Summer 8-2022

Social Media Usage: Implications on Consumer Well-Being and Maladaptive Behavior

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SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE: IMPLICATIONS

ON CONSUMER WELL-BEING AND

MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Business Administration: Marketing Concentration

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

August 2022

LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

June 17, 2022

Date of dissertation defense

We hereby recommend that the dissertation prepared by

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Maladaptive Behavior

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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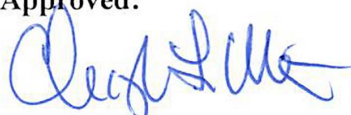
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ABSTRACT

Social media marketing is frequently leveraged due to the amount of time consumers spend on such platforms. However, research within the marketing literature rarely investigates the repercussions that time spent on social media can have on consumer well-being and behavior. Thus, this dissertation explores the effect that actual social media usage (ASMU) can have on consumers and considers the approaches through which healthy social media usage could be achieved. More specifically, the relationships within this study are assessed via Structural Equation Model (SEM) and contribute to the literature by exploring: 1) the effect that objective social media usage has on consumer well-being-related factors, 2) the effect that self-esteem, the search for meaning in life, and the presence of meaning in life have on impulse buying, and 3) consumer wisdom moderating the effects of self-esteem, the search for meaning in life, and the presence of meaning in life on impulse buying. The results and implications of this study are discussed accordingly.

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DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Brenden A. Mertz, and to my family. Brenden, in many ways, this accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine. When we started college together freshman year in 2012, I don't think either of us would have guessed that we would be where we are today. Over the past decade, we have always encouraged one another to reach our fullest potential. However, this program required an exceptional amount of sacrifice on your part. You put your life, geographical preferences, and professional dreams on hold to allow me to pursue mine. You picked me up when I was at my lowest and encouraged me to keep pushing forward when the journey was most difficult. You were strong when I was not, and you believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. You consistently encouraged me, and you did everything you could to support me throughout the entire process. Thank you for pushing me to "go big or go home," to embrace the uncomfortable, and to go beyond what I thought I was ever capable of. I love you, and I am forever grateful for you.

Family, I want to thank you for your emotional and prayerful support throughout the past four years. I specifically want to thank my parents, Brent and Anne Wallace, my in-laws, Rhalen and MaryAnn Mertz, my grandparents, Mimi and Papa, and Mamaw and Papaw, my siblings, Auburn, Reid, and Carissa, and my sister-in-law, Megan Kalus. I appreciate each of you more than you know. Completing this program was one of the most difficult endeavors I have faced. However, I could always count on each of you to

offer up words of encouragement, advice, and, most importantly, prayer. Thank you for

believing in me and for your constant encouragement. I am so grateful for each of you,

and I love you all so very much.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation chair, committee members, and the colleagues and friends who have been there with me throughout this four-year endeavor. First and foremost, I want to thank my dissertation chairman, Dr. William Locander. I can undoubtedly say that without your guidance and support, I would not be where I am today. You helped me find my passions in marketing by helping me cultivate a stream of research and teaching interests that I am proud and excited to pursue. You managed to prepare me for the job market, despite all of the challenges of the global pandemic, and you were able to set me up for a successful career. Words cannot fully express how much you helped me grow over the past few years, but please know that I am forever grateful for your mentorship and leadership. I also want to thank my committee members, Dr. Julie Moulard, Dr. Bruce Alford, and Dr. Sunaina Chugani, for graciously sharing your time, insight, advice, and support. I could not have asked for a better group to guide me through this dissertation process, and I greatly appreciate each of you. It is an honor to have the opportunity to work with each of you, and I look forward to staying in touch and collaborating on projects in the future.

I also want to thank my colleagues and friends who have substantially impacted me during this process. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Marcia Dickerson, Jessica George, and Dr. Rob Pullis for encouraging me to pursue this career. Each of you played a significant role in helping me view the world of academia as one in which I could be

successful. Each of you then intentionally supported me throughout my journey, and this is something that I will always appreciate. To my cohort mate, friend, business partner, and colleague, Louis Zmich, I don't know what I would have done without you in the program. I appreciate you, I have learned so much from you, and I am so glad that we could go through this program together. To Jennifer Locander, thank you for always being so generous with your time, knowledge, and insights. No matter the research question, I knew that I could always count on you. Thank you for always being there for me, as it really meant more than you know. To Brittany Beck, thank you for your support, friendship, and for just being you. I am so incredibly proud of you, and I know that you will impact countless lives for the better throughout your life. I also want to thank my two best friends, Hannah Samsel and Mallory Adams, for being there for me from afar. Despite us being miles apart, you two consistently provided emotional and prayerful support and encouragement that made all the difference in the world. Last but not least, I also want to thank Dr. Barry Babin, who was the marketing department head at the time of my acceptance into the program. I will never forget that the domino effect that brought me to this point all began with Dr. Babin believing in me. The opportunity to pursue my terminal degree at Louisiana Tech completely shifted the trajectory of my life for the better, and that is something that I will forever be grateful for.

I am forever grateful for the individuals who took the time to invest in me and encouraged me to aim for things that I otherwise would have never considered for myself. As I realized my passion for higher education, these individuals helped me reach for my full potential and believed in me even when I didn't. I will always appreciate their inspiring encouragement, support, and mentorship.

It is difficult to adequately put into words how the doctoral program has impacted me. In short, I can confidently say that during this program, I have grown more academically, personally, professionally, and relationally than at any other time of my life. Though the doctoral program was one of the most challenging things that I have done, it was also one of the most rewarding. It challenged me in ways that I would never have imagined and constantly caused me to be pushed outside of my comfort zone. However, through this journey, I was able to overcome some of my biggest insecurities and experience unprecedented growth. As a result of Louisiana Tech University's College of Business Doctoral Program, I feel equipped to successfully research, teach, and serve. But, perhaps most importantly, I now have the chance to have the same positive influence and impact on my students that my professors had on me during such a pivotal point in life. This opportunity is such an honor, and I feel truly blessed to be in such a fulfilling and rewarding career that I know I will continue to appreciate for years to come. All glory to God! Jeremiah 29:11..

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A Global Shift Toward Digitalization

The world we live in today is evolving at an unprecedented pace. Generations of

the past could never imagine the extent of what we now have readily available. Our

forefathers paved the way with innovations that changed history. The printing press

allowed for the rapid dissemination of information to the masses. The compass provided

the ability for reliable navigation and travel. Paper currency revolutionized economic

systems worldwide. The electric light delivered to society the potential for productivity

beyond daytime alone. The invention of the telegraph yielded a communication

breakthrough where messages could be sent and received worldwide at a rapid pace.

These innovations undeniably changed the course of human history (Carr, 2020).

Today's technology provides the individuals living in the transformative digital

age with the ability to have the world at their fingertips. A single individual can now

replicate the progression of innovations and their outcomes mentioned above in minutes

with results that generate outcomes of a grander scale than ever before. Technology has

forever changed the scale and scope of what is possible (Carr, 2020). This evolution of

innovation has also shaped how goods and services are consumed. In the past, society

happily consumed material forms of communication through channels such as telegraphs,

letters, and daily papers. However, the digitization of the consumption of goods and

services, "wherein information is converted into a numerical format, has evolved from niche scientific and commercial applications in the 1950s and 1960s into a technology that has spread across and transformed society" (Morewedge et al., 2021, p. 204). Digitalization can be described as shifting consumption from material to immaterial experience through various devices (e.g., computers, smartphones, tablets, headphones, and wearable devices) (Morewedge et al., 2021). Advancements such as these allow consumer wants and needs to be met faster and more conveniently than ever before. Thus, the rising consumer demand and preference for the consumption of digital goods are understandable due to the numerous advantages over their physical or material counterparts (Morewedge et al., 2021).

Digital Consumption

The digital world has changed drastically since its formative years in the Digital Revolution, between the late 1950s and 1970s. Today, individuals are continuously inundated with digital content, societal norms, and pressures related to such consumption are prevalent and only increasing. For example, individuals are now expected to consume and interact with digital content in work, education, relationships, and entertainment, to name a few. Digital consumption has become a cultural norm that fosters expectations of working from home, participating in virtual conferences and meetings, immediately responding to digital messages, and experiencing education online. Digital entertainment and social platforms can be found in websites, dating applications, various social media platforms, video games, television, and streaming services such as Netflix. Due to the global nature of digital consumption, the norms mentioned above are not isolated to specific cultures or geographical areas. In fact, in an overview of global internet use

conducted by Hootsuite, there are over 4.54 billion internet users. The average amount of time spent per day using the internet by each user was 6 hours and 43 minutes (Kemp, 2020). The average time spent on digital consumption via mobile devices is also staggering. The average time of 3 hours and 40 minutes is being spent on mobile devices each day, with 91% of that time spent using mobile applications (Kemp, 2020).

Social Media Consumption

One area of mobile applications is various social media platforms. The study found that 53% of the total global population has social media accounts, and the average time spent consuming social media per day per individual is found to be 2 hours and 24 minutes, with the average number of social media accounts per user being 8.6 (Kemp, 2020). The time spent on social media has seemingly continued to climb. In 2014, the average amount of time was 1 hour and 44 minutes, and in just five short years, the average time has grown by 38% (Kemp, 2020). It is important to note that 43% of users report using social media for work, but the consumption levels seem to be relatively high regardless of the purpose for usage.

A study conducted by Dean (2021) looks at the time element related to daily social media consumption and the long-term implications. Specifically, the average social media consumption reported was 2 hours and 24 minutes per day spent on social media by global users aged 16-24 on any device (Dean, 2021). Importantly, this study points out the grim reality of what this means for individuals who practice long-term social media consumption. The author points out that "The World Health Organization estimates global life expectancy to be 73 years. Therefore, if the average person persisted with the same social media usage, they would spend 5.7 years, or 2,080 days on platforms in their

eligible lifespan" (Dean, 2021). Additionally, according to a recent study conducted by Asurion, there is a substantial 20% increase in the number of times that people check their phones in just the past two years; now, individuals are checking their phones almost every 10 minutes, or 96 times per day on average (King, 2019). It is as if the daily lives of individuals gravitate around their smartphones (Gui et al., 2021).

The consistent desire to monitor and interact with the never-ending notifications, expectations, and enticements of digital content has lasting repercussions on the customer. Could the saying "too much of a good thing is a bad thing" be applied here? "Too much of a good thing," or overconsumption, is not a new phenomenon and has been thoroughly examined in terms of physical products in the marketing literature. One particularly well-researched area in the marketing discipline is materialism, described as "the belief that possessions will bring happiness" (Belk, 2001, p.1). However, healthy consumption of tangible goods can quickly move to an unhealthy consumption extreme when materialism occurs. Overconsumption of material objects has various detrimental effects on consumers and is linked to lower happiness, self-esteem, increased anxiety, and poorer social relationships (Quelch & Joex, 2007). Additionally, overconsumption is associated with decreased life satisfaction (Whybrow, 2005) and difficulty achieving work-life balance (Schor, 1999). Like the consumption of tangible, material objects have the possibility of resulting in overconsumption, consumers now run the risk of overconsumption via digital and social media content.

Digital and Social Media Overconsumption

Digitization perpetuated an environment that encouraged and nearly required digital overconsumption for individuals to function. More specifically, the ever-

increasing digital consumption is already leading to troubling repercussions such as causing physical (Syvertsn & Enli, 2020), social, and psychological harm (Turkle, 2012; 2016). Namely, research finds that digital consumption is linked to weight gain and muscular pain (Syvertsn & Enli, 2020), decreased quality of relationships (Rotondi et al., 2017), and increased anxiety and depression (Elhai et al., 2017; Demirci et al., 2015). Repercussions such as these are examined in the disciplines of sociology, psychology, medicine, communication, and technology. However, there is a lack of research conducted on the phenomenon of digital overconsumption within the field of marketing despite consumers' showing an ever-increasing affinity for high levels of digital content.

As mentioned in the above sections, one of the most prevalent and detrimental forms of digital overconsumption takes place on social media platforms. Therefore, instead of broadly assessing digital consumption, the study within this dissertation focuses on social media usage. More specifically, this study assesses the effect that objective measures of social media usage have on individual consumer well-being, the effect that consumer well-being has on maladaptive behavior, and how consumer wisdom may offset such maladaptive behavior. It is worth noting that though some research explores the effects that various forms of digital and social media overconsumption can have on the individual, research is disjointed and lacking, especially in the discipline of marketing. Therefore, the implications of this study hold positive potential for the consumer, the marketer, and the marketing literature.

A primary objective of marketing is to provide consumers with their wants and needs. The seminal *Harvard Business Review* article titled *"Marketing Myopia,"* written by Theodore Levitt in 1960 highlights this imperative by urging marketers not to lose

sight of the underlying desires of consumers. Therefore, marketers should seek to understand the consequences of digitization and social media consumption. Based on the statistics mentioned above, consumers spend staggering amounts of time consuming digital and social media content. Consumers believe they need and want to consume social media, but what are its repercussions? How is such consumption affecting consumer well-being? What impact does social media consumption have on consumer behavior, and are there factors that could strengthen or lessen such effects? Marketers actively research, teach, and practice principles to capture, engage, interact, and grow digital audiences on social media. Therefore, it is the ethical responsibility of marketers to examine the potential risks that social media consumption could have on consumers.

Purpose of the Research

Various disciplines have explored some of the antecedents and consequences of increasing social media usage; however, the marketing discipline has yet to thoroughly examine how objective social media usage affects consumer well-being and maladaptive behavior. Therefore, this study aims to shed light on the empirical implications of social media's effect on consumer well-being-related variables.

Research Questions

The evolution of digitalization continues to advance, and consumers are more digitally connected than ever. However, this connection does not come without its costs. Consuming large amounts of digital content, specifically social media content, is linked to numerous detrimental outcomes. Furthermore, the trajectory of social media consumption is currently at an all-time high and only continues to climb upwards. This

form of unprecedented consumption gives way to numerous consumer-related implications and questions. More specifically, this dissertation explores the following questions:

> *R1: How does actual social media usage (ASMU) affect self-esteem and meaning in life?*
>
> *R2: How do self-esteem and meaning in life affect impulse buying?*
>
> *R3: Does consumer wisdom moderate the strength of relationships between self-esteem and impulse buying and meaning in life and impulse buying?*

Managerial Importance

This study explores a topic that proactively benefits managers. It is commonly known that many managers in marketing heavily rely on social media to promote and distribute products and services. However, increasing research shows that social media usage can be harmful to consumers. Therefore, this study specifically considers social media usage's effect on well-being-related variables and maladaptive behavior. Thus, if such an association is found to be substantial, ethical considerations would have to be made by marketing managers accordingly. Therefore, exploration of the impact that social media usage can have on consumer well-being and behavior is important. For example, if social media usage is associated with harming consumer well-being and contributing to maladaptive behavior, what does it say about the company if social media remains one of the leading marketing channels? Further, if consumers are aware of these harmful associations, how would they feel about social media marketing campaigns and initiatives? Could this ultimately lead to consumer outcomes such as negative attitude, decreased engagement, distrust, and purchase avoidance towards a brand? Thus, this

study serves as a foundation for better understanding the scope of this phenomenon and proactively handling these risks by exploring the associations between social media usage, consumer well-being, and maladaptive behavior.

Theoretical Importance

A lack of research has considered how social media can impact the well-being of consumers, especially in the context of marketing. Thus, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the literature by building upon positive psychology literature, which focuses on individual well-being and explores areas related to improving quality of life (Seligman, 2002). The two primary theories, self-determination theory and social comparison theory, serve as the foundation for this dissertation, which is affiliated with positive psychology. These theories aid in understanding how social media consumption impacts consumer well-being and maladaptive behavior. Notably, for this dissertation, well-being is conceptualized through the eudaimonic perspective. The eudaimonic perspective of well-being "focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning" (Ryan & Deci, 2001, pg. 141).

Self-determination theory (SDT) is defined as being "concerned primarily with explicating the psychological processes that promote optimal functioning and health" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, pg. 262). According to Deci and Ryan (2000), specific needs must be met for individuals to flourish and fully realize their human potential. The authors specify three primary needs that are most important: the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When these needs are met, research shows that well-being-related outcomes ensue; in contrast, however, well-being-related

elements are negatively affected when these needs are not met. Thus, this theory provides a framework that highlights the link between need satisfaction (or lack thereof) having the ability to influence areas such as well-being substantially.

This study also builds upon the theory of upward social comparison, which "occurs when comparing oneself with superior others who have positive characteristics" (Vogel et al., 2014, pg. 206). Unfortunately, upward social comparison is notorious for afflicting social media users by making them feel inadequate, negatively impacting various aspects of well-being (Vogel et al., 2014). Often, the high levels of social comparison (Vogel et al., 2014; Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Kavaklı & Ünal, 2021) makes users feel they do not measure up to the individuals they see on various social media platforms. Therefore, it is plausible that as users spend time on social media, they may feel that their needs are not being met compared to their counterparts, resulting in the suffering of consumer well-being. Therefore, in alignment with self-determination theory and upward social comparison theory, this dissertation explores the concept that time spent on social media could detract from a consumer's ability to meet their needs due to upward social comparison, which may harm aspects of well-being.

