

## AVERSIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND INDIVIDUALISTIC SOCIAL RANK STYLES AS PREDICTORS OF A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

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### Abstract

The prognostic and mediational influences of basic and aversive personality traits, and social rank styles on individuals' attitudes towards conspicuous consumption (ATCC, an indirect measure of the actual behaviour) were examined via path analysis<sup>1</sup>. The model (n=400, mean age=22.3) emphasised the direct and indirect effects of Extraversion, and the indirect effects of Neuroticism and Agreeableness which were sequentially mediated by all Dark Triad traits, and by two individualistic social rank styles: Dominant Leadership and Ruthless Self advancement. Dark Triad traits occupied the central position in the model connecting basic personality traits with social rank styles, and ultimately with ATCC. Machiavellianism was the only Dark Triad trait directly linked with ATCC, Dominant Leadership, and Ruthless Self-advancement. Narcissism exerted the main mediating effect on Dominant Leadership, while Machiavellianism and Psychopathy mediated the negative influence of Extraversion and Agreeableness on Ruthless Self-advancement. Both Dominant Leadership and Ruthless Self-advancement were directly predictive of ATCC. As two basic prosocial personality traits (Conscientiousness and Openness) and one prosocial rank strategy (Coalition Building) did not enter the model, we conclude that, from the present perspective, positive ATCC is linked to uncooperative and self-centred mindsets striving for superior positions in the social hierarchy.

**Key words:** conspicuous consumption, the Dark Triad, the Big Five, social rank style, path analysis

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<sup>1</sup> The path analysis model upholds the dark side of affinity for conspicuous consumption. The model connects the personal traits domain with the personal strategies domain. Social rank styles are differentiated by basic and aversive personality traits. Each social rank style has a specific trajectory predictive of ATCC.

## АВЕРЗИВНЕ ОСОБИНЕ ЛИЧНОСТИ И ИНДИВИДУАЛИСТИЧКИ СТИЛОВИ ДРУШТВЕНОГ ПОЗИЦИОНИРАЊА КАО ПРЕДИКТОРИ ПОЗИТИВНОГ СТАВА ПРЕМА УПАДЉИВОЈ ПОТРОШЊИ

### Апстракт

Анализом путање је испитиван директан и посредан утицај основних и аверзивних особина личности и стилова друштвеног позиционирања на став према упадљивој потрошњи (СУП). Модел ( $n = 400$ , просечна старост = 22,3) указује на директне и индиректне ефекте екстраверзије, као и индиректне ефекте неуротичизма и пријатности, који су секвенцијално посредовани свим особинама Мрачне тријаде и следећим индивидуалистичким стиливима друштвеног позиционирања: доминантним вођством и немилосрдним самонапредовањем. Особине Мрачне тријаде заузеле су централну позицију у моделу повезивања основних особина личности са стиливима друштвеног рангирања, а на крају и са СУП-ом. Макијавелизам је био једина црта Мрачне тријаде која је директно повезана са СУП-ом, доминантним вођством и немилосрдним самонапредовањем. Нарцизам је извршио главни посреднички ефекат на доминантно вођство, док су макијавелизам и психопатија посредовали утицајем Екстраверзије и Пријатности (негативно) на немилосрдно самонапредовање. И доминантно вођство и немилосрдно самонапредовање директно су предвиђали СУП. Како две основне просоцијалне особине личности (Савесност и Отвореност) и једна стратегија просоцијалног стила конкуренције (изградња коалиције) нису ушле у модел, закључујемо да је из садашње перспективе позитиван став према упадљивој потрошњи повезан са некооперативним и егоцентричним начином размишљања који тежи ка супериорним позицијама у друштвеној хијерархији.

**Кључне речи:** упадљива потрошња, Мрачна тријада, Великих пет, стил друштвеног позиционирања, анализа пута

### INTRODUCTION

The symbolic value of purchase has for ages run parallel to its functional value (Qiu, Wang, Richard & Wang, 2017). People buy things not simply because of their functional value, but often with the primary purpose of advertising their pecuniary advantages over others. We publicise our attitudes and lifestyles through the products we buy, identities are constructed by appropriating brands, and purchasing patterns determine the way individuals see themselves and communicate with others. More than one century ago, Thorstein Veblen (2005/1899) critically approached this symbolic function of purchasing behaviour. Veblen noted that it is not accumulated wealth by itself, but its unrestrained presentation that confers social recognition and elicits the much desired envy. In every generation, the representational value of buying arrogance is readily acknowledged by the *nouveau riche* as an effective device for promoting their distancing from the ordinary. Besides its obvious economic consequences, conspicuous consumption may be viewed as an assured strategy

