

Understanding the impact of narcissism and schadenfreude on e-consumers' purchase of counterfeit pro-environmental goods



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the connection between schadenfreude, personality traits (narcissism and jealousy), and e-consumers' purchase intentions toward counterfeit products in a GCC nation, specifically Saudi Arabia. It aims to understand how these personality traits and schadenfreude affect the likelihood of purchasing counterfeit sustainable products online. A quantitative cross-sectional design was used, with data collected from 309 e-consumers via an online survey. Stratified random sampling ensured diverse representation among participants. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to analyze the data using SPSS 25 and AMOS 24 software for thorough statistical examination. The results indicate that personality traits, such as narcissism and jealousy, significantly predict schadenfreude among e-consumers. Furthermore, schadenfreude has a direct influence on their intentions to buy counterfeit sustainable products. The study also reveals that these negative personality traits heighten the impact of schadenfreude on purchase intentions, demonstrating a complex interaction between personality and emotional factors in consumer behavior. This research is one of the first to explore the relationship between personality traits, schadenfreude, and purchase intentions in e-commerce within a GCC nation. Its findings offer valuable insights for marketers and policymakers on how dark personality traits can shape sustainable consumption behaviors, helping them better promote sustainable products in the region.

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1. Introduction

The rise of e-commerce has dramatically transformed consumer purchasing behaviors, leading to a burgeoning interest in understanding the psychological and emotional drivers behind online shopping (Baek et al., 2022). Among these drivers, schadenfreude—a complex emotion of pleasure derived from another's misfortune—and narcissism—a personality trait characterized by grandiosity, entitlement, and a need for admiration—have emerged as critical factors influencing consumer behavior (Tyler et al., 2021). This research paper aims to explore the interplay between schadenfreude, narcissism, and e-consumer purchase intentions within the unique socio-cultural context of a GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) nation (Pueschel et al., 2017). By examining these

relationships, we seek to provide a nuanced understanding of how these psychological traits shape e-consumer behaviors in this rapidly growing market (Chen and Lin, 2021). The GCC region, comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, has witnessed significant growth in internet penetration and e-commerce adoption in recent years (Al Balushi et al., 2024). This growth has been fueled by factors such as high disposable incomes, a young and tech-savvy population, and supportive government policies aimed at digital transformation (Kassim et al., 2021). However, the cultural dynamics of the GCC, characterized by collectivism, social conformity, and high-power distance, present a unique context for studying consumer behavior (Usunier and Lee, 2005). The intriguing dynamics of individual psychological traits like schadenfreude and narcissism within this collectivist culture add a layer of complexity to understanding e-consumer purchase intentions (Ahmad and Ishaq, 2023).

Schadenfreude has been extensively studied as an emotion in the context of social comparison and competition. It often arises in situations where individuals perceive themselves as being in a

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superior position relative to others who experience misfortune (Shimul et al., 2021). In consumer behavior, schadenfreude can influence purchase decisions by enhancing the perceived value of a product when it is associated with a competitor's failure or misfortune (Kim and Kim, 2018). For instance, previous research has shown that consumers are likelier to engage in schadenfreude-driven behaviors when they feel a sense of rivalry or competition (Sundie et al., 2009). This study extends this line of inquiry by investigating how schadenfreude influences e-consumer purchase intentions in the GCC, where social status and reputation play a significant role in consumer decision-making.

Narcissism, on the other hand, is a personality trait that has been linked to various consumer behaviors, including luxury consumption and brand attachment (Baek et al., 2018). Narcissistic individuals tend to seek products and brands that reflect their grandiose self-image and provide opportunities for admiration and recognition from others (Harrison et al., 2018). This trait can amplify the effects of schadenfreude by making narcissistic consumers more sensitive to social comparisons and more likely to derive pleasure from others' misfortunes. Given the emphasis on social status and prestige in GCC societies, narcissistic traits may have a pronounced impact on e-consumer purchase intentions in this region (Al-Issa and Dens, 2023). The existing literature on e-consumer behavior has primarily focused on factors such as convenience, price sensitivity, and product variety (Alcúdia and Delgado, 2020). However, there is a growing recognition of the need to consider the emotional and psychological drivers of online shopping. For instance, research highlights the role of emotions in influencing online purchase intentions, suggesting that positive emotions like joy and excitement can enhance the likelihood of making a purchase (Hausman and Siekpe, 2009). Our study builds on this framework by introducing schadenfreude and narcissism as additional emotional and psychological variables that can shape e-consumer behaviors.