Building upon the theories mentioned above, several aspects of this study specifically provide unique contributions to the literature. First, this dissertation explores the impact that objective or actual social media usage (ASMU) can have on well-being-related variables. While previous studies only relied on subjective forms of social media measurement, research using ASMU has been encouraged by Sewall et al., (2020) and was incorporated into this study accordingly. Second, to the author's knowledge, this study is the first to examine the construct of the meaning of life in the marketing

discipline. Thus, exploring meaning in life's association with the maladaptive outcome of impulse buying is examined as a novel relationship. Third, the construct of consumer wisdom was recently developed and introduced to the marketing discipline by Luchs et al., (2021). Luchs et al., (2021) encouraged the exploration of the construct within the context of social media. Therefore, consumer wisdom is used as the moderator of the model for this study.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation follows a traditional five-chapter format. Chapter 1 provided a contextual background, research purpose, research questions, managerial importance, and theoretical importance. Chapter 2 presents a literature review covering the topics of consumer well-being, the detrimental effects of social media usage, approaches for healthy social media consumption, the research questions, conceptual model, and hypotheses. Chapter 3 presents the research scope, the main study, and the conclusion. Chapter 4 presents the quantitative main study, confirmatory factor analysis, structural model specifications, common method bias consideration, structural model results, moderation hypotheses, the conclusion, and post hoc analysis. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents the discussion and future research, Research Questions 1-3, theoretical contributions, managerial contributions, limitations, and future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Well-Being

The concept of consumer well-being is studied within the consumer behavior literature. It is defined as the "alignment of individual and societal needs (i.e., physical, psychological, economic, social) as they relate through consumption" (Burroughs & Rindfleish, 2012, p. 253). Though research in this area is now more prevalent, consumer well-being was not always valued or seen as a priority within the marketing discipline. Unfortunately, in the 1950s, "instead of trying to nurture the well-being of buyers, marketers adopted rhetoric to view consumers almost as the enemy - segments to be covertly researched so that strategies could be devised that would effectively target and persuade them to behave in a way desirable to the company" (Pancer & Handelman, 2012, p. 181). Furthermore, during this time, marketers began to leverage the budding science of psychology to understand consumer motivation better, optimally guide consumer choice, and ultimately coax consumers to make choices that were beneficial to the business doing the advertising (Dichter, 1947). It was not until the early 1970s that the viewpoints mentioned above were called into question by Philip Kotler. He elucidated that the marketer "cannot go on giving the consumer only what pleases him without considering the effect on the consumer's and society's well-being" (Kotler, 1972, p. 54). However, despite the wise words of Kotler, the shift toward valuing consumer well-being

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did not take off immediately in its early days. For example, though the *Journal of Consumer Research* initially emphasized studies that directly benefited consumers, it slowly shifted its focus to more capitalistic topics in the 1980s and 1990s (Mick et al., 2012b). Likewise, during this time, academic conferences like the Association for Consumer Research (ACR) and journals such as the *Journal of Consumer Research* (JCR) prioritized the development of theory and methodology (Mick et al., 2012b). It was not until the early 2000s that a resurgence of interest in consumer well-being occurred (Mick et al., 2012b). One milestone related to this revived aspiration was the establishment of Transformative Consumer Research (TCR), found within the Association for Consumer Research (Mick et al., 2012b). TCR "strives to encourage, support, and publicize research that benefits the quality of life for all beings engaged in or affected by consumption trends and practices across the world" (Mick et al., 2012b, p. 8). Therefore, though consumer well-being was not valued in the past, recognition of its value has grown immensely within the marketing discipline. For example, journals such as the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Macromarketing*, and *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* have all published articles related to consumer well-being. Some consumer behavior textbooks even feature chapters dedicated to consumer well-being (Solomon, 2020).

Few articles within the marketing discipline explore how social media consumption can affect consumer well-being. However, such exploration would be valuable as researchers recognize that social media is a fundamental marketing powerhouse. A recent study published in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* even goes so far as to state that beyond having the ability to shape culture itself,

social media has the power to affect the full scope of the consumer decision-making process (Appel et al., 2020). From a marketing perspective, social media provides opportunities that would have been previously unimaginable. It is as if "customers live in a world in which social media intersects with most aspects of their lives through digitally-enabled social interactivity… [causing] virtually every part of a consumer's decision-making process [to be] prone to social media influence" (Appel et. al., 2020, p. 82). Such influence has the potential for drastic results. The benefits that social media provide to marketers and consumers alike are undeniably remarkable, which is why marketers (both in research and pedagogy) frequently focus on optimizing social media to strategically yield the greatest returns for a business. Though important, this emphasis overlooks how social media usage can negatively affect consumer well-being, so exploring social media in the context of consumer well-being is very important. Furthermore, how will consumer well-being be impacted if time spent on social media continues to rise? Could too much of a good thing become a bad thing?

The Detrimental Effects of Social Media Usage

Of particular interest to this study is how time spent on social media affects consumer well-being. Numerous studies from various disciplines have highlighted the deleterious effects that result from high amounts of screen time and social media consumption. For example, a study in psychology conducted by Twenge et al. (2018) highlights the startling statistical jump in adolescent suicide rates between 2010 and 2015, which aligns with the surge in smartphone adoption and usage. Within this time frame, the rate of adolescents suffering from both depressive symptoms and suicide-related outcomes increased significantly, and was linked to the increased time spent on

social media. Furthermore, Twenge and Campbell (2018) found that adolescents who engage in screen time beyond one hour per day began to suffer from lower psychological well-being as well as multiple other deleterious issues, while heavy screen time users (i.e., more than seven hours a day) were over twice as likely to have been diagnosed with depression or anxiety than their counterparts. Other studies in disciplines outside of marketing find that time spent on social media is associated with decreased well-being (Tromholt, 2016; Sharif & Khanekharab, 2017); decreased psychological well-being (Orben, 2020); lowered self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014); increased levels of depression (Yoon et al., 2019; Woods & Scott, 2016); relationship issues and decrease in both social community participation and academic achievement (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011); increased anxiety and decreased sleep quality (Woods & Scott, 2016); and body dissatisfaction and negative affect (Bennett et. al., 2020).

Additional recent research finds similar results, showing that hours spent on social media are significantly associated with compromised mental health, especially in young girls (Twenge et al., 2020; Twenge & Farley, 2021). Given that social media usage can lead to serious negative repercussions, it is important to understand ways to offset such issues. Though there is not one established solution that has been accepted across disciplines, there are several practices or approaches that either aim to or have been shown to offset negative repercussions and are thus worth discussion.

Approaches for Healthy Social Media Consumption

It is clear that social media is here to stay, and from a marketer's perspective, it provides unprecedented opportunities to reach strategic objectives. However, it is also important to remember what we ought to be most concerned about - the consumer. Social media can be beneficial, but the literature must be invested in weighing both the opportunities and the costs related to its usage. When it comes to the costs or the disadvantages, social media consumption can be highly detrimental to consumers, especially those who fall into the more vulnerable categories. Therefore, to optimize social media usage to minimize detrimental outcomes, potential solutions must be explored. Currently, various disciplines have conducted studies that highlight concepts and practices related to healthier social media consumption. The following sections discuss the concepts of digital well-being, mindful consumption, consumer wisdom, social media abstinence/detox, and moderation.

Digital Well-Being/Wellness

Though not yet prevalent within the marketing literature, several other disciplines are beginning to explore the concepts of digital and social media well-being and wellness. Several associations are beginning to surface, but of specific interest is the association between digital wellness and its impact on overall wellness and well-being (Ferrar, 2020). Unfortunately, empirical findings in this area are still scant, while qualitative efforts are disjointed. Despite the important role of digital wellness, scholarly attempts at definitions are far from unified. For example, researchers across disciplines have differing definitions. In the sociology literature, digital well-being is defined as "a state in which subjective well-being is maintained in an environment characterized by digital

communication overabundance" (Gui et al., 2017, p. 166). Similarly, an article from the

communications literature defines digital well-being as "...a subjective individual

experience of optimal balance between the benefits and drawbacks obtained from mobile

connectivity" (Abeele, 2020, p. 13). Researchers McMahon and Aiken (2015) from the

information technology discipline suggest that an individual's digital wellness entails

how healthily an individual is (both physically and mentally) in relation to digital

technology. Lastly, Royal et al. feel that moderation is key as an approach to healthy

technology usage; and they define digital wellness as "the optimum state of health and

well-being that each individual using technology is capable of achieving" (Royal et al.,

2019 p. 103).

Despite the tautological issues related to this topic, its value is still substantial,

and further exploration is timely and needed. Researchers are beginning to "stress the

importance of [developing] a new set of skills that is necessary to cope with such

challenges of the digital age, both in

Mindful Consumption

One promising intermediary mechanism could be mindfulness, which is

frequently conceptualized as mindful consumption in marketing literature. Mindful

consumption (MC) was popularized within marketing literature by Sheth et al. (2011)

who define MC as "a consumer mindset of caring for self, for the community, and nature,

that translates behaviorally into tempering the self-defeating excesses associated with

acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational consumption" (p. 21). Recently, researchers

define MC as, "the ongoing practice of paying attention, with acceptance, to internal

stimuli (bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts) and external stimuli and their effects

on the consumption process" (Bahl et al., 2016, p. 3). Bahl et al. (2016) explain that mindful consumption involves consumers intentionally making selections instead of simply acting on impulse or routine.

Some researchers apply the concept of mindfulness to offset the harmful social media-induced repercussions. One recent study shows a significant negative relationship between mindfulness and stress derived from social media usage (Apaolaza et al., 2019). Another study found that mindless social media scrolling could lead to cognitive and emotional reactions, such as upward social comparison and the fear of missing out, potentially leading to detrimental effects on one's well-being (Argan et al., 2018; Weaver & Swank, 2019; Baker et al., 2016). Furthermore, various other studies have linked mindful social media usage to more positive outcomes. Specifically, some studies consider mindfulness as a moderator in social media contexts and find it to be associated with beneficial outcomes such as lowering burnout at work (Charoensukmongkol, 2016) and even increasing identity clarity and self-esteem (Yang et al., 2017). Therefore, consideration and inclusion of mindfulness hold a valuable place in the literature as a reasonable way to offset negative social media usage repercussions.

Passive vs. Active Social Media Usage

Recently, research finds different ways in which users interact and consume content on social media platforms. More specifically, there is a prominent distinction between the two modes of social media engagement: active versus passive usage. Active social media behavior "refers to activities such as content creation, information sharing, meeting new people online and chatting with them, joining groups, talking about hobbies and personal interests, and posting or uploading videos or photos" (Chen, et al., 2014, p.

215). While passive social media behavior is simply described as someone who "browses content...but rarely contributes" (Chen et al., 2014, pp. 214-215). Since being introduced to the literature, these two forms of usage have been examined in multiple contexts, such as relationships (Quiroz & Mickelson, 2021), mental health (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018; Thorisdottir et al., 2019), and even political participation (Gainous et al., 2021). Though the differences between interacting with social media in an active vs. passive way may seem unsubstantial on the surface, their differing effects hold surprising and noteworthy significance. For example, passive social media usage has been shown to have significant detrimental effects with links to decreased relationship satisfaction (Quiroz & Mickelson, 2021), increased anxiety, and depression (Thorisdottir et al., 2019), and increased depressive symptoms (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018). In contrast, most active social media usage is harmless or even beneficial, such as decreasing depressive symptoms (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018). These findings are noteworthy and are worth considering as an approach to explore further to achieve a healthier form of social media consumption.

Consumer Wisdom

One approach that may mitigate the potential negative effects of social media usage is consumer wisdom (CW), which is defined as "the pursuit of well-being for oneself and others through mindful management of consumption-related choices and behaviors, as realized through the integrated application of Intentionality, Contemplation, Emotional Mastery, Openness, and Transcendence" (Luchs & Mick, 2018, p. 384).

Mick et al. (2012a) were the first to empirically investigate the construct of wisdom and shed light on its pivotal role within the context of consumer behavior. In a recent article, Luchs and Mick (2018) express the importance of consumer wisdom given

the challenges of consumption's "dark side". Many other disciplines (e.g., cognitive psychology, lifespan psychology, gerontology, medicine, public policy, education, and leadership) acknowledge the weighty potential that wisdom holds and have conducted research accordingly (Etheridge, 2005; Intezari & Pauleen, 2017; Plews-Ogan et al., 2012). As cited in Luchs, Mick, and Haws (2021), prior research finds that wisdom is positively associated with physical and mental health (Ardelt, 2003), happiness (Kross & Grossmann, 2012), social cooperation (Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003), resilience (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and purpose in life (Sternberg & Jordan, 2005). In contrast, wisdom is negatively associated with depression, economic pressure, and fear of mortality (Thomas et al., 2015).

Such research led to the recent introduction of wisdom to the consumer behavior literature due to its historical ties to well-being in other disciplines. Specifically, Schwartz and Sharpe (2010) point out that beyond being both a will and a skill, wisdom has the potential to significantly impact consumer behavior, especially in the context of well-being, while Luchs et al., (2021) describe wisdom as a virtue that has stood the test of time. Furthermore, according to Luchs and Mick (2018), the linkage between consumer wisdom and well-being-related constructs is practically untapped within the marketing literature (Luchs & Mick, 2018). However, the research related to CW continued to progress as the framework developed by Luchs et al. (2018) was built. This development resulted in the publication of the article titled "consumer wisdom for Personal Well-Being and the Greater Good: Scale Development and Validation," which now allows for empirical assessment of consumer wisdom (Luchs et al., 2021). The CW scale consists of 6 dimensions (Responsibility, Purpose, Flexibility, Perspective,

Reasoning, and Sustainability) and is composed of 24 items. Responsibility, the first component of consumer wisdom, concerns "managing spending relative to personal resources toward achieving a realistically envisioned lifestyle" (Luchs et al., 2021, p. 6). Purpose, the second component of consumer wisdom, involves "prioritizing discretionary spending to promote personal growth, health, and relationships" (Luchs et al., 2021, p. 6). Flexibility, the third dimension, concerns "being open to alternative forms of consumption, such as renting, sharing, and buying used goods" (Luchs et al., 2021, p. 6). Perspective, the fourth dimension, refers to "using past experiences and imagined potential future consequences to inform current consumption decisions (Luchs et al., 2021, p. 6). Reasoning, the fifth component, involves "seeking and applying sufficient information to guide consumption decisions" (Luchs et al., 2021, p. 6). Lastly, Sustainability concerns "favoring pro-environmental and prosocial consumption options" (Luchs et al., 2021, p. 6). Luchs et al. (2021) empirically demonstrate that consumer wisdom has a valuable influence on consumer behavior, finding that consumer wisdom is positively linked to several consumer well-being indicators, such as improved life satisfaction, perceived financial well-being, personal relationship support, and job satisfaction. The authors also point out that consumer wisdom may provide novel ways for consumers to overcome and better navigate goal conflicts and decision trade-offs. Luchs et al. (2021) thus note that marketers should consider cultivating new instructional and policy programs aimed at increasing consumer wisdom that could, in turn, create a newfound path to individual well-being and the greater good (Luchs et al., 2021). Building upon this, (Ozanne et al., 2021) identify how public policy and marketing practice could best cultivate and support consumer wisdom (Ozanne et al., 2021). It is

safe to say that the research related to this newly established construct is both valuable and promising. Furthermore, consumer wisdom carries the potential to improve consumer behavior and perhaps be applied in such a way that could offset the negative repercussions related to social media usage.

Social Media Abstinence or Detox

As stated in the sections above, social media usage has skyrocketed in the past several years. More specifically, adult social media usage increased exponentially from 5% to over 70% between 2005 and 2019 (El-Khoury et al., 2021). Unfortunately, this growth brings on a number of detrimental repercussions. Therefore, solutions such as social media abstinence or detox are being explored to diminish the harmful effects of social media usage. Social media detoxification is defined as "voluntary attempts at reducing or stopping social media use to improve well-being" (El-Khoury et al., 2021, p. 1). In addition, various studies explore and consider the effects of taking time off from social media, and the results are promising (El-Khoury et al., 2021). For example, taking time off from social media results in numerous effects, which are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Effects Related to Social Media Abstinence or Detox

Subject	Author
positive change in mood reduced anxiety, and improved sleep	Schmuck, 2020
preventing detrimental effects on well-being	Hunt et al., 2018
decreased loneliness, depression, anxiety, and fear of missing out	Allcott et al., 2020
increased subjective well-being	Tromholt, 2016
increased life satisfaction and increased positive emotions	Eriksen, 2021
increased subjective well-being	Turel et al., 2018
reduced stress	Brailovskaia et al., 2020

Based on the aforementioned findings, it is clear that the harmful effects of social media can be offset by taking time off from social media. However, for many users, this is not a sustainable solution. A compromised option could be moderating (or lessening) the use of social media.

