

Titel: Excessive Buying as a Means of Regulating Boredom: Moderating Role of Materialism

Author: Agata Kocimska-Bortnowska

Reviewer: Erik Wästlund

Introduction

This thesis revolves around boredom and how excessive buying can be used in order to alleviate it. The thesis consists of a systematic literature review and four empirical data collections with a total of 2221 participants. From a methodological perspective it is noteworthy that the thesis builds on a literature review, a laboratory experiment, a diary study, and two online studies. The multi-method approach combined with the many participants gives the thesis a stable foundation for investigating the phenomenon of interest.

Study 1: literature review (55 papers, 83 studies)

Study 2: laboratory experiment (n = 297)

Study 3: diary study (n = 927)

Study 4a: online study (n = 231)

Study 4b: online study (n = 766)

From a theoretical perspective the thesis builds upon previous research on boredom, buying behavior/excessive buying, and materialism.

In regards to boredom, the thesis presents a comprehensive account of previous research and the many facets of this complex psychological phenomenon. After first delineating the state-trait issue an integrated approach is presented. In this view, state-boredom is described as a "a temporary experience of nonoptimal arousal" and trait-boredom " reflecting the frequency and intensity of state boredom". This is followed by a summary of the many theoretical views of boredom as well as strategies for dealing with boredom. Special focus is lent to the relationship between boredom and the experienced sense of meaning. More specifically the experience of meaninglessness as part of boredom is viewed as a driver to regain a sense of meaning.

The author then moves on to excessive buying as a possible and plausible strategy for dealing with boredom. As opposed to the traditional view on consumption as a functional and rational activity, the thesis builds on the idea that consumption is also a hedonic activity which can be pleasure driven or conducted to minimize various aversive states such as for instance boredom and experienced lack of meaning. Following this train of thought the author also posits that excessive buying should lead to a restored sense of meaning and decreased experience of boredom.

The last theoretical area presented materialism which is described as a value orientation. Individuals with high levels of materialism are described as considering tangible goods central to self-actualization and success. This position is problematized in terms of the hedonic treadmill and its consequences for regulating boredom is discussed.

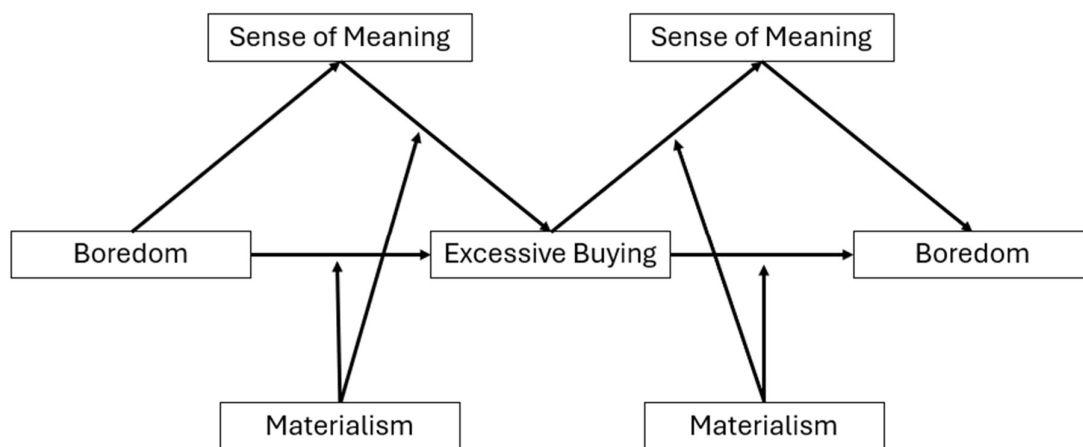
Based on this theoretical framework three hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Boredom triggers excessive buying.

H2: Excessive buying hinders boredom and the desire for the sense of meaning.

H3: Materialism moderates both the relationship between boredom and excessive buying and the relationship between the desire for a sense of meaning and excessive buying.

Taken together the introduction implies a conceptual model (as seen below) consisting of two parts. The first part describes how boredom leads to an increase in excessive buying. This relationship is explained in terms of how boredom leads to a decreased sense of meaning and increased desire to act and that this act is excessive buying, Furthermore the direct effect as well as the mediated effect is thought to be moderated by materialism insofar that this relationship should be more pronounced among highly materialistic individuals. The second part describes how excessive buying leads to a decrease in boredom. This effect is explained in the same way, namely that the relationship is mediated by sense of meaning and moderated by materialism.



Study 1: Methodological aspects of manipulating boredom. Systematic review

Method: scopus search, review follows prisma guidelines

The results show five major categories of inducing boredom: quantity-based, content-based, combinations of quantity and content, waiting based, and confounded/multiple manipulations. These five categories are then analyzed for methodological strengths and weaknesses. The result of the analysis suggests what type of boredom manipulation should be used in the subsequent experiments.

Study 2: Boredom triggers excessive buying. A Laboratory Experiment.

This study aimed at testing H1: boredom triggers excessive buying. The boredom manipulation was based on study 1 where participants in the high boredom condition performed more repetitions of the same boring task that was performed in the low boredom condition. As reward for participating the participants were given mock notes that they could use in a mock store after completing the task.