that reaps profitable social capital returns (Hinz, Spann & Hann, 2015). The demonstration of purchasing power has been related to gains in social recognition (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011), and ultimately to Darwinian sexual selection (De Fraja, 2009; Sundie, Kenrick, Griskevicius, Tybur, Vohs & Beal, 2011). Thus, men have faith in the signalling value of purchased goods and services as a decoy for attracting the opposite sex (Griskevicius, Tybur, Sundie, Cialdini, Miller & Kenrick, 2007; Henighausen, Hudders, Lange, & Fink, 2016). Women cheerfully parade luxury items provided by their male partners in order to discourage potential romantic competition (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014), and are more sensitive to displays of male conspicuous consumption during the fertile phase of their menstrual cycle (Lens, Driesmans, Pandelaere & Janssens, 2012).

The contemporary evolutionary explanation of conspicuous consumption draws on costly signalling as an innate and widespread communication manoeuvre for manipulating social relations (Bliege Bird & Smith, 2005). According to costly signalling theory, an individual displaying luxury items deviously makes it known that she or he is able to 'waste' money, and is thus wealthy and of a high social status, which is the unobservable yet desirable quality (Berger, 2017). As a manifestation of costly signalling, conspicuous consumption is a self-serving and often deceptive strategy (McAndrew, 2019).

*Aversive Personality Traits, Social Rank Styles,  
and Conspicuous Consumption*

While there is a widespread agreement on the ego-inflating and selfish nature of conspicuous consumption (Sedikides, Gregg, Cisek & Hart, 2007), there are actually very few empirical studies connecting eye-catching consumption with other self-centred behavioural tendencies. The superficial – as opposed to substantial – self enhancement of narcissists is focused on appearance (Hart, Tortoriello, Richardson & Breeden, 2020), a feature quite evocative of the apparent nature of conspicuous consumption. Narcissists' conceit and their insatiable urge for self-aggrandisement have been recognised as positive predictors of conspicuous consumption (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). Thus, it seems plausible that a comprehensive study of the psychological foundations of conspicuous consumption should include narcissism and its correlates.

Narcissistic attitudes and behaviour, and disregard for others are positively related to low empathy (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012), physical aggression (Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008), externalising outcomes (Vize, Collison, Crowe, Campbell, Miller, & Lynam, 2019), striving for dominance (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992), pursuit of status (Zeigler-Hill, Vrabel, McCabe, Cosby, Traeder, Hobbs & Southard, 2019), and, above all, interpersonal strategies characterised by Machiavellian manipulation and psychopathic ruthlessness (Paulhus, 2014).

Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and subclinical psychopathy are considered to constitute the Dark Triad of antisocial personality traits (DT; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). These three independent, yet overlapping malevolent traits are marked by self-interest and little or no concern for the well-being of other people, thus predisposing one to underhanded social behaviour (Jones & Paulhus, 2017). As conspicuous consumption is an egocentric, manipulative, and often deceptive prestige-seeking consumer behaviour, it shares many aims with the exploitative interpersonal strategies of the DT traits. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that studying the similarities between the propensity for conspicuous consumption and DT traits may broaden our understanding of their shared psychological foundation. Namely, it is reasonable to theorise that conspicuous consumption is also related to DT traits other than narcissism.

From a somewhat different theoretical perspective, conspicuous consumption is a manifestation of the social attention-holding power (Gilbert, 2016) which nurtures an inflated, yet unstable self-esteem. Thus, conspicuous consumption may parallel some evolved competitive strategies in a uniquely human social rank system (Zuroff, Fournier, Patall & Leybman, 2010). Individual differences in the social rank domain distinguish three styles, one cooperative (Coalition Building) and two individualistic: Dominant Leadership (socially desirable) and Ruthless Self-advancement (socially undesirable). Coalition Building is characterised by the tendency to cultivate cooperative coalitions, respect for the opinion of other group members, avoiding confrontation, and seeking compromise. Dominant Leadership is defined by one's tendency to assume a guiding role among their peers, overconfidence in the promotion of her/his ideas, and dominant initiative when making final decisions about a group's actions. Finally, Ruthless Self-advancement is demonstrated by a readiness to secure a higher social rank through manipulative, cheating and self-serving strategies. Previous studies report that Coalition Building correlates negatively with Psychopathy and Machiavellianism, while Dominant Leadership negatively correlates with narcissism, and Ruthless Self-advancement positively correlates with all three DT dimensions (Zuroff et al., 2010). With this in mind, it seems reasonable to investigate how different social rank styles affect the proclivity for conspicuous consumption.