Social Media Moderation

Social media moderation is a trend that is recognized anecdotally and in research outside of marketing. Additionally, social media companies such as Tiktok and Instagram encourage users to only consume specific amounts of social media through the screen time accountability feature. Notably, in 2018, the iPhone iOS 12 update allows users to monitor and assess the amount of time spent on their devices. Thus, beyond providing users with the potential to better analyze their usage, this new app allows/empowers users

to limit and simply take time off of their device. This update (which was quickly replicated by developers on Android devices) allows users to see information in daily or weekly formats and either as holistic or categorized reports. For example, users can see various screen time activity reports, such as their most heavily used category (e.g., social media, messaging, photos) and the amount of time spent on each app. From an academic standpoint, this development provides researchers with the newfound ability to objectively assess specific usage categories. For this study, the social media usage category assessment is of particular interest. This objective form of social media measurement will be referred to as actual social media usage (ASMU). Additionally, this dissertation research will focus on the ASMU of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn, which can be accessed within the social media usage category of the screen time application.

Though few studies have incorporated the operationalization of screen time via ASMU, Sewall et al., (2020) recently conducted such a study. The results provide significantly more accurate findings than studies that had previously relied on subjective measurement methods. Specifically, respondents in the Sewall et al. (2020) study vastly overestimated their weekly overall iPhone and social media use times. This misestimation caused the correlations between the estimated use and the well-being variables to be consistently stronger than the correlations between reported actual use and well-being variables. Thus, calling into question the accuracy of previous studies that relied on subjective/estimated social media measurement.

Consequently, this newfound ability to accurately measure social media usage opens the door to numerous future research opportunities within this area of the literature.

Thus, significant findings using subjective measures may no longer be supported and vice versa. Of particular interest is how this "more objective" measurement of social media usage affects consumer well-being in the context of marketing, and this study has the potential to pinpoint and uncover empirical relationships more accurately than ever before.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

Based on the previously reviewed research, the present study seeks to serve as the first study within the marketing literature to assess how the actual amount of time spent on social media affects consumer well-being and contributes to maladaptive behavior. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions and to test Hypotheses 1-6 with the model shown in Figure 1.1.

> *RQ1: How does actual social media usage (ASMU) affect self-esteem, search for meaning in life, and presence of meaning in life?*
>
> *RQ2: How does self-esteem and meaning in life (both search and presence) affect impulse buying?*
>
> *RQ3: Does consumer wisdom moderate the strength of relationships between self-esteem and impulse buying, search for meaning in life and impulse buying, and meaning in life and impulse buying?*

Conceptual Model

Figure 2.1 illustrates the six hypotheses using a conceptual model.
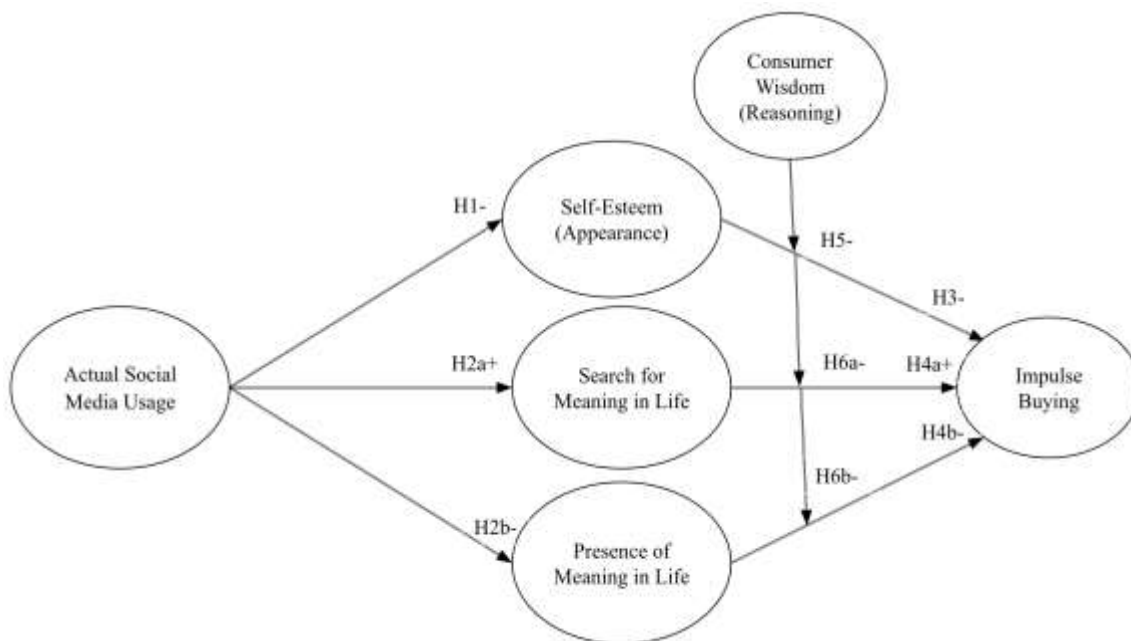
Figure 2.1: *Conceptual Model*

Hypotheses Development

ASMU → Self-Esteem

Many studies find the relationship between social media usage and well-being related measures to be negative (Twenge, 2018; Lin et al., 2016; Kelly et al., 2018; Frison & Eggermont, 2016; Twenge et al., 2020). However, recent studies shed light on the literature's questionable reliance on subjective self-report measures when assessing social media usage (Parry et al., 2021; Sewall et al., 2020). According to Sewall et al. (2020), 157 studies find a negative relationship between digital technology usage and well-being; however, nearly all of these studies are based on subjective retrospective approximations of usage. Unfortunately, measures relying on retroactive estimates are faulty (Araujo et al., 2017; Scharkow, 2016) and prone to inflated correlations when compared to more

objective measures (Kobayashi & Boase, 2012). For example, Sewall et al. (2020) found

significant discrepancies between the strengths of the effects of Estimated Social Media

Usage (ESMU) and ASMU on the outcomes of loneliness, depression, and life

satisfaction, calling into question the validity and accuracy of studies conducted before

objective measures of ASMU were available. Additionally, some scholars find that

estimated usage is either over-or under-stated (Verbeij et al., 2021; Ohme et al., 2021).

Therefore, due to significant discrepancies found between studies measuring estimated

social media usage versus actual social media usage, future research encourages the use

objective measures (e.g., screen time application) to achieve valid and accurate findings

(Parry et al., 2021; Sewall et al., 2020). In response to these calls, this dissertation

explores the effect that actual social media usage (ASMU) has on constructs related to

consumer well-being (i.e., self-esteem and meaning in life).

Fortunately, researchers now have access to Screen Time applications available

on iPhone and Android devices. However, studies utilizing this measure are still scant in

the academic literature, primarily due to it only being available to the public since 2018.

Therefore, this form of measurement holds substantial potential and should be explored

more thoroughly (Parry et al., 2021; Sewall et al., 2020), especially within the context of

well-being. To the author's knowledge, there is only one study utilizing the Screen Time

application within the context of user well-being, which finds that increased ASMU leads

to decreased life satisfaction and increased loneliness and depression (Sewall et al.,

2020).

As mentioned previously, this dissertation explores the relationship between

ASMU and the well-being-related construct of self-esteem. The relationship between

social media usage and self-esteem has been explored in the context of estimated social media usage (Sewall, 2020) and specific estimated social media platforms such as Facebook (Vogel et al., 2014). However, using an objective measurement ASMU in association with self-esteem has not yet been studied. The conceptualization of self-esteem builds on the work of Rosenberg (1979), which describes high self-esteem as someone who recognizes both their strengths and weaknesses but nonetheless considers themself a person of worth; a person with low-self-esteem does not have respect for themself, and perceives themself to be inadequate and unworthy. Of particular interest to this study are the temporary changes in self-esteem, which were unable to be captured by the more trait-focused measurement provided by Rosenburg. Thus, the Heatherton and Polivy (1991) scale, which examines self-esteem as "the measurement of short-lived (i.e., state) changes in self-esteem" (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991 pg. 895), was deemed to be a good fit due to the momentary nature of social media.

Unfortunately, many studies show that various forms of estimated social media usage (ESMU) and self-esteem have a negative relationship in various contexts (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Jan et al., 2017; Vogel et al., 2014; Hawi & Samaha, 2017; Andreassen et al., 2017; Twenge & Farley, 2021). The negative repercussions of social media and self-esteem are often due to the presence of upward social comparison (Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Kavaklı & Ünal, 2021; Wang et al., 2017). Upward social comparison is described as comparing oneself to others whom one perceives to be better off than oneself (Vogel et al., 2014; Buunk & Gibbons, 2005). This form of comparison is prominent for its occurrence on social media, where users feel that they are unable to measure up to idealistic profiles, images, and updates of others (Cramer et al., 2016;

Valkenburg et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2017) leading to a negative impact on their self-esteem (Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Kavaklı & Ünal, 2021). Therefore, similar findings to that of the relationships using subjective measures are anticipated by assessing ASMU's effect on consumer self-esteem. Thus:

H1: *There is a negative relationship between ASMU and self-esteem***.**

ASMU → Meaningful Life

Time spent on social media is negatively related to various measures of well-being, such as life satisfaction (Twenge & Farley, 2021), psychological well-being (Twenge, 2019), and depression (Yoon et al., 2019), especially in younger consumers (Twenge et al., 2018). However, there is no study that examines the effect that social media usage has on a consumer's perception of meaning in life, which certainly plays an important role in consumer well-being.

The concept of meaning in life is explored across several disciplines and is defined in numerous ways. Definitional themes include self-actualization, coherence of life, sense of fulfillment, goal-directedness or a sense of purpose, and authentic living (Przepiorka, 2012). One of the most widely accepted definitions of meaning in life comes from Steger et al. (2006), defining this construct as "sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one's being and existence" (p. 81).

One of the greatest contributors to the theoretical development of meaning in life is Victor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist, philosopher, Holocaust survivor, and the author of *Man's search for Meaning* (1946). Frankl was one of the first scholars to build upon existential theory (Frankl, 1984), a centuries-old philosophy emphasizing the importance and implications of a meaningful life. meaning in life also aligns with

logotherapy (Frankl, 2014) and the theories of positive psychology (Seligman, 2002).

Researchers describe meaning in life as critical for human beings and their well-being

(Deci & Ryan, 2000). Furthermore, scholars in the well-being literature have especially

encouraged the topic of meaning in life due to its strong association with well-being itself

(Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). Since Frankl's seminal work, various other scholars aim to

develop their understanding, definition, and operationalization of meaning in life across

various disciplines, including the following studies: Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964);

Antonovsky (1985); Battista and Almond (1973); Baumeister, (1991); Morgan and

Farsides, (2009); and Steger et al., (2006). However, of particular interest is the valuable

potential of the meaningful life measure, which yielded various empirical tests that

uncovered numerous beneficial associations, such as increased life satisfaction, improved

social relationships, and better management of stressful life events (Park & Baumeister,

2017; Steger et al., 2008); decreased health risk behaviors and increased psychological

health (Brassai et al., 2011); increased self-esteem and daily well-being (Kiang &

Fuligni, 2010); decreased depressive symptoms (Steger et al., 2009); and improved

management of affective responses (Schaefer et al., 2013).

More recent research incorporates a more nuanced conceptualization of meaning

in life based on Frank's interpretation that meaning in life is composed of two parts: the

presence of meaning and searching for meaning (Steger et al., 2008b). While the presence

of meaning is a desirable psychological quality, searching for meaning is the process used

to attain such a quality (Steger et al., 2008b). Frankl (1963) posited that individuals have

a natural drive to find meaning and significance in their lives. This innate "will to

meaning" can cause psychological distress when one fails to achieve such meaning.

Present meaning is described as an individual perceiving his or her life as valuable,

significant, and purposeful (Steger et al., 2006; Dezutter et al., 2014). The presence of

meaning is associated with various positive outcomes such as increased subjective well-

being (Zika & Chamberlain, 1992), increased self-esteem (Steger et al., 2006),

psychological stability, healthy self-acceptance, strong social relationships, and increased

satisfaction with self and others (Steger et al., 2008a), positive affect (King et al., 2006),

decreased anxiety and depression (Steger et al., 2006), decreased suicidal ideation

(Harlow et al., 1986), and improved quality of life (Hart & Singh, 2009).

On the other hand, searching for meaning, is a process of developing a sense of

meaning (Steger et al., 2008b). This process describes an individual seeking to

understand and increase meaning in life (Steger et al., 2006; Dezutter et al., 2014). In

contrast to the number of clear positive links associated with the presence of meaning, an

individual's search for meaning is associated with more ambiguous or negative outcomes.

One explanation for this could be that individuals searching for meaning feel that they are

unable or have not yet achieved their potential (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1971).

Regardless, the dimension of the search for meaning has yielded conflicting viewpoints

amongst theorists. Some scholars view the search for meaning as a positive, natural, and

healthy part of life (Frankl, 1963), while others consider it to be detrimentally brought on

by frustration (Baumeister, 1991). Further, some believe it can be either positive or

negative depending on the individual's motivation (Reker, 2000). The empirical findings

related to the search for meaning are less extensive than its counterpart and demonstrate

that the search for meaning is associated with negative states, such as lower well-being

(Schwartz et al., 2011), increased depression and negative affect (Steger et al., 2008a; Park & Jeong, 2016).

No study has yet to consider the link between social media usage and meaning in life specifically. However, several studies examine the differing effects of these two dimensions of meaning in contexts similar to social media usage. For example, a study using a sample of college students found that internet usage has a negative relationship with the *presence* of meaning in life and a positive relationship with the *search* for meaning (Aydin, 2017). In addition, a study examining gaming addiction and bullying found that the presence of meaning lessened the effects of bullying. In contrast, the search for meaning intensifies the effects of bullying (Zhao et al., 2020). In the studies mentioned above, various forms of digital usage led to significant associations with a meaningful life.

Therefore, due to the understanding that the presence of meaning in life is highly associated with well-being, while the search for meaning is associated with negative outcomes. As numerous studies show that increased social media usage leads to decreased levels of well-being (Kross et al., 2013; Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Verduyn, et al., 2015), it is reasonable to assume that ASMU will have a negative effect on the presence of meaning in life and a positive effect on the search for meaning in life. Thus, H2:

> **H2a:** *There is a positive relationship between ASMU and search for meaning in life.*
>
> **H2b:** *There is a negative relationship between ASMU and the presence of meaning in life.*

Self-Esteem → Impulse Buying

Past research finds that low self-esteem is associated with maladaptive behavior such as compulsive shopping (Hanley & Wilhelm, 1992), compulsive buying (DeSarbo & Edwards, 1996) and gambling (Volberg et al., 1997). Frequently maladaptive consumption takes place in an attempt to feel better about oneself. However, such efforts are often short-lived.

One perspective of the logic of maladaptive consumption is tied to the inability of an individual to self-regulate in such a way that is in line with a standard. For instance, many of the maladaptive problems, which some consumers experience, are linked to failures to self-regulate (Verplanken & Sato, 2011).

Furthermore, self-esteem undoubtedly plays a role in consumer behavior and the consumer well-being literature, and it holds significant implications within the context of social media. Of specific interest to this dissertation is the effect that self-esteem has on impulse buying behavior. Impulse buying was conceptualized in the early 1960s by Stern (1962) and was later described as a phenomenon that was a psychologically driven urge to buy (Rook, 1987). Impulse buying is defined as "a phenomenon borne by artificial needs or overbearing desires of customers to own something" (Nuseir, 2020, p. 325). Impulse buying has been well examined in the literature in various contexts and is related to/affected by self-discipline (De Kervenoael et al., 2009), personality traits (Thompson & Prendergast, 2015), and self-coping mechanisms (Chen et al., 2016). Additionally, research shows strong associations between dispositional variables and impulse buying (Amos et al., 2014; Iyer et al., 2020). Surprisingly, few studies have specifically and empirically explored the relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying outside of

work done by Verplanken et al., (2005). Recently, Dhandra (2020) explores the relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying and finds it significant and negative. The rationale for this finding is tied to the idea that impulsive buying functions as a self-regulatory mechanism that holds the potential to lessen negative psychological states such as low self-esteem by providing an escape via an impulse purchase (Verplanken et al., 2005; Dhandra, 2020).