H1: high vs low boredom level would predict spending mock notes (confirmed)

H2: this relationship would be moderated by high/low on materialism (confirmed H1 only true for medium or high levels of materialism)

H3: this relationship would be moderated by high/low on trait boredom (not confirmed)

Possible issue: dichotomization and lack of ecological validity

Study 3: Excessive buying lowers boredom. A daily diary study.

This study was designed to investigate state boredom, excessive buying and materialism in an ecologically valid setting.

For two weeks participants filled in questionnaires in the evening regarding their shopping during the day and their current boredom levels.

H1: the higher the levels of reported shopping during the day the lower the levels of evening boredom (confirmed)

H2: this would also be true after controlling for momentary happiness and sadness (confirmed)

H3: the relationship between excess shopping and boredom is moderated by materialism (confirmed)

Possible issue: how was zero buys treated, cause and effect: are people bored because of lack of shopping or are there circumstances leading to both boredom and no shopping.

Study 4a: Novel method of manipulating boredom. Online study.

Pilot study to test novel boredom protocol: the clock task. This task is a quantity-based monotony manipulation.

H1: participants in the high boredom condition would report higher levels of boredom than those in the low boredom condition (Confirmed).

H2: participants in the high boredom condition will report a higher desire to engage in a meaningful activity than those in the lower boredom condition (Confirmed).

Study 4b: Buffering Effect of Excessive Buying on Boredom. Online study.

Study designed to confirm the regulatory role of excessive purchasing shown in study 3.

Design: between subjects 2 (high, low boredom) x 2 (buying vs non-buying). DVs boredom and desire to engage in meaningful activities

H1a: participants in the high boredom condition would report lower levels of boredom after completing a buying related task than those in the non-buying task (confirmed)

H1b: there would be hardly no differences in the low boredom conditions (confirmed)

H2a and H2b: same as 1a/b but with desire to engage in meaningful activities (not confirmed)

H3: Materialism as moderator (confirmed)

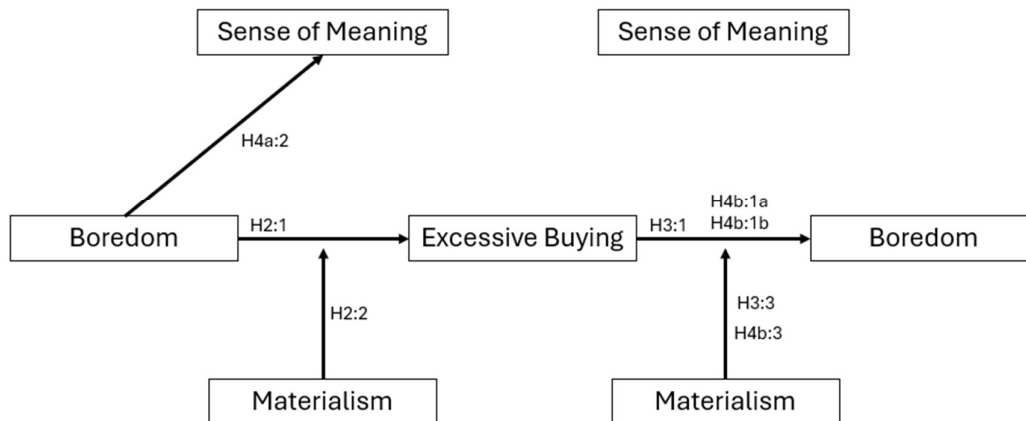
Possible issue: The two tasks be viewed as a choice vs sorting task. Hence the effect shown in the buying condition might well be from general distraction as much as from shopping. So rather than having their sense of meaning restored they simply forgot how boring the task was.

Conclusion

Based on these four studies the author draws two main conclusions: a) boredom leads to an increase in excessive buying and b) excessive buying leads to a decrease in boredom. Furthermore, these two effects are shown to be moderated by materialism insofar that these effects are mainly shown in individuals that have a materialistic orientation. There is no support for the mediating effect of sense of meaning.

Additionally, the author introduces, and validates, a novel way to induces boredom in experiments. This, in itself, is a very interesting finding.

Mapping the supported hypotheses to the implicit theoretical model clearly supports these conclusions.



While there are a number of limitations - some mentioned and some not - to the thesis, in my view the candidate has:

- conducted a thorough review of relevant literature
- shown familiarity with several diverse and complex research designs
- analyzed the material in a scientifically correct way
- presented a novel way to manipulate boredom in the lab
- drawn reasonable conclusions based on the results
- summarized and described the findings in a comprehensible way

In conclusion, I state that the doctoral dissertation submitted by Ms. Agata Kocimska-Bortnowska satisfies all the legal requirements for a doctoral degree as set forth in Article 187 of the Act of July 20, 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science. The Candidate has demonstrated theoretical knowledge in the discipline of psychology and the ability to conduct independent scientific research.

Therefore, I evaluate the submitted work positively and recommend that Ms. Agata Kocimska-Bortnowska be admitted to the subsequent stages of the doctoral procedure

Signature page

This document has been electronically signed
using eduSign.

eduSign

Electronically signed by

Erik Wästlund

eduSign

Date and time of signature

2026-10-08 07:06 GMT

Authenticated by

Karlstad University