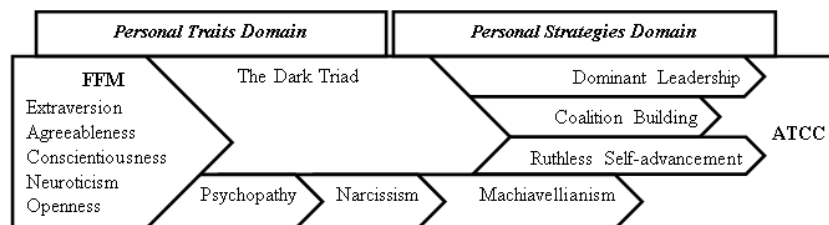
*Basic Personality Traits, Aversive Personality Traits, Social Rank Styles, and Conspicuous Consumption*

The combination of basic personality traits is responsible for all individual differences in manifest behaviour, as posited by the Five Factor Model (FFM; McCrae & Costa, 2013). Accordingly, the five basic traits have been related to DT dimensions (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) and social rank styles (Zuroff et al., 2010). Both Psychopathy and Machiavellianism are inconsistent with Conscientiousness and Agreeableness.

In addition, Machiavellianism is also negatively correlated with Extraversion and Openness, while Narcissism is positively correlated with Extraversion and Openness (O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, Story & White, 2015). On the other hand, Dominant Leadership correlates positively with Extraversion and Conscientiousness, and negatively with Neuroticism and Agreeableness; Coalition Building correlates positively with Agreeableness, while Ruthless Self-advancement negatively correlates with Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. While it is reasonable to assume that some basic personality traits underpin the proclivity for conspicuous consumption, it is also of interest to verify how much additional variance is accounted for by the uncooperative approach to other people typified by DT traits and individualistic social rank styles.

*Present Study*

Despite its patently manipulative essence and a high propensity for immoral deviations (Vasilyev, Kovalchuk, Korkiya & Mamedov, 2017), conspicuous consumption has not been systematically scrutinised for its commonalities with other selfish and ethically questionable behavioural tendencies, and there is no direct evidence about basic personality traits predisposing conspicuous consumption. As noted above, there is evidence connecting self-centred interpersonal strategies with basic personality traits, and evidence connecting self-centred interpersonal strategies with conspicuous consumption. However, an all-encompassing study charting causal relationships among basic personality traits, social rank styles, and conspicuous consumption is still non-existent. This study was designed to fill this gap and enhance our understanding of the individual differences in proclivity to conspicuous consumption. Since conspicuous consumption has a wide yet reluctantly admitted daily presence, we opted for an indirect approach. In other words, we opted to study the attitude towards conspicuous consumption (hereinafter ATCC) as a proxy of actual consumer behaviour. Relying on path analysis, our aim was to construct a parsimonious predictive model encompassing the collective effect of the aforementioned variables. A tentative hierarchical model of the study variables is depicted in Figure 1.



*Figure 1. Conditional hierarchical model of inherent personal traits predisposing to social rank styles and proclivity for conspicuous consumption.*

Drawing from the existing knowledge, we hypothesise that distinct basic and aversive personality traits predict social rank styles and the affinity for conspicuous consumption. More specifically, we assume the following: H1) the Big Five traits have direct effects on DT traits; H2) the Big Five and DT traits have indirect and direct effects on social rank styles; and H3) the Big Five traits, DT traits and social rank styles have direct and indirect effects on the attitude towards conspicuous consumption.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### *Participants and Procedure*

The data was collected via the standard paper and pencil procedure, in group testing sessions of up to 30 students per group. There was at least one empty chair between any two participants. Upon completing the study, an experimenter debriefed and thanked the participants. Consequently, our study included 400 (178 male and 222 female) university students from Novi Sad (mean age 22.3).