Based on this finding, it is expected that the present replication hypothesis will be even stronger than that of Dhandra (2020). Anticipation of a stronger relationship stems from the context of this study being related to social media. Due to the rise of time people are spending on social media, combined with the clear linkage of social media negatively affecting consumers' self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014), it stands to reason that self-esteem will be negatively impacted as hypothesized in the section as mentioned above. Furthermore, due to social media constantly promoting countless products and services, such exposure will likely catalyze the temptation to make impulse purchases. Exploring this relationship in the context of social media is not completely novel. Recent research conducted by Nuseir (2020) finds that Facebook can even act as a catalyst that creates impulse buying opportunities. Therefore, considering the catalytic effect that Facebook can have on impulse buying and the known impact that social media has on self-esteem, this study seeks to explore this relationship in the context of ASMU in general. Thus, H3:

H3: *There is a negative relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying.*

Meaning in Life → Impulse Buying

Exploring meaningful life within the context of maladaptive behavior is common in disciplines outside of marketing. For example, a study of young adults finds that a

presence of meaning is associated with adaptive psychosocial functioning while a lack of

meaning is related to maladaptive psychosocial functioning (Dezutter et al., 2014).

Another study of college students finds that meaning in life serves as a valuable buffer

for impulsive individuals in the context of internet addiction (Zhang et al., 2015). While

prior research outside of the field of marketing demonstrates that a lack of meaning in life

is associated with maladaptive behaviors, this dissertation seeks to assess the associations

of meaningful life within the marketing literature. Specifically, the research herein

considers the maladaptive behavior of impulse buying. While impulse buying is

negatively linked to well-being constructs such as life satisfaction within marketing (Ata

& Sezer, 2021), impulse buying has not yet been associated with consumers' meaning in

life. However, it stands to reason that consumers with high levels of meaning in life

would not need products and services for personal fulfillment. Therefore, the following

relationship is hypothesized to extend the consumer behavior literature regarding

consumer well-being and maladaptive behavior. Thus, H4a and H4b:

> **H4a:** *There is a positive relationship between the search for meaning in life and impulse buying*.
>
> **H4b:** *There is a negative relationship between the presence of meaning in life and impulse buying.*

The Moderating Effect of Consumer Wisdom

Consumer wisdom is a recently introduced construct within the marketing

literature, and a scale to measure it has not been available until a 2021 publication (Luchs

et al., 2021). The potential of this construct is substantial, and research within marketing

suggests that future research should apply consumer wisdom in various contexts (Luchs

et al., 2021). Consumer wisdom (CW) is defined as "the pursuit of well-being for oneself

and others through mindful management of consumption-related choices and behaviors, as realized through the integrated application of Intentionality, Contemplation, Emotional Mastery, Openness, and Transcendence" (Luchs & Mick, 2018, p. 384).

Prior research demonstrates that consumer wisdom is positively associated with well-being constructs, specifically life satisfaction, perceived financial well-being, personal relationship support, and job satisfaction (Luchs et al., 2021). Specifically, (Luchs et al., 2021) encourage researchers to apply consumer wisdom to promote "wisdom in their consumption decisions and behaviors, both concerning promoting their well-being and the greater good through their consumption behaviors" (Luchs et al., 2021, p. 20). Furthermore, researchers suggest that studies should be conducted in a social media context (Luchs et al., 2021). Therefore, given the current findings related to consumer wisdom, consumer wisdom may mitigate the strength of the negative relationships between both self-esteem and impulse buying and meaningful life and impulse buying. Thus, H5, H6a, and H6b:

> **H5:** *Consumer wisdom decreases the strength of the negative relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying.*
>
> **H6a:** *Consumer wisdom decreases the strength of the positive relationship between the search for meaning in life and impulse buying.*
>
> **H6b**: *Consumer wisdom decreases the strength of the negative relationship between the presence of meaning in life and impulse buying.*

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 presents the proposed study method, including the sampling method, the sample, the data collection technique, the study design, the research scope, and the measures used within the study.

Research Scope

The amount of time consumers spend on social media daily continues to rise. However, little research in the marketing discipline considers how social media consumption affects consumer well-being and purchase behavior. Though best social media marketing practices are heavily explored in our discipline, it is just as important to consider how social media can impact consumers. Therefore, a novel empirical exploration of how objective social media usage can impact the well-being behavior of consumers is both warranted and important. Thus, this dissertation specifically explores three main issues: 1) the effect that objective social media usage has on consumer well-being-related factors, 2) the effect that self-esteem, the search for meaning in life, and the presence of meaning in life have on impulse buying, and 3) consumer wisdom moderating the effects of self-esteem, the search for meaning in life, and the presence of meaning in life on impulse buying. Implications from this study are expected to provide beneficial insight for both research and practice.

Sample

The sample was collected by a Qualtrics panel, and the survey was also conducted via Qualtrics. The sample consisted of 277 young adults (ages 18-40). Young adults are the heaviest users of social media (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Therefore, this dissertation explored this specific age group. All respondents were assured of their privacy and anonymity at the beginning of the survey. The proposed model was analyzed via AMOS in SPSS, and the moderated mediation analysis was conducted via the plug-in PROCESS.

The Study

The survey was administered with the collaboration of a Qualtrics project manager who assisted in obtaining fully completed survey responses. At the beginning of the survey, all respondents were given the following message, which communicated the survey context:

"We are seeking feedback on the experience of individuals ages 18-40 who use social media. Please prepare to take this survey on an Apple iPhone. Please note, you will be required to toggle back and forth between the settings section of your phone, the survey, and your photos."

After the introduction, respondents were required to pass through the following screening questions to move forward with the survey:

1) Are you between 18 and 40 years of age?

2) Are you an iPhone user?

3) Do you know how to take a screenshot on your iPhone?

4) Do you currently use social media on your iPhone?

5) Has your Screen Time application on your iPhone been turned on for more than a week?

The respondents who met the screening questions' criteria then entered into a section of the survey that required the respondent to "access a particular section of your iPhone's Screen Time feature which is found within the Setting of your phone." They were then asked to "follow the upcoming visual steps to complete this portion of the survey," which required respondents to report their social media usage times into a matrix table and then upload a screenshot validating the numbers they entered. These visual steps will be outlined in the methods section.

The questions that included directions and a screenshot upload aspect were not randomized within the survey and were viewed first by all respondents. This decision was made to offset respondent fatigue due to these questions requiring the most effort. However, after this section of the survey, all other sections randomized the dependent variables and other constructs of interest in the survey accordingly. The constructs of interest include self-esteem, meaning in life, impulse buying, and consumer wisdom. In addition, several descriptive statistical questions are also included, such as age, sex, socioeconomic status, and geographic region. These efforts resulted in a sample size comprising 106 males and 171 females with a total N=277.

Measures

Actual Social Media Usage (ASMU)

The independent variable within this study is actual social media usage. Respondents were required to submit their objective usage times at the beginning of the survey before moving on to any further questions. actual social media usage (ASMU) can

best be described as the objective measure of daily and aggregate weekly use of social media. For this study, social media platforms were specified as the following applications: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn.

In order to ensure and validate an objective ASMU time, this study incorporated directions for respondents to follow to find and report their usage times via the Screen Time application (available on both iPhone and Android smartphones). This dissertation follows the research method used by Sewall et al. (2020) to retrieve this information from participants by carrying out the following steps:

1) Participants were provided detailed instructions (including visual aids) by first directing them to the Screen Time application.

2) Participants were then directed to access and report their weekly time spent in the Social Networking category, which includes a compilation of their time spent specifically on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn.

3) For daily and weekly ASMU, participants were instructed to fill in the blank fields in the questionnaire corresponding to the number of hours (constrained at 0 and 168) and the number of minutes (constrained at 0 and 59) shown in the Screen Time application for the category of Social Networking.

4) After obtaining the data from steps 1-3, the researcher will calculate the daily averages for both categories by dividing the weekly values provided by 7.

In addition to requiring respondents to fill in the blanks related to their reported social media usage times, this study also required respondents to upload a screenshot of their reported time to validate their responses. Specifically, this survey required respondents to answer both open-ended and Likert scale questions. The survey also required respondents to follow specific Screen Time-related directions on their smartphones, take screenshots of specific screens within last week's Screen Time, and then upload their screenshots accordingly. The specific direction in this portion of the survey read, "the following section will require you to access a particular section of your iPhone's Screen Time application. Please follow the upcoming visual steps to complete this portion of the survey." Unfortunately, this facet of the survey caused a significant drop in the quality of responses which caused the collection to take much longer than anticipated. Specifically, though the survey had no issues with respondents completing the survey, most respondents uploaded incorrect/unrelated/inappropriate screenshots that were deemed not to be "quality" responses, and had to be removed from the sample accordingly. Therefore, additional effort and time were required to filter through each response and corresponding upload (ASMU and Screen Time specifically) to determine adequate quality. The quality filtering process was made possible using the unique identifier (UI) number affiliated with each response and uploaded screenshot. Due to Qualtrics only wanting to send in small batches of responses at a time, 15 rounds of the quality response filtering process took place and are detailed in Appendix C.

Though tedious, this process allowed all responses and the coding of the critical ASMU variable to be verified by objective numbers that could not be subject to error via typos, respondent bias, and subjective responses. As a result, out of the 9,359 attempts of

the survey, 1286 were fully completed, and ~20% of them provided quality (appropriate) upload responses. Once the quality responses and uploads were collected, a column for each social media platform was created, and numbers from each respondent's upload were manually coded accordingly. After all of the social media columns (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn) had been coded for each response, a final ASMU column was created. The ASMU column comprised the sum of all the time spent on average in the previous week from the platforms mentioned above. In other words, ASMU is the total amount of minutes spent on all social media accounts based on the respondents' average usage from the previous week. The average ASMU time spent in minutes per week ranged from 30 minutes to 3532 minutes. However, overall, respondents spent on average 806 minutes per week, or 2 hours and 31 minutes per day on social media. ASMU then served as a continuous independent variable for the model.

Questions regarding the dependent variables and other questions of interest remained in the survey, in a randomized order. The constructs of interest include self-esteem, meaning in life, impulse buying, and consumer wisdom. In addition, several descriptive statistical questions are also included, such as age, sex, and education level.

Self-Esteem

A study conducted by Heatherton and Polivy (1991) examined "the measurement of short-lived (i.e., state) changes in self-esteem" (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991, pg. 895). This particular scale was deemed a good fit for the model within this dissertation due to the momentary nature of social media. Heatherton and Polivy (1991) point out that events and/or situational factors can momentarily alter the self-esteem of individuals. Thus, the

ability to examine such temporary fluctuations in self-esteem in the context of social media usage by using this specific measurement was ideal. As a result, twenty items from the Heatherton and Polivy (1991) self-esteem scale were collected to measure what an individual was thinking at that very moment regarding self-esteem-related items.

Specifically, Heatherton and Polivy's (1991) scale included three primary factors of self-esteem: Performance, Social, and Appearance. For this study, only the factor of Appearance (items 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, and 16) was used. All items contained the same stem: "Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements…". Some of the items included "... I feel good about myself, and … I am pleased with my appearance right now". All items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from I strongly disagree to I strongly agree.

Meaning in Life

Ten items from the Steger et al., (2006) scale were collected to assess and measure the presence of and search for meaning in life. There were two main factors in the Steger et al., (2006) scale, the search for meaning in life and the presence of meaning in life. For this study, both the meaning in life and search for meaning in life factors were used, and each was composed of five items. All items contained the same stem: "Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements…". Some of the items included "... I understand my life's meaning, and … I am always looking to find my life's purpose". All items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from Absolutely Untrue to Absolutely True.

Impulse Buying

Nine items from the Rook and Fisher (1995) scale were collected to assess and measure "a consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically" (Rook & Fisher 1009, p. 306). All items contained the same stem: "Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements…". Some of the items included "... I buy things according to how I feel at the moment, and … "Just do it" describes the way I buy things." All items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Consumer Wisdom - Reasoning

As mentioned previously, the consumer wisdom scale consists of six dimensions (Responsibility, Purpose, Flexibility, Perspective, Reasoning, and Sustainability) composed of 24 items. However, for this study, only the subscale of consumer wisdom reasoning was used in the final analysis. Therefore, four items (items 17, 18, 19, and 20) from the Luchs et al., (2021) consumer wisdom (reasoning) subscale were utilized to measure the level of a consumer's wisdom in the context of reasoning. All items contained the same stem: "How well (or how often) does each of the following statements describe you? ..." Some of the items included "... I know when I've done enough research to make a good purchase decision, and …Before buying something, I know how to get the information that I need to make great choices". All items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from Never to Always.

Model Fit and Validity

The proposed conceptual model in Figure 2.1 was assessed using SPSS AMOS. The first step was to assess the measurement model by conducting a 4-factor

confirmatory factor analysis. This analysis resulted in an appropriate fit according to the

factor loadings, model fit, average variance extracted, reliability, and validity assessments

(Hair et al., 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Additionally, none of the control variables

significantly affected the hypothesized relationships.

Direct, Indirect, and Moderating Effects

As mentioned above, the proposed conceptual model and the hypotheses within the

model were first assessed and measured by SPSS AMOS. Next, to measure the

moderation effects, the macro program PROCESS in SPSS was used. Specifically, Model

14 (Figure 3.2) (Hayes, 2017) was selected due to its alignment with the proposed model

(Figure 3.1). Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show Model 14 from Hayes (2013) compared to this

study's conceptual model.
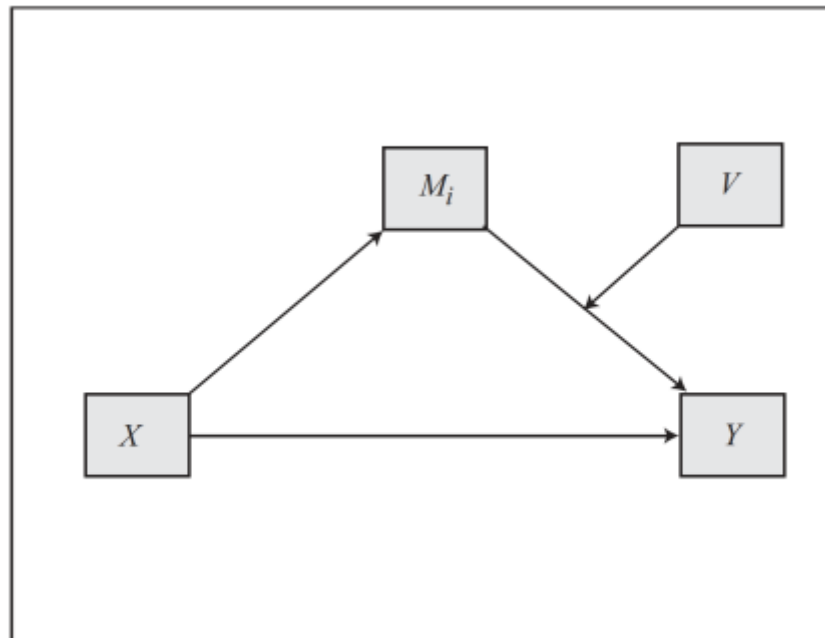
Figure 3.1: *PROCESS Model 14*

This model proposes that ASMU (X) affects both self-esteem (M1) and search for meaning in life (M2) and the presence of meaning in life (M3). Additionally, self-esteem (M1), search for meaning in life (M2), and presence of meaning in life (M3) are expected to affect impulse buying (Y). Lastly, the relationship between self-esteem (M1) and impulse buying (Y), the relationship between the search for meaning in life (M2) and impulse buying (Y), as well as the relationship between the presence of meaning in life (M3) and impulse buying (Y), are suggested to each be moderated by consumer wisdom - reasonability (V).

Conclusion

By exploring how social media usage affects consumer well-being and behavior, this research extends the consumer behavior literature in the contexts of well-being, digital, and social media marketing. Furthermore, this study is one of the first to collect an objective social media usage data and explore empirical linkages accordingly.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

The data from the main study were collected from a Qualtrics panel from a Qualtrics survey. The data set was then used to test the hypothesized model. All analyses were conducted using SPSS software.

Quantitative Main Study

The Qualtrics survey yielded 277 respondents who were each compensated by Qualtrics for providing complete, quality responses. Respondents were removed if they failed to pass two attention check questions or if they failed to meet the quality upload requirements detailed in Chapter 3. The sample consisted of 171 males, and 106 females. Of the 177 respondents, 72 were between the ages of 18-24, 111 were between the ages of 25-32, and 94 were between the ages of 33-40. The education and household incomes of the respondents are also shown below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	Participants	Percentage
Education		
Some High School	10	3.6%
High School/Equivalent	43	15.5%
Some College	75	27.1%
Associate's Degree	29	10.5%
Bachelor's Degree	80	28.9%
Master's Degree	35	12.6%
Doctorate Degree	2	0.7%
Professional Degree (JD, MD)	3	1.1%
Annual Household Income		
Less than $10,000	21	7.6%
$10,000 to $19,999	16	5.8%
$20,000 to $29,999	34	12.3%
$30,000 to $39,999	21	7.6%
$40,000 to $49,999	20	7.2%
$50,000 to $59,999	29	10.5%
$60,000 to $69,999	20	7.2%
$70,000 to $79,999	25	9.0%
$80,000 to $89,999	18	6.5%
$90,000 to $99,999	11	4.0%
$100,000 to $149,999	46	16.6%
$150,000 or more	16	5.8%

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Using the data collected from the 277 respondents, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The initial CFA analysis included all of the items for each construct and the resulting in adequate fit. Specifically, the chi-squared was found to be significant (Chi-square = 809.86, df = 367, p = 0.000). Next, based on the sample size (Hair et al., 2019), an appropriate model fit was found according to these additional

indices: CFI of 0.917, NFI of 0.86, TLI of 0.908, GFI of 0.845, and RMSEA of 0.066,

(90% CI HI = 0.072, LO = 0.060).

