British born undergraduate students and Polish young professionals, partially support those of other researchers, such as Yurchisin and Johnson (2004) and Dittmar et al. (1996), who also found comparable relationships between MVO, self-esteem and compulsive buying behaviour.

The second hypothesis, that the Polish sample will have higher materialism scores than the British sample has been supported for the centrality aspect of MVO, although, overall the MVO scores were not considerably different. As previous research suggested (Griffin, Babin & Christensen, 2004; Cohen & Cohen 1996) deprivation of material goods in childhood of Polish participants might have resulted in materialistic values becoming central in their life.

The third hypothesis, that MVO is a likely mediator between self-esteem and compulsive buying behaviour has been supported only in the Polish sample, and there was a relationship found between all three variables. This suggests that models investigating the vulnerability factors to compulsive buying should strongly consider high materialism levels as one of the main predictors. This finding contributes to the existing body of knowledge about compulsive buying behaviour, and should be explored further in the future, perhaps by examining which aspects of MVO mediate between self-esteem and specific aspects of compulsive buying. Future research could also focus on investigating compulsive buying tendencies in a sample with a greater proportion of male participants, as in this study the considerable majority of participants were female. Hence, the results cannot be generalised to
a larger population. Another limitation of this experiment was that it used mostly young participants, both students and professionals, and therefore the findings cannot be generalised to older populations.

In the Polish sample, self-esteem was not a considerable predictor of compulsive buying behaviour, which differs from other researchers’ findings (e.g. Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). This difference, however, might be due to some specific characteristics of the Polish sample that make it distinctive from the British and American samples used in previous studies. The mean age of British participants in this study was the same as in Yurchisin and Johnson’s (2004) study, which was 20 years. The mean age of the Polish sample, however, was just over 28 years, which was different from the previous research. Perhaps, that was a factor contributing to the dissimilarities in the self-esteem as a predictor of compulsive buying behaviour. Cohen & Cohen (1996) found that younger people tend to have lower self-esteem than adults, perhaps there is also a difference in the way that self-esteem predicts compulsive buying tendencies related to age, however that had not been examined in the current study.

Another explanation for this difference could be that Poles, might be more influenced by other variables potentially predicting compulsive buying tendencies, such as apparel-product involvement and perceived social status (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). Another possible factor which may directly or indirectly influence the vulnerability to become a compulsive buyer, is the personality type. People with narcissistic personality characteristics tend to be more materialistic, which in turn may lead to shopping addiction (Jansson-Boyd, 2011). Narcissistic tendencies can result from parental influences, which in turn are also factors associated with higher MVO levels. Perhaps, Polish participants had been raised in a different way than the British, and therefore are influenced more by other variables.
The considerable difference between centrality aspect of the MVO in the British and Polish sample, suggests that the Poles put a greater value on material possessions and consider them more central to their life, than the British. The Polish sample had significantly higher scores on the centrality aspect of materialism, but they were generally no more materialistic. This result might be due to the cultural and socio-economic climate differences resulting in material possessions being defined as central values in the Polish consumers’ lives (Griffin, Babin & Christensen, 2004). Research suggests that some social and cultural aspects can promote the growth of insecurity in consumers, making them more susceptible to become materialistic value orientated. According to Cohen and Cohen (1996) socio-economic disadvantage experienced in childhood increases the likelihood of becoming materialistic later in life. Most of the Polish participants in this study were children, when the significant economic changes happened in the late 1980s, and the centrally controlled economy was transformed into the capitalistic market economy, slowly increasing the levels of consumption (Eichengreen, 2008). Apart from the socio-economic aspect, also another potential factor might have contributed to the explanation of the differences between found in the British and Polish samples, which is the role of media.

Private television networks in Poland were established at the parallel time to the collapse of communistic regime in late 1990s. Many international programmes appeared on TV and introduced consumers to considerably higher levels of advertising than they were used to on public broadcasting networks (Krol, 1999). This, again, took place in the period of childhood of the Polish participants, which might have magnified their experience of material goods deprivation, as they were able to compare themselves with those seen on TV. Social comparison studies have proposed that comparing oneself with other people, who are seen in some way as more affluent or better, can lower one’s self-worthiness (Tesser, Millar & Moore, 1988).
Considering self-esteem and MVO as predictors of compulsive buying tendencies in a cross-cultural setting is useful for identifying people who might be vulnerable to become addicted to shopping. Moreover, future research could explore the relationship between those and other potential factors, such as personality type, and perceived social status, to create a fuller picture of compulsive buying risk factors. More focus on the dysfunctional aspects of acquisitive desire is required, especially it is crucial to investigate other possible predictors of compulsive buying behaviour to shed some light on what are the key factors predisposing individuals to cross the line between healthy shopping behaviour and unhealthy fixation on consumption and compulsions to buy. Understanding this kind of behaviour and its aetiology may help in devising an even more effective treatment for the sufferers and improving their quality of life. Some further investigation of compulsive buying behaviour would be beneficial, perhaps using complementary methods of data collection, along the more traditional techniques, such as qualitative analyses, e.g. an interview would provide a source of rich data, or a neuroscientific method, which could help to identify some irregularities in the patterns of brain activity associated with compulsive buying behaviour.
References


Appendix I: Statistical Analyses
Appendix II: Stimulus Materials
Appendix III: Letter from DERP
Appendix IV: Information given to Participants
Appendix V: Project Supervision Learning Contract