### *Measures*

**Conspicuous consumption.** The attitude towards conspicuous consumption was evaluated by the ATCC-60 psychometric scale, a most recent adaptation of our ATCC-55 scale (Velov, Gojković & Đurić, 2014) supplemented with five items directly addressing the behavioural component of the construct. Thus, ATCC-60 contains 60 items rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', with  $\alpha = .93$ . All 60 items consisted of statements related to the purchase and wearing of brand name clothes, a manifestation of conspicuous consumption that was familiar to our sample. According to exploratory factor analysis (principal components followed by Varimax rotation), this scale has a unique and consistent structure. Its five dimensions account for 65% of the total variance, and describe wearing branded and expensive clothes as a result of various emotional, motivational and cognitive structures (Table 1).

**Social Rank Style.** The Social Rank Style was evaluated with the Rank Style With Peers Questionnaire (RSPQ, Zuroff et al., 2010), a questionnaire containing 17 items of the 5-point Likert scale type intended to measure three distinctive styles in the social rank domain: Dominant Leadership (5 items,  $\alpha = .81$ ), Coalition Building (7 items,  $\alpha = .86$ ) and Ruthless Self-advancement (5 items,  $\alpha = .77$ ).

**The Dark Triad.** Short Dark Triad (SD3) estimates of the dark side of personality – Machiavellianism ( $\alpha = .78$ ), Narcissism ( $\alpha = .66$ ), and Psychopathy ( $\alpha = .77$ ) were obtained by the validated Serbian version (Dinić, Petrović & Jonason, 2018) of SD3 (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The 5-point Likert-type scale was composed of 27 items (9 for each trait).

*Table 1. Latent dimensions of ATCC-60 psychometric scale*

Dimension	Eigen value	% of explained variance	Content
Attractiveness	14.110	23.516	branded and expensive clothes as a way for obtaining attention and enhancing the physical attractiveness of the person who wears them
Prestige	5.897	9.828	symbolic function - a mean to display economic status, affluence, prestige, luxury and success
Conformity	2.662	4.436	normative function, social and peer pressure, universally more acceptable
Emulation	2.317	3.862	unpleasant comparison, envy, lack of self-esteem, an efficient device for boosting one's value among peers
Behaviour	2.012	3.353	behavioural component, intentions, habits

**The Big Five.** The Big Five Inventory (BFI) created by John, Donahue, & Kentle (1991) is a 44-item multidimensional personality inventory. The five in question are: Openness to experience (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious,  $\alpha = .78$ ), Conscientiousness (efficient/organised vs. easy-going/careless,  $\alpha = .74$ ), Extraversion (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved,  $\alpha = .76$ ), Agreeableness (friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/detached,  $\alpha = .74$ ), and Neuroticism (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident,  $\alpha = .71$ ). The Serbian version of BFI has been successfully utilised in previous research (e.g. Smederevac, Mitrović & Čolović, 2007).

**Statistical procedures.** The reliability of the psychometric scales was assessed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Bivariate linear associations among constructs and their latent structures were analysed by Pearson's coefficient of linear correlation. The fitness of the structural equation model was estimated using MLE, and the fit of the model was assessed with a combination of indices: relative Chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Bentler's Comparative fit index – CFI, Goodness-of-Fit – GFI, Root-mean-square error of approximation – RMSEA, and Standardised root mean squared residual – SRMR.

## RESULTS

### *Correlations*

Table 2 presents the associations between the selected variables. Each social rank style was characterised by its unique personality profile. Coalition Building was primarily defined by its positive association with Agreeableness; Dominant Leadership was primarily defined by its positive association with Extraversion, and its negative association with Agreeableness; and Ruthless Self-advancement was primarily defined by its negative association with Agreeableness. As expected, ATCC and both

individualistic social rank styles – Dominant Leadership (mostly saturated with Narcissism) and Ruthless Self-advancement (mostly saturated with Machiavellianism) were significantly positively correlated with DT traits, and significantly negatively correlated with Agreeableness. Conversely, Coalition Building was negatively associated with DT traits and positively associated with Agreeableness, while there was no evidence of its significant correlation with ATCC. These findings indicated that the diversity of social rank styles with respect to their ATCC was anchored in their distinctive patterns of associations with basic personality traits and aversive personality traits.