As a result of this step, items 6 and 11 from the self-esteem factor were removed.

For the construct of impulse buying, items 6, 7, and 8 were also dropped. Constructs of

meaning in life (both search for meaning in life and presence of meaning in life) and

consumer wisdom reasoning retained all items due to each of them loading above 0.7.

After removing the items mentioned above, the final CFA analysis resulted in a good

model fit, which was determined by analyzing several commonly used model fit indices.

First, the chi-square statistic was found to be significant (Chi-square = 551.86, df = 242,

p = 0.000). Next, based on the sample size (Hair et al., 2019), an appropriate model fit

was found according to these additional indices: CFI of 0.931, NFI of 0.884, TLI of 0.92,

GFI of 0.845, SRMR of.0656, and RMSEA of 0.068, (90% CI HI = 0.075, LO = 0.060).

Another commonly reported analysis recommended by (Hair et al., 2019) is a

validity analysis that considers convergent validity (factors loading above 0.70). Average

variance extracted (each construct being >0.50) suggests adequate discriminant

reliability. The study's construct reliabilities for each latent factor exceed 0.70,

suggesting convergent validity. The results displayed in Table 4.2 also demonstrate

discriminant validity found in the final CFA analysis. Figure 4.1 shows the CFA model

fit.

Table 4.2

Validity Analysis

	CR	AVE	IB	MLP	CWR	SEA	MLS
IB	0.934	0.702	0.838				
MLP	0.926	0.716	-0.215**	0.846			
CWR	0.865	0.615	-0.180**	0.264***	0.784		
SEA	0.852	0.590	-0.156*	0.420***	0.167*	0.768	
MLS	0.891	0.622	0.131*	-0.245***	0.216**	-0.139*	0.789

*Note: *p < 0.05 | **p < 0.01 | ***p < 0.00*
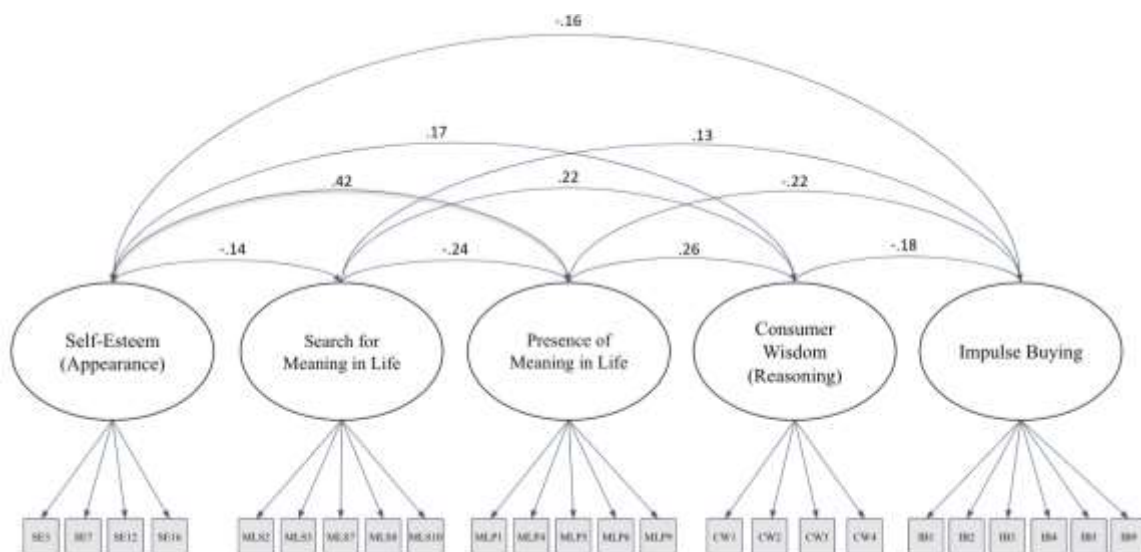
Figure 4.1: *CFA Model Fit*

Structural Model Specifications

In AMOS, a structural equation model (SEM) that excluded the moderation analysis was used to analyze hypothesized relationships H1-H4b in the conceptual model (see Figure 4.2). The results indicate acceptable model fit to the data: χ^2 (218) = 544.05, p < 0.00; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.74. The CFI value and RMSEA fall within acceptable

ranges (Hair et al., 2010; Hu and Bentler, 1999). None of the control variables

significantly affected the hypothesized relationships.
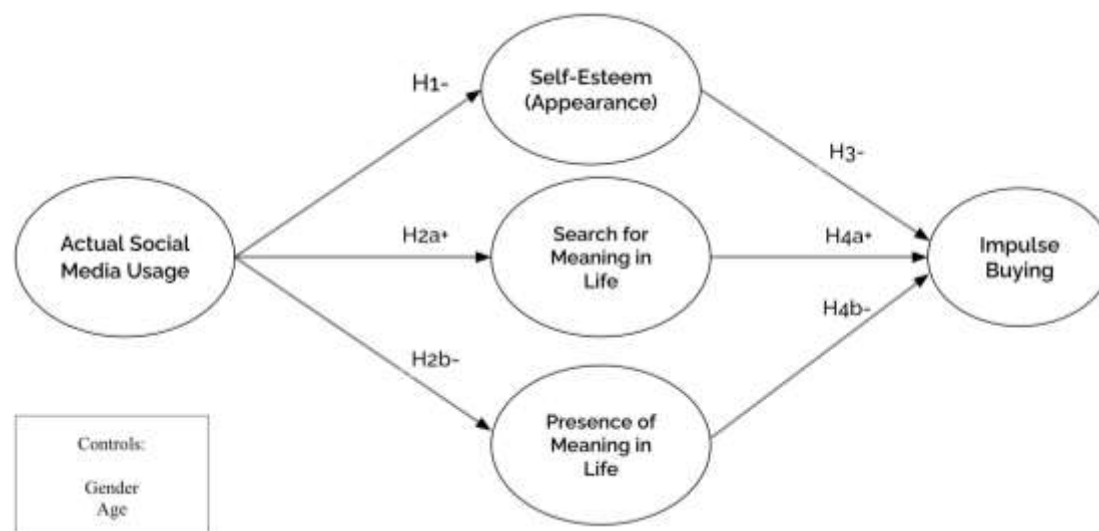
Figure 4.2: *SEM Model Excluding Moderation*

Common Method Bias Consideration

A common research concern worth addressing is Common Method Bias (CMB).

Though some scholars would recommend that CMB is prevalent in data and should be

tested accordingly, other scholars would disagree. This study aligns with the belief that

testing for CMB is unnecessary for the following reasons. First, CMV is not as prevalent

as some researchers may think. In fact, according to Fuller et al., (2016), issues related to

CMV are often overemphasized and do not pose a substantial threat to research findings.

Second, though some researchers have expressed concern regarding the inflation of

observed variables, this has been contradicted by studies that have shown that not all

method variance even causes inflation (Spector et al., 2017). Third, it has been shown

that Harman's one-factor test (Fuller et al., 2016), the correlational marker technique

(Richardson et al., 2009), and the unmeasured latent method construct technique (ULMC;

Richardson et al., 2009; Chin et al., 2012) can all produce false positives and false

negatives. In addition, these tests cannot consistently identify CMV when it is there and

sometimes indicating bias when there is none. Lastly, it is important to note that models

with interactions, especially models that explore moderated mediation, such as the one in

this study, cannot produce results due to CMB (Evans, 1985; Siemsen et al., 2010). Thus,

CMB was not tested in this study for the reasons specified above.

Structural Model Results

Hypothesis 1 is not supported; as actual social media usage is not significantly

related to self-esteem Appearance ($p = ns$). Hypothesis 2a and 2b were also not

supported, as actual social media usage was not significantly related to either search for

meaning in life or presence of meaning in life. Hypothesis 3 was not supported, as self-

esteem Appearance was not significantly related to impulse buying. Similarly, hypothesis

4a was not supported, as the search for meaning in life was not significantly related to

impulse buying. However, support was found for hypothesis H4b as the presence of

meaning in life is significantly related to impulse buying ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < 0.05$). A

summary of these results is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Hypothesis Outcomes

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	Beta Value (β) with Significance (p value)	Results
H1	Actual Social Media Usage on Self-Esteem (Appearance) (-)	NS	Not supported
H2a	Actual Social Media Usage on Search for Meaning in Life (+)	NS	Not supported
H2b	Actual Social Media Usage on Presence of Meaning in Life (-)	NS	Not supported
H3	Self Esteem (Appearance) on Impulse buying (-)	NS	Not supported
H4a	Search for Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (+)	NS	Not supported
H4b	Presence of Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (-)	($\beta = -0.16; p=<0.01$)	Supported

Moderation Hypotheses

SPSS PROCESS was used to test the moderation hypotheses shown in Figure 4.3.

Specifically, the moderating effect of consumer wisdom (Reason) on the following

relationships was explored: self-esteem (Appearance) and impulse buying (H5), search

for meaning in life, and impulse buying (H6a), and presence of meaning in life (H6b).

Each of the constructs (excluding ASMU and the covariates age and gender used in this

analysis were summated factor scores. Age and gender were controlled as covariates in

the PROCESS model, just as they were in the SEM model. PROCESS Model 14 allowed

for the moderation hypotheses to be tested simultaneously, and the results of these

findings can be found in Table 4.4 and structural model conclusions can be found in

Table 4.5.
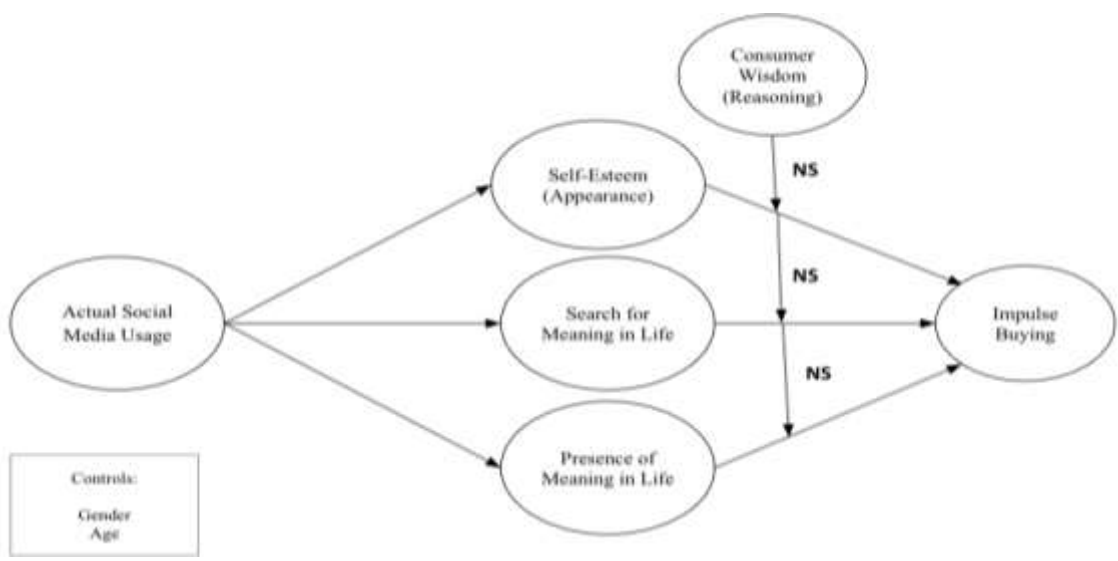
Figure 4.3: *PROCESS Model 14 Conceptual Model*

Table 4.4

PROCESS Moderation Interaction Relationship Estimates

Structural Path	Unstandardized Regression Weight *(*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)*
consumer wisdom (Reason) → self-esteem (Appearance)/impulse buying	NS
consumer wisdom (Reason) → search for meaning in life /impulse buying	NS
consumer wisdom (Reason) → presence of meaning in life /impulse buying	NS

Table 4.5

Structural Model Conclusions

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	Beta Value (β) with Significance (p value)	Results
H5	Consumer Wisdom moderating relationship between Self-Esteem and Impulse buying.	NS	Not supported
H6a	Consumer Wisdom moderating relationship between Search for Meaning in Life and Impulse buying.	NS	Not supported
H6b	Consumer Wisdom moderating relationship between Presence of Meaning in Life and Impulse buying.	NS	Not supported

Conclusion

Chapter 4 showcases the statistical analysis and findings from a Qualtrics sample of 277 to test H1-H6b in the proposed model. The proposed model was tested and showed no support for any of the hypothesized relationships, except for H4b, as the presence of meaning in life was shown to be significantly negatively related to impulse buying. The following post hoc analysis section aims to examine and assess each of the social media platforms as the independent variable of the model accordingly.

Post-Hoc Analysis

As mentioned previously, various studies have taken the approach of measuring social media usage as overall time spent across all social media platforms. Furthermore, many of these studies considered the overall subjective or estimated time spent on all social media platforms as an appropriate form of measurement. However, in 2020, a study conducted by Sewall et al., highlighted the issues of this form of subjective social media measurement and called into question the validity and accuracy of such studies

that relied on self-reported estimates of time spent on social media. Therefore, the aforementioned study sought to collect and measure the subjective overall actual social media usage times across all platforms and did so successfully.

ESMU vs. AMSU

Though the comparison of estimated social media usage to actual social media usage was not a part of the original study, the ESMU measure was collected with the intention to compare it to ASMU. The goal of this collection and juxtaposition was to corroborate the concerns raised by Sewall et al., 2020, and to better understand the extent of the differences between the two forms of social media measurement. The resulting analysis yielded findings in line with Sewall (2020), which highlighted the tendency for respondents to overestimate their time spent on social media. The confirmation of this discrepancy further supports the need for objective measurement to be used exclusively. The details of this comparison are discussed below.

ASMU

On average, respondents spent 806 minutes per week, or 2 hours and 31 minutes per day across all social media platforms. Notably, this amount of time is very close to the number reported in the literature review of this dissertation. According to Kemp (2020), the average time spent consuming social media per day per individual was 1 hour and 44 minutes, and in just five short years, the average time grew by 38%. By 2020, the average time spent consuming social media per day per individual was found to be 2 hours and 24 minutes. Therefore, our social media usage has increased by 7 minutes (an 8% increase) in just two short years, showcasing a continued upward trajectory of social media consumption.

ESMU

In line with the research conducted by Sewall et al. (2020), respondents estimated social media usage time was substantially different from the actual time spent on social media. On average, the respondents reported spending an estimated 1,142 minutes per week on social media, which is 3 hours and 11 minutes per day. In other words, the self-reported estimated social media usage was inflated by 40 minutes from what the objective, actual social media usage time recorded during the survey collection. Thus, this discrepancy is consistent with the findings of Sewall et al., (2020) and certainly calls into question the validity and accuracy of findings reported in previous studies that used such forms of subjective measurement.

ASMU of Each Social Media Platform as the Independent Variable

Due to the insignificant findings related to ASMU, further exploration was warranted, and several adjustments were made to the model. First, to rule out that both forms of social media overall usage were not significant, a replication of the dissertation model with ESMU as the independent variable was analyzed. However, the results from this run did not affect the well-being-related variables of self-esteem, appearance, search for meaning in life, and presence of meaning in life. Based on these findings, it was determined that the insignificance of the model extended beyond the discrepancies between ESMU and ASMU. One explanation for the insignificance could be that social media usage is measured in aggregate. For example, it is reasonable to speculate that only certain social media platforms negatively affect consumers, while other platforms may be neutral or even positively affect consumers. Thus, instead of considering all social media usage time holistically with ASMU as the independent variable, the objective time spent

on each social media platform should be considered individually. To the author's

knowledge, there has yet to be a study that conducts an analysis that allows for the

comparison of subjective (ESMU) and objective (ASMU) social media measurement and

considers the effects related to each social media platform independently. Therefore, the

following section will explore the effects of specific platforms' social media usage on

consumer well-being-related variables. For parsimony, the original dissertation model

will remain. Only the independent variable (running each social media platform -

Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn as the

IV) will change. Table 4.6 presents the Pearson correlations between the variables of

interest.

Table 4.6

Preliminary Correlation Analysis

		MLP	MLS	IM	SEA	Facebook	Instagram	Tiktok	Snapchat	Twitter	LinkedIn
MLP	Correlation	1									
	Sig. (2-tailed)										
MLS	Correlation	-.263**	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0									
IM	Correlation	-.204**	.126*	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.037								
SEA	Correlation	.368**	-.151*	-.144*	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.012	0.017							
Facebook	Correlation	-0.002	-.121*	0.039	-.136*	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.971	0.044	0.52	0.024						
Instagram	Correlation	0.042	0.081	-0.073	.125*	-.129*	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.485	0.181	0.224	0.038	0.032					
Tiktok	Correlation	-0.075	0.105	.132*	-0.106	-.147*	-0.094	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.215	0.082	0.028	0.079	0.015	0.118				
Snapchat	Correlation	-0.054	0.072	0.02	0.025	-0.099	-0.027	0.07	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.37	0.233	0.738	0.676	0.099	0.66	0.246			
Twitter	Correlation	0.036	0.083	0.075	0.035	-0.071	0.008	-0.021	-0.055	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.554	0.167	0.215	0.557	0.24	0.894	0.722	0.365		
LinkedIn	Correlation	0.033	-0.022	-0.028	-0.025	-0.053	0.005	-0.07	-0.052	-0.012	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.59	0.71	0.643	0.682	0.382	0.928	0.248	0.391	0.845	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Post - Hoc SEM - Facebook

The SEM model and analysis from the study within the dissertation were conducted. However, instead of using ASMU as the independent variable (IV), Facebook's ASMU was the IV.

In AMOS, a structural equation model (SEM) that excluded the moderation analysis was used to analyze hypothesized relationships H1-H4b in the conceptual model (see Figure 2.1). The results indicate acceptable model fit to the data: χ^2 (218) = 550.25, p < 0.00; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.74. The CFI value and RMSEA fall within acceptable ranges (Hair et al., 2010; Hu and Bentler, 1999). None of the control variables significantly affected the hypothesized relationships. Table 4.7 contains the Facebook hypothesis outcomes.
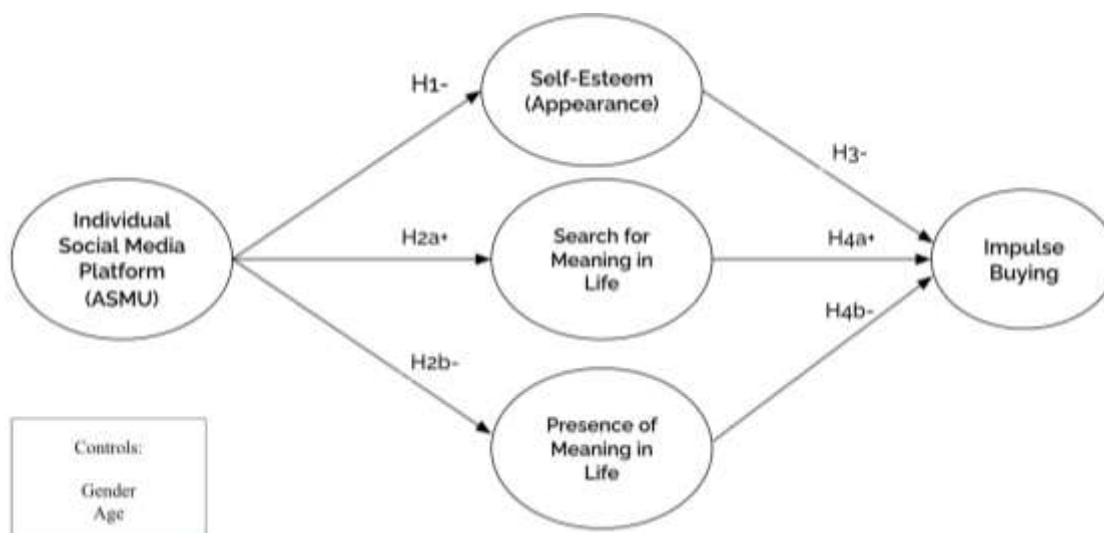

Figure 4.4: *SEM Model with alternating Independent Variables*

Table 4.7

Facebook Hypothesis Outcomes

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	Beta Value (*β*) with Significance (*p* value)	Results
H1	Facebook (ASMU) on Self-Esteem (Appearance) (-)	(*β*= -0.13; *p*=<0.06)	Supported
H2a	Facebook (ASMU) on Search for Meaning in Life (+)	NS	Not Supported
H2b	Facebook (ASMU) on Presence of Meaning in Life (-)	NS	Not supported
H3	Self Esteem (Appearance) on Impulse buying (-)	NS	Not supported
H4a	Search for Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (+)	NS	Not supported
H4b	Presence of Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (-)	(*β*= -0.16; *p*=<0.01)	Supported

Post - Hoc SEM - Instagram

The SEM model and analysis from the study within the dissertation were

conducted. However, instead of using ASMU as the independent variable (IV),

Instagram's ASMU was the IV.

In AMOS, a structural equation model (SEM) that excluded the moderation

analysis was used to analyze hypothesized relationships H1-H4b in the conceptual model.

The results indicate acceptable model fit to the data: χ^2 (218) = 548.47, $p < 0.00$; CFI =

0.92; RMSEA = 0.74. The CFI value and RMSEA fall within acceptable ranges (Hair et

al*.,* 2010; Hu and Bentler, 1999). None of the control variables significantly affected the

hypothesized relationships. Table 4.8 contains the Instagram hypothesis outcomes.

Table 4.8

Instagram Hypothesis Outcomes

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	Beta Value (β) with Significance (p value)	Results
H1	Instagram (ASMU) on Self-Esteem (Appearance) (-)	NS	Not Supported
H2a	Instagram (ASMU) on Search for Meaning in Life (+)	NS	Not Supported
H2b	Instagram (ASMU) on Presence of Meaning in Life (-)	NS	Not supported
H3	Self Esteem (Appearance) on Impulse buying (-)	NS	Not supported
H4a	Search for Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (+)	NS	Not supported
H4b	Presence of Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (-)	(β= -0.16; p=<0.01)	Supported

Post - Hoc SEM - TikTok

The SEM model and analysis from the study within the dissertation were
conducted. However, instead of using ASMU as the independent variable (IV), TikTok's
ASMU was the IV.

In AMOS, a structural equation model (SEM) that excluded the moderation
analysis was used to analyze hypothesized relationships H1-H4b in the conceptual model
(see Figure 2.1). The results indicate acceptable model fit to the data: χ^2 (218) = 548.47, p
< 0.00; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.74. The CFI value and RMSEA fall within acceptable
ranges (Hair et al*.,* 2010; Hu and Bentler, 1999). None of the control variables
significantly affected the hypothesized relationships. Table 4.9 contains the Tiktok
hypothesis outcomes.

Table 4.9

TikTok Hypothesis Outcomes

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	Beta Value (β) with Significance (p value)	Results
H1	TikTok (ASMU) on Self-Esteem (Appearance) (-)	(β= -0.12; p=<0.09)	Supported
H2a	TikTok (ASMU) on Search for Meaning in Life (+)	NS	Not Supported
H2b	TikTok (ASMU) on Presence of Meaning in Life (-)	NS	Not supported
H3	Self Esteem (Appearance) on Impulse buying (-)	NS	Not supported
H4a	Search for Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (+)	NS	Not supported
H4b	Presence of Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (-)	(β= -0.16; p=<0.01)	Supported

Post-Hoc SEM - Snapchat

The SEM model and analysis from the study within the dissertation was conducted. However, instead of using ASMU as the independent variable (IV), Snapchat's ASMU was the IV.

In AMOS, a structural equation model (SEM) that excluded the moderation analysis was used to analyze hypothesized relationships H1-H4b in the conceptual model (see Figure 2.1). The results indicate acceptable model fit to the data: χ^2 (218) = 543.18, p < 0.00; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.74. The CFI value and RMSEA fall within acceptable ranges (Hair et al.*,* 2010; Hu and Bentler, 1999). None of the control variables significantly affected the hypothesized relationships. Table 4.10 contains the Snapchat hypothesis outcomes.

Table 4.10

Snapchat Hypothesis Outcomes

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	Beta Value (β) with Significance (p value)	Results
H1	Snapchat (ASMU) on Self-Esteem (Appearance) (-)	NS	Not Supported
H2a	Snapchat (ASMU) on Search for Meaning in Life (+)	NS	Not Supported
H2b	Snapchat (ASMU) on Presence of Meaning in Life (-)	NS	Not supported
H3	Self Esteem (Appearance) on Impulse buying (-)	NS	Not supported
H4a	Search for Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (+)	NS	Not supported
H4b	Presence of Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (-)	(β= -0.16; p=<0.01)	Supported

Post - Hoc SEM - Twitter

The SEM model and analysis from the study within the dissertation was conducted. However, instead of using ASMU as the independent variable (IV), Twitter's ASMU was the IV.

In AMOS, a structural equation model (SEM) that excluded the moderation analysis was used to analyze hypothesized relationships H1-H4b in the conceptual model (see Figure 2.1). The results indicate acceptable model fit to the data: χ^2 (218) = 551.40, p < 0.00; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.74. The CFI value and RMSEA fall within acceptable ranges (Hair et al., 2010; Hu and Bentler, 1999). None of the control variables significantly affected the hypothesized relationships. Table 4.11 contains the Twitter hypothesis outcomes.

Table 4.11

Twitter Hypothesis Outcomes

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	Beta Value (β) with Significance (*p* value)	Results
H1	Twitter (ASMU) on Self-Esteem (Appearance) (-)	NS	Not Supported
H2a	Twitter (ASMU) on Search for Meaning in Life (+)	NS	Not Supported
H2b	Twitter (ASMU) on Presence of Meaning in Life (-)	NS	Not supported
H3	Self Esteem (Appearance) on Impulse buying (-)	NS	Not supported
H4a	Search for Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (+)	NS	Not supported
H4b	Presence of Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (-)	(β= -0.16; *p*=<0.01)	Supported

Post-Hoc SEM - LinkedIn

The SEM model and analysis from the study within the dissertation was

conducted. However, instead of using ASMU as the independent variable (IV),

LinkedIn's ASMU was the IV.

In AMOS, a structural equation model (SEM) that excluded the moderation

analysis was used to analyze hypothesized relationships H1-H4b in the conceptual model

(see Figure 2.1). The results indicate acceptable model fit to the data: χ^2 (218) = 553.62, *p*

< 0.00; CFI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.75. The CFI value and RMSEA fall within acceptable

ranges (Hair et al., 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999). None of the control variables significantly

affected the hypothesized relationships. Table 4.12 contains the LinkedIn hypothesis

outcomes.

Table 4.12

LinkedIn Hypothesis Outcomes

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	Beta Value (β) with Significance (p value)	Results
H1	LinkedIn (ASMU) on Self-Esteem (Appearance) (-)	NS	Not Supported
H2a	LinkedIn (ASMU) on Search for Meaning in Life (+)	NS	Not Supported
H2b	LinkedIn (ASMU) on Presence of Meaning in Life (-)	NS	Not supported
H3	Self Esteem (Appearance) on Impulse buying (-)	NS	Not supported
H4a	Search for Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (+)	NS	Not supported
H4b	Presence of Meaning in Life on Impulse buying (-)	(β= -0.16; p=<0.01)	Supported

Post-Hoc Overall Conclusion

There are several important insights gained from this post-hoc analysis. First, analysis has shown that there is a high chance that studies that used ESMU as a measurement reported inaccurate and invalid results. This post-hoc analysis builds upon the work of Sewall et al., (2020) by showcasing that subjective (ESMU) times are substantially different from objective (ASMU) times. Therefore, all future studies should avoid using self-reported measurements of social media usage. Second, though ASMU is more accurate and thus a better measure than ESMU, ASMU of all social media platforms is not an optimal measure to utilize either. Instead, the objective, actual social media usage of specific platforms should be considered and explored concerning consumer behavior-related variables in future research. Third, when each of the social media platforms was respectively considered as the independent variable, the significance of the associations varied, and the results are as follows:

Specifically, time spent on Snapchat, Twitter, and LinkedIn did not affect the well-being-related variables (self-esteem appearance, search for meaning in life, and presence of meaning in life). However, Facebook and Tiktok did yield noteworthy significant findings. For example, respondents who spent more time on Facebook and Tiktok were significantly associated with lower self-esteem (appearance).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This dissertation explored the effect that social media usage could have on well-being-related variables and consumer behavior. It also explored a consumer wisdom construct as a way to dampen the strength of hypothesized relationships that led to impulsive behavior. Specifically, the model explored the relationship between actual social media usage (ASMU) with the well-being related variables of self-esteem (appearance), search for meaning in life, and the presence of meaning. It also explored the effect that self-esteem (appearance), search for meaning in life, and presence of meaning in life had on impulse buying. Finally, it explored the moderating effect that consumer wisdom (reasoning) could have on the relationships between self-esteem (appearance), search for meaning in life, and the presence of meaning in life on impulse buying. The findings from this study contribute to the consumer well-being marketing literature and provide unique insights for marketers, consumers, and public policymakers.

Discussion and Future Research

This research builds upon the positive psychology theory and literature, emphasizing the importance of well-being and improving quality of life (Seligman, 2002). Studies incorporating positive psychology within the context of social media in the marketing literature are especially crucial due to the ever-increasing consumption of

social media usage and the dearth of exploration of this area thus far, especially within the marketing discipline. A current call for papers in the Journal of Psychology and Marketing even goes so far as to say that "despite brands' efforts to utilize technology to engage with customers, our knowledge in relation to positive psychology is largely non-existent" (McLean et al., 2022, pg. 2). Therefore, this research is more timely and essential than ever before.

Due to social media usage being at an all-time high, with forecasts showing that usage will only continue to increase, exploring the hypothesized relationships within social media usage was fitting. Although various studies outside of marketing had considered the impact of social media usage on various constructs, most of these studies used estimated, subjective measures of social media usage. However, subjective social media usage measures were prone to inaccuracy (Sewall et al.,). Therefore, it was imperative to conduct a study that used an objective measurement of social media usage. Objective measurement of social media usage was made possible through the Screen Time application, and exploration of future studies using this form of measurement has been highly encouraged (Parry et al., 2021; Sewall et al., 2020).

Thus, this research provides one of the first studies that consider the effect that actual social media usage has on consumer well-being-related variables and behavior; while answering calls for consideration of the impact that such usage can have on aspects of a consumer's well-being. The results of the tested hypotheses from the proposed model shed light on an area lacking in exploration while providing important insights for practitioners and future studies alike.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, *how does actual social media usage (ASMU) affect self-esteem, search for meaning in life, and presence of meaning in life?* The proposed model sought to explore the effect that an objective measure of social media usage would have on well-being-related variables. It was expected that as an individual's social media usage increased, their well-being would decrease. The proposed structural model explored the following relationships to test these relationships:

H1: There is a negative relationship between ASMU and self-esteem.

H2a: There is a positive relationship between ASMU and search for meaning in life.

H2b: There is a negative relationship between ASMU and the presence of meaning in life.

The results do not support the proposed relationships for H1-H2b, as each hypothesis was insignificant. The fact that H1 was insignificant is fascinating because it was nearly a replication hypothesis, as other studies *have* shown social media usage to have a significantly negative relationship with self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014). It was also surprising that the relationship between actual social media usage and the meaning in life variables failed to be significant because various studies have shown that social media usage decreases variables that are related to well-being (Twenge, 2018; Lin et al., 2016; Kelly et al., 2018; Frison & Eggermont, 2016; Twenge et al., 2020).

There are two primary explanations for these insignificant findings. First, building off of the work of Sewall et al., (2020), it is essential to remember that he found significant discrepancies between Estimated Social Media Social Usage (ESMU) vs. actual social media usage (ASMU).

Furthermore, nearly all published social media studies use the subjective measure of ESMU when conducting research and testing hypotheses. Therefore, it is reasonable that the previously published findings related to ESMU could be faulty and subject to revision. For example, perhaps social media usage does not affect self-esteem when considered with the actual and objective usage times. Alternatively, social media usage should not be considered in the aggregate, leading to the second explanation. Regardless, further consideration of the discrepancies between Estimated Social Media Social Usage (ESMU) vs. Actual Social Media Usage (ASMU) should be further explored in future studies and the post hoc analysis in an upcoming section. A second plausible explanation for the insignificant findings could be to consider actual social media users instead of measuring them by their parts. As mentioned previously, ASMU comprised the average weekly times that users spent on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn. However, perhaps this summated conceptualization of social media usage is too broad, causing any significance to be found to diminish. This newfound awareness brought about by these findings provides an opportunity for further exploration in future studies and the post hoc analysis in an upcoming section.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, *how does self-esteem, search for meaning in life, and presence of meaning in life affect impulse buying*? The proposed model sought to link these well-being-related variables to the maladaptive behavior of impulsive buying. It was hypothesized that as individuals consumed more social media, there would be a negative association with the well-being-related variables of self-esteem, search for meaning in life, and presence of meaning. Thus, an increased association with impulsive

purchases. Put simply, the logic behind this was that individuals would make impulse purchases to feel better about themselves. To test these relationships, the proposed structural model specifically explored the following relationships:

> **H3**: *There is a negative relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying.*

> **H4a**: *There is a positive relationship between the search for meaning in life and impulse buying.*

> **H4b**: *There is a negative relationship between the presence of meaning in life and impulse buying.*

The results do not support the proposed relationships of H3 and H4a, as each of these hypotheses was insignificant. However, H4b was significant. Each finding will be discussed below accordingly.