*Table 2. Bivariate correlations of study variables*

	ATCCDL	CB	RS	Mac	Nar	Psy	E	A	C	N		
RSPQ	Dominant Leadership	.271**	–									
	Coalition Building	-.048	.015	–								
	Ruthless Self-advancement	.350**	.240**	-.202**	–							
SD3	Machiavellianism	.398**	.329**	-.211**	.595**	–						
	Narcissism	.273**	.613**	-.201**	.369**	.452**	–					
	Psychopathy	.249**	.354**	-.445**	.444**	.475**	.458**	–				
BFI	Extraversion	-.090	.485**	.111*	.010	.034	.411**	.133**	–			
	Agreeableness	-.233**	-.192**	.547**	-.399**	-.411**	-.267**	-.596**	.109*	–		
	Conscientiousness	-.061	.103*	.261**	-.026	-.054	.026	-.192**	.263**	.293**	–	
	Neuroticism	.107*	-.117*	-.091	.059	.008	-.145**	.066	-.248**	-.249**	-.279**	–
	Openness	-.001	.306**	.249**	-.092	-.048	.192**	-.019	.372**	.231**	.278**	-.196**

*Note.* \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). \* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). RSPQ = Rank Style with Peers Questionnaire; SD3 = Short Dark Triad; BFI = Big Five Inventory; ATCC = attitude towards conspicuous consumption; DL = Dominant Leadership; CB = Coalition Building; RS = Ruthless Self-advancement; Mac = Machiavellianism; Nar = Narcissism; Psy = Psychopathy; E = Extraversion; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness; N = Neuroticism.

### *The Structural Equation Model - Path Analysis*

The hypothetical structural model was validated using path analysis (maximum likelihood estimation). The proposed model solution (Figure 2) illustrates regression effects between the Big Five, DT, social rank styles and attitude towards conspicuous consumption.



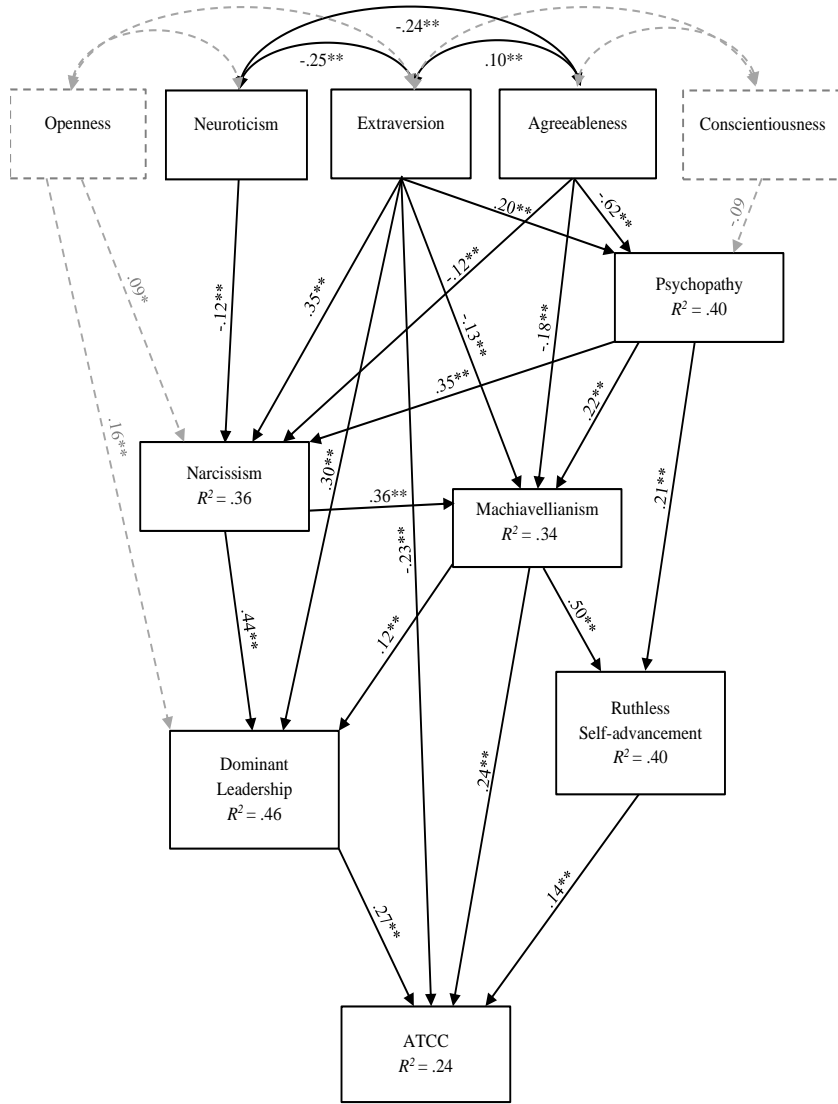


Figure 2. Path analysis solution

Note. Dashed rectangles and lines represent excluded variables and effects. Double arrows represent correlations; Single arrows represent hypothetical causal paths; numbers on causal paths are standardized regression coefficients; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

The theoretical unrefined model fits well (Table 3), but the contribution of the two variables (Openness and Conscientiousness) is negligible or insignificant.