The insignificance of H3 was surprising due to this relationship being very close to a replication hypothesis. Several studies (Verplanken et al., 2005; Dhandra, 2020) found a negative relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying. Therefore, a similar outcome was expected of this relationship as well. One reason this study could not replicate this hypothesis may have been due to the measure only focusing on the appearance component of self-esteem. Though this aspect was chosen specifically due to social media platforms placing a heavy emphasis on appearance, future studies may also benefit from examining other aspects of self-esteem. It would also be interesting to see if future studies using a general self-esteem measure would confirm previous studies within the context of actual social media usage or if the significance of such a relationship diminishes altogether as it did in this study.

The insignificance of H4a also came as a surprise, considering studies such as (Ata and Sezer, 2021) show that well-being-related variables are negatively related to

impulse buying. Though the meaning in life construct is relatively new to the marketing literature, its potential seemed promising. Specifically, the search for meaning in life construct was expected to have a positive relationship with impulse buying due to the search for meaning in life (or a lack of meaning in life) construct being associated with negative (or maladaptive) behaviors and outcomes (Schwartz et al., 2011; Steger et al., 2008a; Park & Jeong, 2016). Therefore, it was expected that the search for meaning in life (associated with negative outcomes) would be positively associated with impulse buying (a negative outcome). One explanation for the insignificance of this relationship may be that despite the search for meaning in life (or lack of meaning in life) having associations with maladaptive behavior, impulse buying simply is an anomaly. Another potential explanation for the insignificance of this relationship may again be due to the independent variable in this model being composed of all social media platforms in aggregate. Instead, future studies are encouraged to reexamine this relationship with individual social media platforms serving as the independent variable. The post hoc analysis in the upcoming section will examine this accordingly.

In contrast to the search for meaning in life not affecting impulse buying, the presence of meaning in life on impulse buying was significant. This finding was in line with various studies that pointed to meaning in life is associated with various positive outcomes (Zika and Chamberlain, 1992; Steger et al., 2006; Steger et al., 2008; King et al., 2006) while also having significant negative associations with maladaptive outcomes such as anxiety and depression (Steger et al., 2006). Therefore, though unprecedented with this specific relationship, these findings were logical and expected.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked, *does consumer wisdom moderate the strength of the relationships between self-esteem, search for meaning in life, presence of meaning in life, and impulse buying?* The proposed model sought to uncover a moderator that could dampen the strength of the hypothesized relationships that led to the maladaptive behavior of impulse buying. Several reasons were that the moderator of consumer wisdom (reasoning) was selected. First, consumer wisdom was positively associated with well-being constructs, specifically, life satisfaction, perceived financial well-being, personal relationship support, and job satisfaction (Luchs et al., 2021). Therefore, there was the hope that this association would hold in the form of a moderator. Second, this scale had only just been introduced to the marketing literature as a new scale. Therefore, the authors encouraged future studies to incorporate it, especially in the context of social media (Luchs et al., 2021). Third, due to this construct having aspects similar to mindfulness (Luchs & Mick, 2018), which has performed well as a moderator that can offset maladaptive behavior, there was anticipation that consumer wisdom would perform similarly.

Therefore, it was hypothesized that if an individual was high in consumer wisdom (reasoning), the relationship's strength to impulse buying would be lessened. To test these relationships, the proposed structural model specifically explored the following relationships:

> **H5**: *Consumer wisdom decreases the strength of the negative relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying.*

> **H6a**: *Consumer wisdom decreases the strength of the positive relationship between the search for meaning in life and impulse buying.*

H6b*: Consumer wisdom decreases the strength of the negative relationship between the presence of meaning in life and impulse buying.*

Unfortunately, the results do not support the proposed relationships for H5-H6b. There are several reasons that these relationships were found to be insignificant. First, one explanation for the insignificant findings could be that only consumer wisdom (reasoning) was explored instead of the entire scale, with all six subfactors in aggregate being considered. The subfactor of consumer wisdom *reasoning* was selected above the others due to its ability to measure consumer wisdom in a parsimonious manner. However, the decision not to collect and measure all six subfactors of the consumer wisdom scale may have led to inaccurate results by not assessing consumer wisdom as a whole. However, the choice of not collecting all of the subscales was made because many of the subscales were outside of the realm of this paper. For example, the subscales of Flexibility and Sustainability included items such as "I like to share, swap, or trade for things with my friends and neighbors" or "I buy products from companies that promote environmental responsibility, even when they cost more." Though these areas are important, they fell outside of the scope and aim of this paper. Ideally, a scale that measured social media wisdom would have been used, but such a scale is not yet available. Therefore, though consumer wisdom (reasoning) as a moderator itself was found not to have a significant effect on the relationships mentioned, it may be beneficial for future studies to collect all six subfactors of consumer wisdom in order to assess the effect that this construct could have in its complete form. The consumer wisdom scale seems to have great potential, and it will likely provide important contributions in the right study and context. However, the consumer wisdom scale may not have been the appropriate fit for this model and particular study in hindsight. The items within this scale

were related to more broad and generalized purchases, whereas a scale related to consumer social media wisdom would have been more appropriate. Thus, alternate moderators will likely be explored for this model accordingly in the future.

Theoretical Contribution

This dissertation provides two primary theoretical contributions. First, considering social media as an aggregate of multiple social media platforms may not be the best way to explore how social media affects various outcomes. Many previous studies have taken the approach of measuring social media holistically. In fact, until Sewall (2020), many studies considered the overall estimated time spent on all social media platforms as an appropriate form of measurement. However, when Sewall et al., (2020) pointed out the flaws of this measurement, this study set out to collect and measure overall actual social media usage times across all platforms. However, due to the insignificant findings related to ASMU, the measurement issue may extend beyond the discrepancies between ESMU and ASMU. Instead, considering social media usage in aggregate as opposed to individual platforms may be an even bigger issue. In hindsight, it is reasonable to consider that not all social media usage is associated with negative repercussions. Perhaps only specific social media platforms negatively affect consumers, while other platforms may be neutral or even positively affect consumers. However, a comparison of the effects that ESMU vs. ASMU vs. individual social media platforms can have on a consumer has yet to be explored to the author's knowledge. Therefore, an important insight may be gained from this dissertation is that though ASMU is a more accurate and better measure than ESMU, ASMU of all social media platforms is not an optimal measure to consider either. Instead, actual social media usage of specific platforms ought

to be considered and explored concerning consumer behavior-related variables in future research accordingly. Thus, the post hoc analysis section explored the effects of specific platforms' social media usage on consumer well-being-related variables. Distinctions found from this analysis hold the potential to optimally measure social media usage not only in the marketing literature but across multiple disciplines.

Second, though all other hypotheses within the model were insignificant, one relationship within the model was supported. As mentioned previously, the presence of meaning in life was significantly associated with the maladaptive outcome of impulse buying. This significance is noteworthy for several reasons. First, to the author's knowledge, variables related to meaning in life had not yet been considered in the context of consumer behavior or the marketing literature in general until this model. Importantly, this finding extends beyond providing a foundation for similar research conducted in consumer behavior literature. This finding also uniquely links consumer behavior to theories related to positive psychology (Seligman, 2002), which focuses on improving well-being and quality of life. Consequently, due to the significant finding of meaning in life being negatively associated with the maladaptive outcome of impulse buying, it is plausible that the meaning in life construct can potentially provide many more valuable contributions within the marketing discipline in future studies.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations to this study. Many of which may explain why the hypothesized relationships within the model resulted mainly in insignificance. Though it was not expected that all of the hypotheses within the model would be supported, only finding significance for one relationship was disappointing. As a result, six limitations are

discussed as follows. First, one limitation of this study may have been related to two of the primary constructs only consisting of subfactors of their original constructs. For example, the self-esteem scale comprised three subfactors (appearance, social, and performance). However, only self-esteem appearance was used in the model due to the entire scale not holding together. Similarly, though consumer wisdom was composed of six subfactors (Responsibility, Purpose, Flexibility, Perspective, Reasoning, and Sustainability), the only subfactor used was consumer wisdom (Reasoning) due to some of the subcomponents not capturing what was hoped to be measured within this study.

Therefore, future studies are encouraged to consider measuring these constructs (or similar constructs) using the entire scale that includes all of the subfactors instead of only considering specific aspects. Second, this study only considers responses from individuals who fall between 18 to 40 years of age due to this group being the heaviest reported users of social media. However, future studies may benefit from sampling from a broader age range and more narrow samples. For example, collecting responses from a sample comprising a wide age range could be interesting, especially if it was juxtaposed with a narrower student sample. Moreover, such a future study could assess if the significance and strengths of the relationships differed or stayed the same between the two groups.

Third, this study only considered responses from individuals within the United States. Future research could consider sampling from different areas around the world to assess the differences in social media consumption and the effects that such consumption has on individuals worldwide. Fourth, this study only conducted one primary study using Structural Equation Modeling. It would be interesting for different methodological

approaches to be applied in similar contexts. For example, a study utilizing an experiment or a longitudinal design could be fascinating and provide more substantial results. Fifth, as previously mentioned, many respondents were removed from the sample due to not following the given directions and uploading incorrect screenshots. As a result, the few respondents who did upload the correct screenshots could be deemed a biased sample. Thus, future studies are encouraged to pursue samples that are less prone to issues related to selective attrition.

Lastly, one limitation that could be easily overcome is related to the independent variable of ASMU. As mentioned in a previous section, the variable of ASMU comprised the time spent on all social media platforms in aggregate. However, assessing social media usage in this way may have hindered the significance of relationships that may have otherwise surfaced due to the rationale that some social media platforms could be harmful, and others could be harmless. Therefore, instead of only considering ASMU in total as the independent variable, future studies ought to individually run each of the social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn) as the independent variable for the model individually and assess the results.

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APPENDIX A

MEASUREMENT SCALES

ASMU

Self-Esteem (Appearance)
Heatherton, T. F., & Polivy, J. (1991)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements…

(1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = somewhat disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 5 = Somewhat agree; 6 = agree; 7 = strongly agree).

1. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.
2. I feel that others respect and admire me.
3. I am dissatisfied with my weight. (R)
4. I feel good about myself.
5. I am pleased with my appearance right now.
6. I feel unattractive. (R)

Meaning in Life (Search and Presence)
Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements…

(1 = Absolutely Untrue; 2 = Mostly Untrue; 3 = Somewhat Untrue; 4 = Can't Say True or False; 5 = Somewhat True; 6 = Mostly True; 7 = Absolutely True).

1. I understand my life's meaning. (P)
2. I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.
3. I am always looking to find my life's purpose.
4. My life has a clear sense of purpose. (P)
5. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful. (P)
6. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose. (P)
7. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.
8. I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life. (S)
9. My life has no clear purpose. (P - Reverse Coded)
10. I am searching for meaning in my life. (S)

MLQ syntax to create Presence and Search subscales:
Presence 1, 4, 5, 6, & 9-reverse-coded
Search 2, 3, 7, 8, & 10

Impulse Buying
Rook, D. W., & Fisher, R. J. (1995)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements…

(1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = somewhat disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 5 = Somewhat agree; 6 = agree; 7 = strongly agree).

1. I often buy things spontaneously.
2. "Just do it" describes the way I buy things.
3. I often buy things without thinking.
4. "I see it, I buy it" describes me.
5. "Buy now, think about it later" describes me.
6. Sometimes I feel like buying things on the spur of the moment.
7. I buy things according to how I feel at the moment.
8. I carefully plan most of my purchases. (R)
9. Sometimes I am a bit reckless about what I buy.

Consumer Wisdom
Luchs, M. G., Mick, D. G., & Haws, K. L. (2021).

How well (or how often) does each of the following statements describe you?

(1 = never; 2 = occasionally; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = frequently; 6 = usually; 7 = always).

1. I understand which product features are the most important
2. I know when I've done enough research to make a good purchase decision
3. I know where and how to buy things so that I get the best value

Before buying something, I know how to get the information that I need to make great choices

APPENDIX B
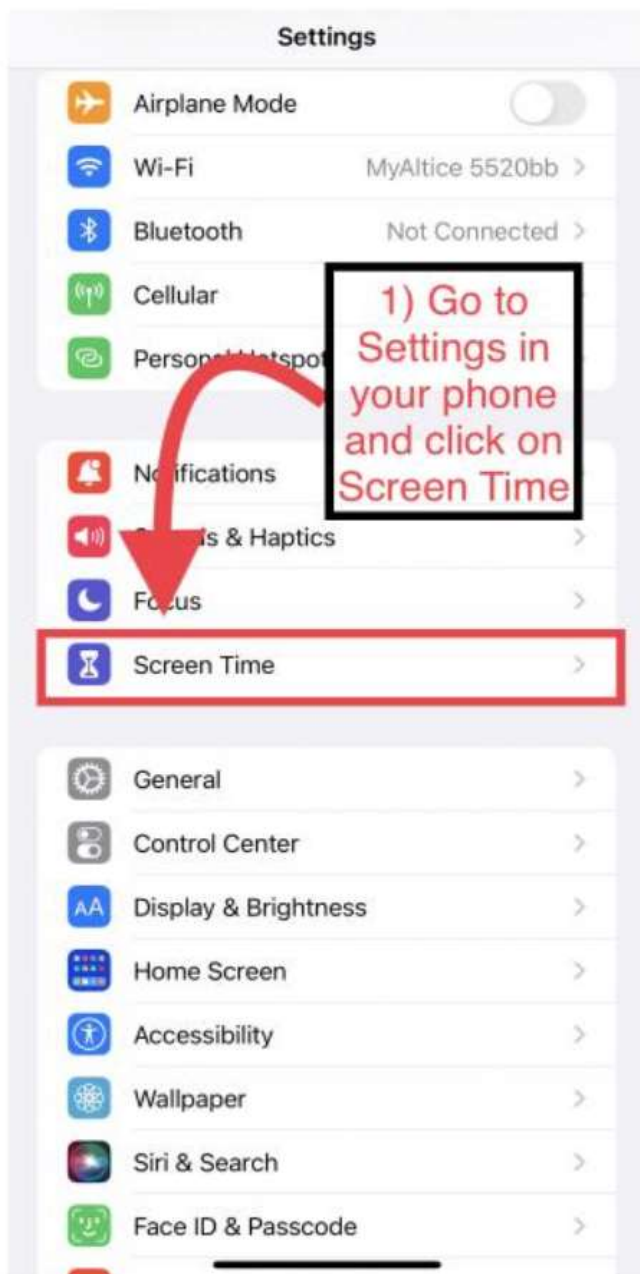
DIRECTION FIGURES

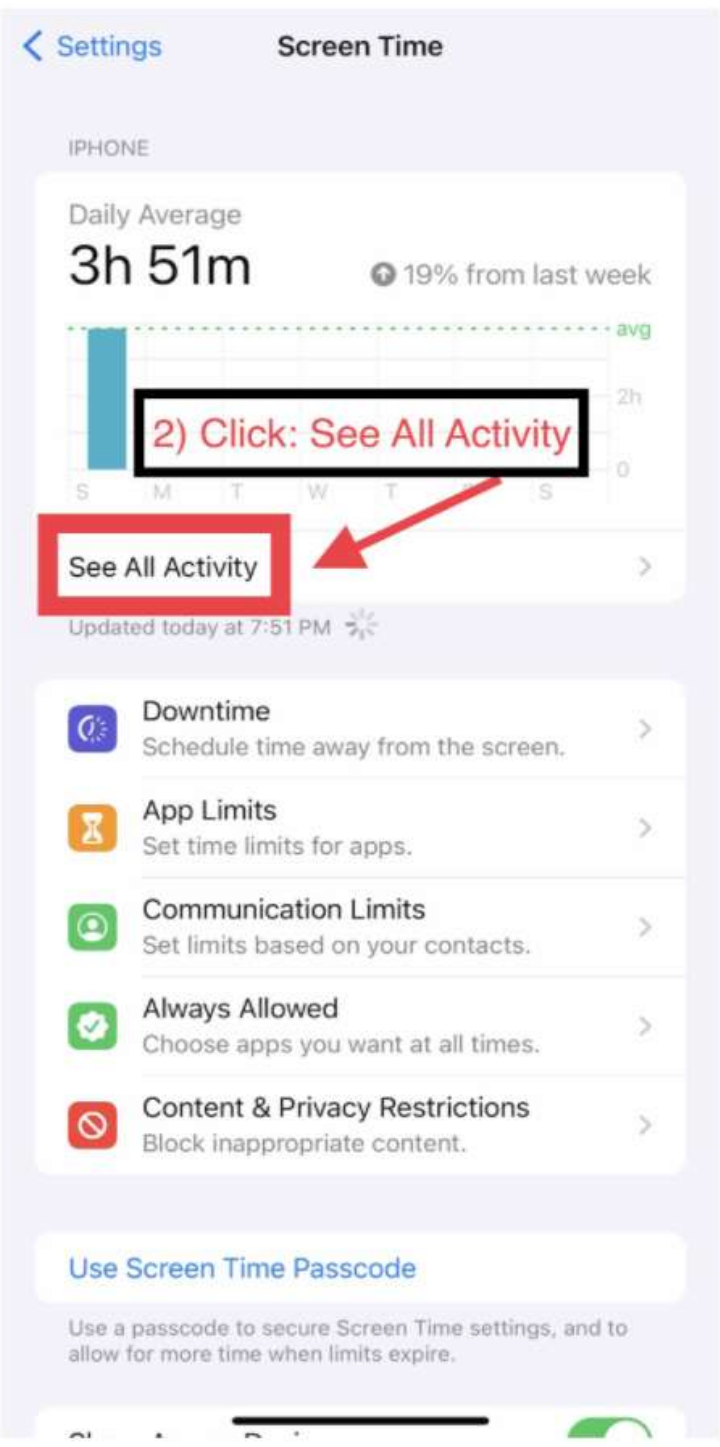*Figure 1 - Direction 1*

Figure 2 - Direction 2

Figure 3 - Direction 3
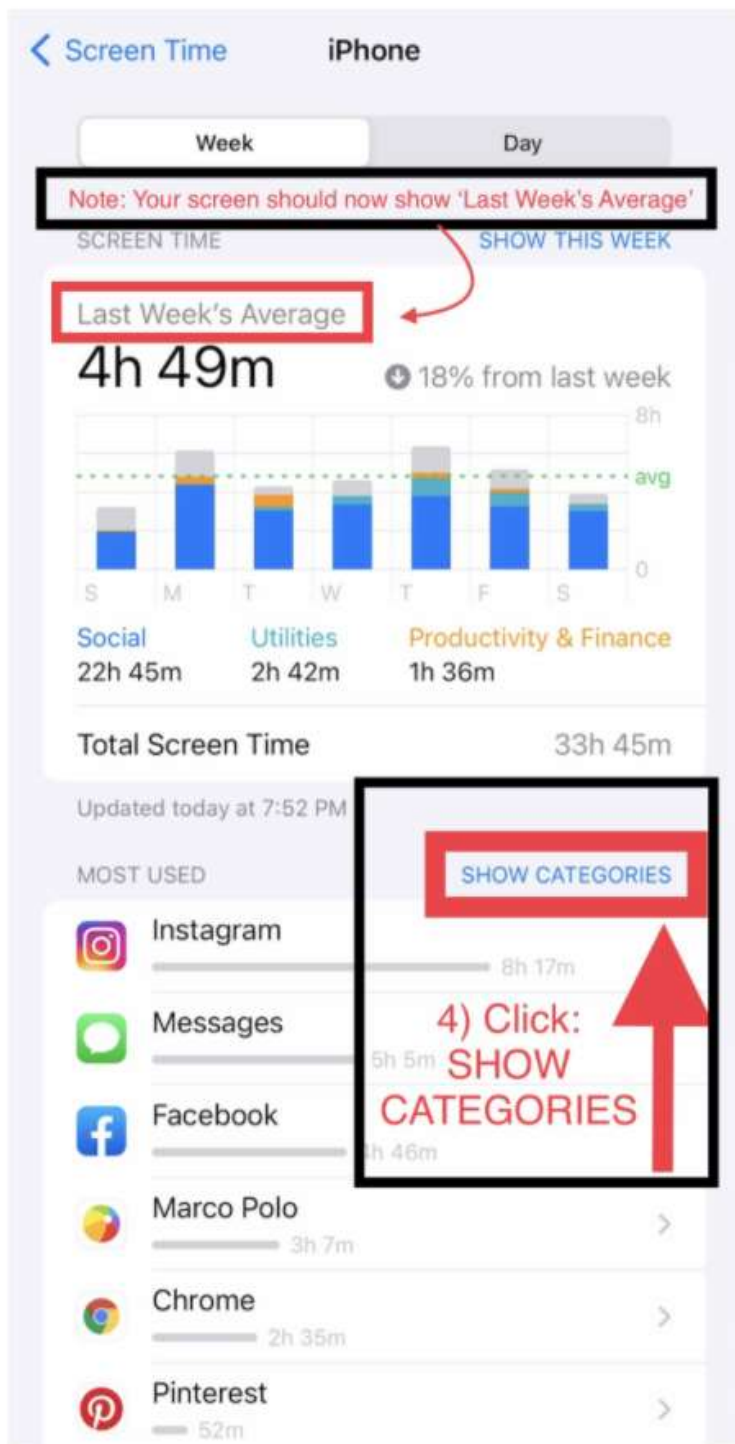
Figure 4 - Direction 4
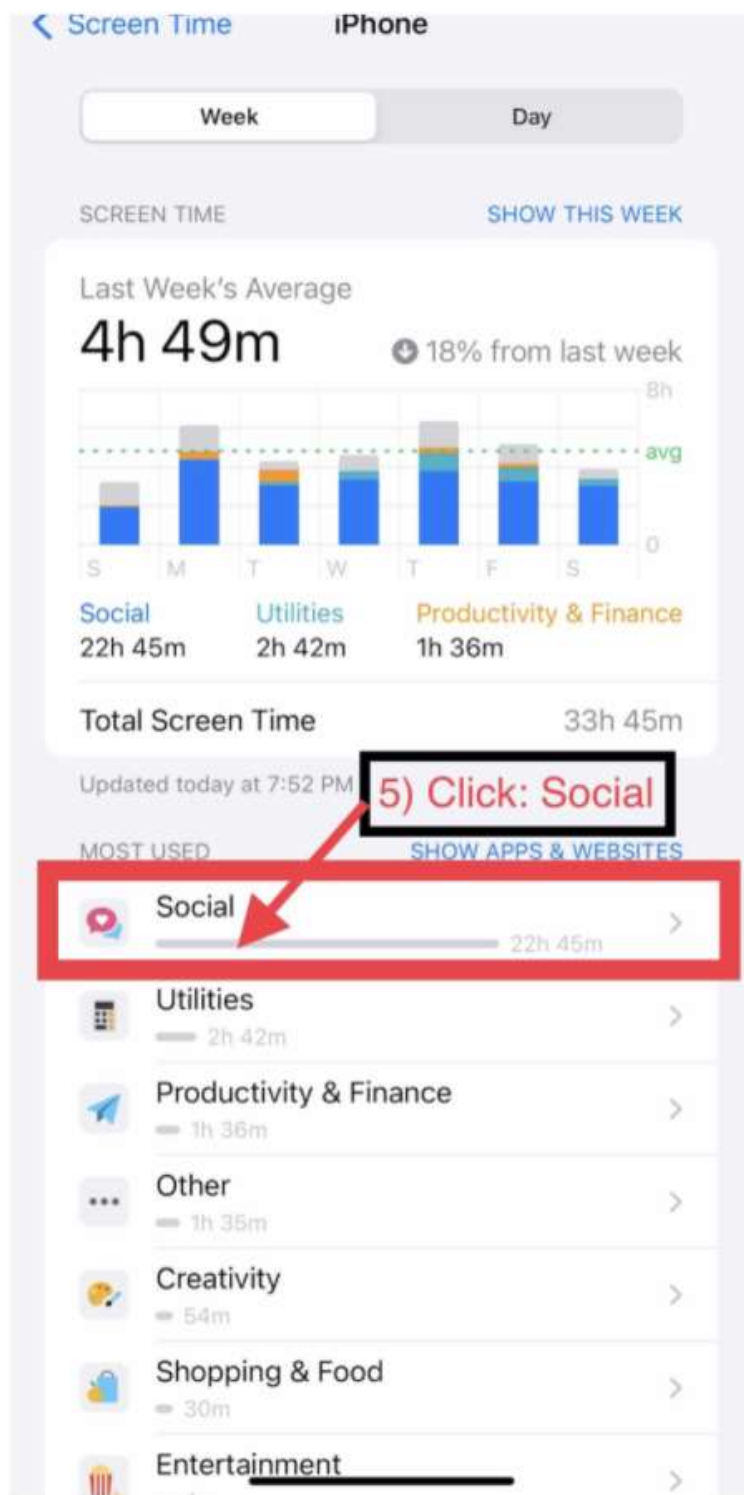
Figure 5 - Direction 5

Figure 6 - Direction 6

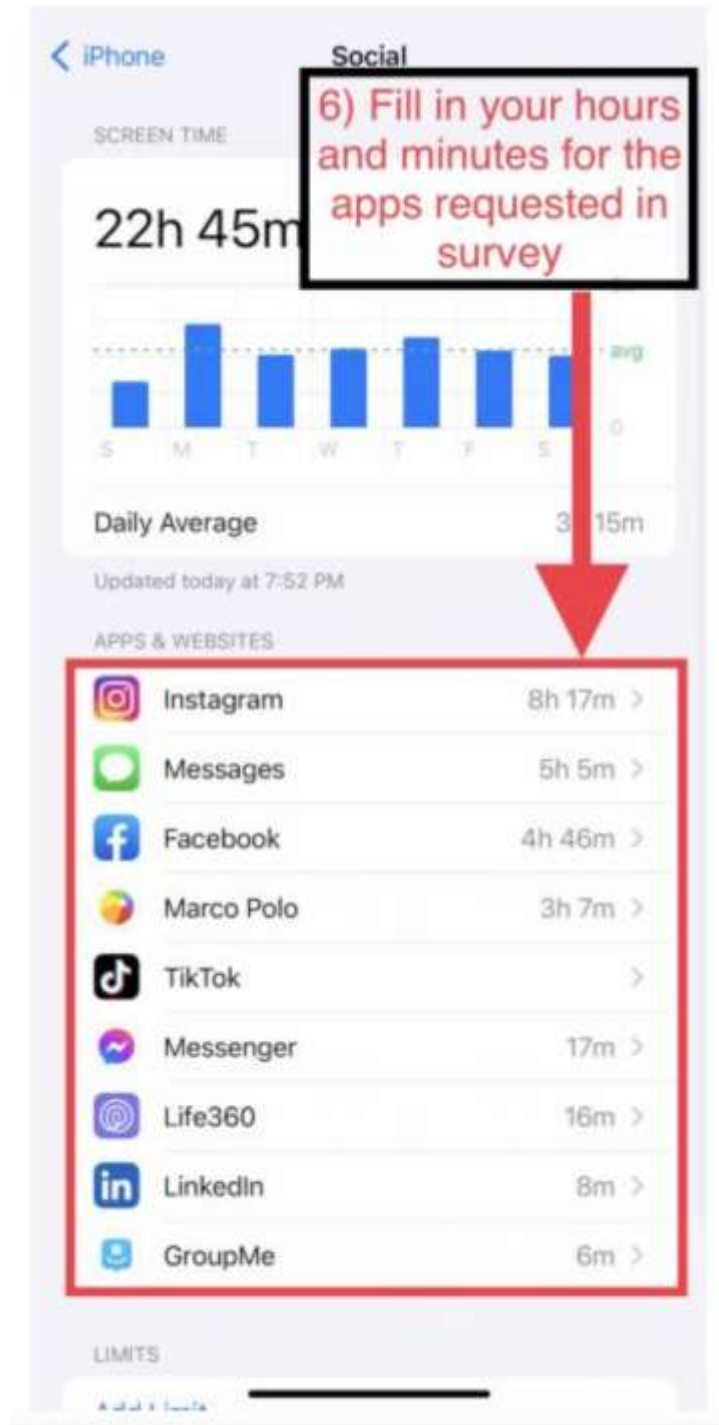*Once you have gotten to this point on your phone, please take a screenshot and prepare to upload it.*

Figure 7 - Uploads and Input

ASMU1

Please upload the screenshot you took that includes the amount of time spent on your social media platforms here.

Choose File | No file chosen

ASMU2

If you were not able to view more than 5 applications on one screen, please take and upload a second screenshot that includes the remaining social media platforms here.

If at least 8 applications were visible in your original upload, please disregard.

Choose File | No file chosen

Q69

Based off of your 'Screen Time', how many hours and minutes per week do you use the following social media applications?

If you do not use the app listed, please enter "0" for both hours and minutes. Please do not leave blank.

Access Reminder: 1) Search Screen Time, 2) Click See All Activity, 3) Swipe Left to See 'Last Week's Average' (or nearest completed week), 4) Click SHOW CATEGORIES, 5) Click Social, 6) Fill in the times below.

	Hours	Minutes
Facebook		
Instagram		
TikTok		
Snapchat		
Twitter		
Pinterest		
Reddit		
LinkedIn		

APPENDIX C

QUALITY FILTERING PROCESS STEPS

Due to Qualtrics only wanting to send in small batches of responses at a time, 15 rounds of the quality response filtering process took place and are detailed below.

Step 1: Download the datasheet in Excel format from Qualtrics.

Step 2: Download the User Generated files from Qualtrics.

Step 3: Open the downloaded files (one on either side of the screen)

Step 4: Add a column beside the Unique Identifier number (UI) column and title it ASMU

Step 5: Add a second column beside the UI column and title it Screen Time

Step 6: Copy the UI number from each row (each row being a different respondent)

Step 7: Open the User Generated file titled ASMU and CTRL F using the UI number.

Step 8: Determine if the image uploaded by that user was correct (that they had followed the directions to get the appropriate screen and upload accordingly.

Step 9: If the upload was correct: the column ASMU would be filled with the color green; if the upload was incorrect: the column ASMU would be filled with the color red.

*This process was followed for every column in the datasheet in that round.

Step 10: Open the User Generated file titled Screen Time and CTRL F using the UI number of only the respondents who had ASMU filled with the color green.

Step 11: Determine if the image uploaded by that user was correct (that they had followed the directions to get themselves to the appropriate screen and upload accordingly).

Step 12: If the upload were correct: the column Screen Time would be filled with the color green; if the upload were incorrect: the column Screen Time would be filled with the color red. An example can be viewed in Figure 3.9 below:

Step 13: Save the excel file and email the Qualtrics project manager the color-coded excel sheet with the understanding that they would completely delete any of the respondents who had red in either the ASMU or Screen Time columns.

APPENDIX D

HUMAN USE APPROVAL LETTER

LOUISIANA TECH
U N I V E R S I T Y.

OFFICE OF
RESEARCH AND PARTNERSHIPS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Breanne A. Mertz, Marketing Doctoral Candidate

FROM: Dr. Walter Buboltz, Professor/Elva L. Smith Endowed Professor
           buboltz@latech.edu

SUBJECT: **Human Use Committee - Review DECISION**

DATE: February 4, 2022

In order to facilitate your project, an EXPEDITED REVIEW has been completed for your proposed study:

HUC No.:   **HUC 1388, 22-057**

TITLE: **Social media usage: Implications on consumer well-being and maladaptive behavior**

HUC DECISION:

APPROVED	Yes	**X**	No		N/A	

The proposed study's procedures were found to provide reasonable and adequate safeguards against possible risks involving human subjects. The information to be collected may be personal in nature or implication. Therefore, diligent care needs to be taken to protect the privacy of the participants and to assure that the data are kept confidential. Informed consent is a critical part of the research process. The subjects must be informed that their participation is voluntary. It is important that consent materials be presented in a language understandable to every participant. If you have participants in your study whose first language is not English, be sure that informed consent materials are adequately explained or translated. Since your reviewed project appears to do no damage to the participants, the Human Use Committee grants approval of the involvement of human subjects as outlined.   Projects should be renewed annually. *This approval was finalized on* **February 04, 2022** *and this project will need to receive a continuation review by the IRB if the project continues beyond* **February 04, 2023**. ANY CHANGES to your protocol procedures, including minor changes, should be reported immediately to the IRB for approval before implementation. Projects involving NIH funds require annual education training to be documented. For more information regarding this, contact the Office of Sponsored Projects.

You are requested to maintain written records of your procedures, data collected, and subjects involved. These records will need to be available upon request during the conduct of the study and retained by the university for three years after the conclusion of the study. If changes occur in recruiting of subjects, informed consent process or in your research protocol, or if unanticipated problems should arise it is the Researchers responsibility to notify the Office of Research and Partnerships or IRB in writing. The project should be discontinued until modifications can be reviewed and approved.

Thank you for submitting your Human Use Proposal to Louisiana Tech's Institutional Review Board.

A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM

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