Table 3. *Unrefined Model Fit Summary*

	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	$\chi^2/df$	<i>CFI</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>SRMR</i>
Model	26.818	21	.177	1.277	.996	.988	0.026	0.023

Note: CFI = comparative fit index, GFI = goodness of fit index, RMSEA = root mean-square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square

The indices of refined model fitness are listed in Table 4. The Chi-squared value (with a probability higher than .05) points at non-significant discrepancy between the sample and fitted covariance matrices. The Bentler's Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Goodness of Fit (GFI) are very close to a perfect fitness of 1. The Root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardised root mean square (SRMR) were below .05. All these indicators indicate a good fit, suggesting that the proposed model solution corresponds to empirical data.

Table 4. *Refined Model Fit Summary*

	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	$\chi^2/df$	<i>CFI</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>SRMR</i>
Model	21.544	14	.088	1.539	.993	.988	0.037	0.025

Note: CFI = comparative fit index, GFI = goodness of fit index, RMSEA = root mean-square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square.

All of the standardised indirect effects were statistically significant, according to the bootstrap bias-corrected percentile method. The magnitude of multicollinearity was analysed by considering the size of the Variance inflation factor ( $VIF < 2$ ). VIF was acceptable for all variables in the model.

Two basic personality traits did not meet theoretical expectations. Conscientiousness had no statistically significant effect on Psychopathy and, although statistically significant, Openness had an extremely weak influence on Narcissism and Dominant Leadership. Because of this, Conscientiousness and Openness were considered redundant, and were excluded from the model. In a similar fashion, Coalition Building was absent from the model due to its lack of predictive relationship with ATCC.

In the model, the three basic personality traits were directly associated with respective DT traits, and, through them, with individualistic social rank styles and in sequence with ATCC. Therein, Extraversion was the only basic personality trait directly negatively associated with ATCC, and directly positively associated with a social rank style (Dominant Leadership). Extraversion was positively associated primarily with Narcissism and, to a lesser degree, with Psychopathy, and negatively associated with Machiavellianism. The negative pole of Agreeableness was associated with DT traits, and especially with Psychopathy. Neuroticism (through its negative pole: emotional instability) was directly related only to Narcissism. The combined direct effects of Machiavellianism and Psy-

chopathy led to Ruthless Self-advancement, while the combined direct effects of Narcissism and Machiavellianism led to Dominant Leadership.

### *DISCUSSION*

The model supported our initial assumption that, at least among the young, positive ATCC is associated with an egotistic penchant for reaching and maintaining dominant positions in the social hierarchy. This was evidenced through the validation of a structural model testing the theoretical hierarchy and the joint effect of all selected variables. In the model, ATCC was positively and substantially related to DT traits, Dominant Leadership, and Ruthless Self-advancement. We take this as further evidence of CC being an instrument for the enhancement of one's social status by the use of insincere and pretentious demonstrations. The key implication of our findings is the fact that the proclivity for eye-catching displays of purchasing power is not isolated from the individual differences in the constellation of personality traits contributing to the choice of individualistic social rank styles.

Drawing on an evolutionary framework, we present a path analysis model encompassing personality structure, antagonistic personality traits, and strategies regulating social interactions, and specific consumer attitudes and behaviour. The model separates 'the dark' from 'the bright side' of personality, and posits their relation to interpersonal strategies and, eventually, the ATCC. Our data suggests that approximately a quarter of the ATCC variance is covered by a dark shadow of greed, arrogance, immorality, vanity, and envy. Therefore, our study is in agreement with previous reports indicating that conspicuous consumption is typical of, but by no means limited to, socially toxic personalities (Saad, 2007).

The Big Five traits had direct effects on DT traits (H1), the Big Five and DT traits had indirect and direct effects on social rank styles (H2); and social rank styles had indirect and direct effects on the attitude towards conspicuous consumption (H3). In addition, our model is in compliance with all of the recommended criteria for structural equations modelling (H4).

Path analysis revealed that ATCC was directly affected by Introversion, Machiavellianism, Dominant Leadership, and Ruthless Self-Advancement. DT occupy the central position in the model as they connect the personal traits domain with the personal strategies domain. Additionally, they connect basic personality traits with social rank styles and, eventually, with ATCC. Moreover, Machiavellianism was the only DT trait exerting both a direct and an indirect influence on ATCC, and the only DT trait directly associated with each individualistic social rank style. The Bivariate analysis of our data found no evidence of significant correlation between Extraversion and ATCC, and, quite in line with pre-

vious reports (Lee & Ashton, 2005), no evidence of a significant correlation between Extraversion and Machiavellianism. However, path analysis provided a more complex insight into the data. Extraversion was the only basic personality trait affecting (though in opposite directions) all study variables. Most importantly, Introversion was directly associated with ATCC and Machiavellianism, while Extraversion was linked to Dominant Leadership. Although Narcissism and Psychopathy were merely indirect predictors of ATCC, they (conjoined with Machiavellianism) defined two distinct trajectories leading to ATCC: a) extravert, emotionally unstable, and uncooperative Narcissism steering towards Dominant Leadership; and b) extravert, heartless, and callous Psychopathy steering towards Ruthless Self-advancement. Concurrently, self-absorbed Introversion, fitting quite well into the premediated Machiavellian manner, exerts both a direct and an indirect influence on ATCC (through Machiavellianism's involvement in both individualistic rank styles). Since two basic prosocial personality traits (Conscientiousness and Openness) and one prosocial rank style (Coalition Building) were conspicuously absent from the model, we conclude that our present perspective stresses the self-centred, uncooperative side of ATCC. However, it is worth noting that the predictive power of Psychopathy, the central DT trait (Dinić, Wertag, Tomašević & Sokolovska, 2020), was overshadowed by Machiavellianism and Narcissism. As an agentic dimension is present in both Machiavellianism and Narcissism, but not in Psychopathy (Vize, Lynam, Collison, & Miller, 2018), this finding favours the agentic over the antagonistic side of conspicuous consumption.

A structural model connecting the personal traits domain, the personal strategies domain, and ATCC has not been reported so far. However, our data is in line with previous reports indicating that conspicuous consumption is habitually a visible ingredient of an exploitative and opportunistic interpersonal strategy marked by materialism (Velov, Gojković & Đurić, 2014), a high esteem of power, Machiavellianism, Leadership, and Ruthless Self-advancement (Mitić, Petrović & Đurić, 2018). Thus, the present study partially replicates and extends our findings on the psychological antecedents of ATCC.

The predictive relationship between Narcissism and ATCC reported here deserves additional commentary, since narcissistic apprehension about the importance of public appearances makes narcissists highly susceptible to the purchase of luxury goods (Fastoso, Bartkowski, & Wang, 2018). However, in an earlier study (Velov, Gojković & Đurić, 2014), there was no evidence of a statistically significant correlation between ATCC and Narcissism, as evaluated through the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-40; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Recently, a study (Neave, Tzemou, & Fastoso, 2020) using an abbreviated version of NPI-40 (NPI-16; Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006) and a different measure for the pro-

clivity for conspicuous consumption (Roy Chaudhuri, Mazumdar & Ghoshal, 2011) reported a positive association between the two constructs. Thus, it seems that the confirmation of the expected predictive relationship between Narcissism and conspicuous consumption is affected by the methodology used.

This study suffers from a number of limitations. We relied on the self-reports of an *ad hoc* sample of Serbian university students, and on an unstandardized translation of RSPQ. In an attempt to control for socially desirable responses, we studied ATCC, which is only an implied expression of actual conspicuous consumption. As attitudes are only predictive of actual behaviour (Ajzen & Cote, 2008), positive ATCC is only an indirect indication of truly existing behaviour. The direct measurement of conspicuous consumption is hindered by the fact that it is often publicly declared as frivolous and objectionable (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004; Eastman & Eastman, 2011). In this study, ATCC was inspected only with respect to brand name clothes, a manifestation of conspicuous consumption that was readily recognisable to our adolescent participants. Therefore, our findings cannot be generalised to other forms of conspicuous consumption and to other age groups without qualification. While apparel is a universally practiced channel of social communication, it may well be that ‘norm of dress’ (Veblen, 2005/1899) has quite exceptional ways of projecting status among the young. Another key limitation of this study lies in the fact that our data failed to replicate the expected predictive relationships between BFI traits (Conscientiousness and Openness) with respective DT (Psychopathy and Narcissism) and RSPQ (Dominant Leadership) traits. This deficiency may point at some other unspecified inadequacies of our sample and/or our procedure.

### CONCLUSIONS

Literature abounds with evidence on the fact that manifold manifestations of conspicuous consumption are widely distributed across situations, cultures and historical periods. However, there are not many studies on the psychological underpinnings predisposing individuals to this form of status-bearing signalling. Drawing on our previous research, the present study places the propensity for conspicuous consumption within a broad theoretical framework consisting of relevant basic personality traits, specific malevolent personality traits, and the modalities of social competition among the young. Thus, it provides a more nuanced perspective on what is commonly believed to be a ubiquitous behavioural bias. Providing evidence for personality-based individual differences in the ATCC expands the opportunities for future studies investigating the connection between other known psychological correlates of DT and individualistic social rank styles, and the motivation for excessive spending

on functionally dubious items. For instance, it would be interesting to empirically test the expected differential association between ATCC and the affective resonance vs. affective dissonance, and the bright vs. dark side of narcissism dichotomies.

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## АВЕРЗИВНЕ ОСОБИНЕ ЛИЧНОСТИ И ИНДИВИДУАЛИСТИЧКИ СТИЛОВИ ДРУШТВЕНОГ ПОЗИЦИОНИРАЊА КАО ПРЕДИКТОРИ ПОЗИТИВНОГ СТАВА ПРЕМА УПАДЉИВОЈ ПОТРОШЊИ

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### Резиме

Симболичка вредност робе коју купујемо је вековима ишла „руку под руку“ са њеном функционалном вредношћу. То је посебно уочљиво код таштих драгулија – скупocenости које имају за циљ да изазову дивљење и завист других. Њихова функционална вредност је занемарљива у односу на оно што невербално комуницирају, што даље производи друштвено одмеравање, такмичење и класно позиционирање. Како је упадљива потрошња еволутивно адаптивна карактеристика (присутна код многих животиња, посебно као репродуктивна стратегија), поставља се питање да ли она код људи представља просоцијалну или аверзивну карактеристику. У складу са тим, желели смо да испитамо које базичне особине личности учествују у интерперсоналним стратегијама које фаворизују упадљиву потрошњу као средство самопромоције.

У складу са претпоставкама утицајних истраживача из ове области, креиран је теоријски модел који је затим емпиријски проверен на узорку од 400 испитаника. Коришћена је анализа пута, те је моделирањем структуралним једначинама рачунат предиктиван утицај особина и стилова. На овај начин је проверена и смисленост хијерархијског устројства ових варијабли. У складу са претпоставкама, базичне особине личности су предвиђале димензије Мрачне тријаде, а оне су предвиђале стилове социјалног позиционирања и став према упадљивој потрошњи. Међу значајним предикторима се издвајају неуротицизам, екстраверзија и непријатност (од Великих пет), све три димензије Мрачне тријаде (нарцизам, макијавелизам, психопатија), као и два стила позиционирања – компетитивни и индивидуалистички. На овај начин је објашњено 24% варијансе упадљиве потрошње. Ниједна просоцијална карактеристика се није показала статистички значајним предиктором у овом моделу. Подобност модела је тестирана релевантним статистичким показатељима, те испуњава све критеријуме одличног теоријског и емпиријског поклапања.

Уз сва истраживачка ограничења и недостатке, рад пружа нов и занимљив поглед на упадљиву потрошњу и њено устројство у савременом друштву. Истраживања која претходе овом раду допринела су његовој ширини у одабиру варијабли, његовом методолошком асортиману, као и логичном следу закључака. Сва је прилика да раскош, брендирана одећа, скупи аутомобили и други јавни показатељи богатства имају своје еволутивно упориште. Но, нису све еволутивно развијене стратегије просоцијалног типа, а упадљива потрошња то засигурно није. Она је оружје манипулативних стратегија обмане оних који теже друштвеној моћи, не бирајући за то средства и жртве, те плашт несигурних, рањивих и покорних конформиста, као и завидних, насилних нарциса и макијавелиста.