In the GCC context, where social hierarchies and collective values are deeply ingrained, the impact of schadenfreude and narcissism on e-consumer behavior is likely to be pronounced. Previous research has shown that consumers in collectivist cultures are highly influenced by social norms and the desire to maintain social harmony (Shukla and Purani, 2012). However, GCC societies' increasing individualization and westernization, particularly among younger generations, have led to a complex interplay between traditional collectivist values and emerging individualistic tendencies (Khare et al., 2014). This duality makes the GCC an intriguing setting for examining how individual psychological traits like schadenfreude and narcissism influence online shopping behaviors (de Bellis et al., 2016). To date, there has been limited research on the role of schadenfreude and narcissism in e-consumer behavior, particularly within the context of the GCC.

Most studies on schadenfreude have focused on its social and interpersonal dimensions, with little attention to its implications for consumer behavior.

Similarly, while narcissism has been linked to luxury consumption and brand attachment (Jiang et al., 2022; Nandy et al., 2023), its impact on online purchase intentions remains underexplored. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how schadenfreude and narcissism influence e-consumer purchase intentions in the GCC. The rise of e-commerce has transformed how consumers shop, and understanding the psychological and emotional drivers behind online shopping is crucial. Among these drivers, schadenfreude—pleasure derived from another's misfortune—and narcissism—a personality trait characterized by grandiosity and a need for admiration—have emerged as significant factors influencing consumer behavior. This study explores the relationship between schadenfreude, narcissism, and e-consumer purchase intentions within a GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) nation. By examining these relationships, we seek to provide insights into how these psychological traits shape e-consumer behaviors in this rapidly evolving market.

In the context of e-commerce, prior literature has suggested that consumers' motivation to engage in online shopping is driven by convenience (Zaghoul et al., 2024) as well as by consumption values, which include both utilitarian and hedonic aspects (Punj, 2011). However, the role of emotions like schadenfreude and personality traits like narcissism in influencing e-consumer purchase intentions has not been extensively studied. This discussion highlights three gaps in the existing research related to e-consumer behavior and schadenfreude:

1. Few studies have focused on the impact of schadenfreude and narcissism on e-consumer purchase intentions.
2. There is a dearth of theory-driven investigations that incorporate these psychological traits.
3. The interaction between schadenfreude, narcissism, and consumption values regarding e-commerce behavior remains largely unexplored.

The present study attempts to bridge these gaps by applying the theories of social comparison and self-enhancement to understand consumer choice behavior in e-commerce. The study examines three research questions (RQs):

- RQ1. How do schadenfreude and narcissism influence e-consumer purchase intentions in the context of a GCC nation?
- RQ2. Are specific consumption values mediating the relationship between these psychological traits and purchase intentions?
- RQ3. Do age and gender moderate the relationship between schadenfreude, narcissism, and e-consumer purchase intentions?

To answer these research questions, we take the following steps:

1. Conduct a comprehensive literature review to understand prior research on schadenfreude, narcissism, and e-consumer behavior.
2. Contextualize these psychological traits and consumption values within the GCC context via a cross-sectional research design, including a self-reported survey for quantitative data collection.
3. Propose and empirically test research hypotheses on the association between schadenfreude, narcissism, and e-consumer purchase intentions.

The novelty of this study stems from the following contributions:

- It is among the first to examine the combined effects of schadenfreude and narcissism on e-consumer purchase intentions within the context of a GCC nation, i.e., Saudi Arabia.
- It extends the understanding of consumer behavior by incorporating psychological traits and emotional responses, thus contributing to the limited literature on these aspects of e-commerce.
- This study is based on sample data from a GCC nation, i.e., Saudi Arabia, providing insights into a growing but under-researched market in terms of psychological drivers of e-consumer behavior.
- Finally, this work formulates a conceptual framework that integrates schadenfreude, narcissism, and consumption values, offering a basis for future research on psychological factors influencing e-consumer behavior.

The proposed model highlights that e-consumer purchase intentions are influenced not only by the technical merits and affordances of online platforms but also by consumers' emotional and psychological traits (Fig. 1). By including app-related values and those derived from psychological traits, this study provides a framework for future studies to incorporate these aspects within the broader domain of e-commerce and consumer behavior.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the background literature and details the justification of the proposed hypotheses. Section 3 covers the methodology in detail. Section 4 presents the analysis and discussion results, and Section 6 concludes with implications, limitations, and future research areas.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Schadenfreude and purchase Intention for counterfeit green products

Schadenfreude, the pleasure derived from another's misfortune, has been identified as a powerful emotional driver that can influence consumer behavior in various contexts. This emotion often arises in competitive or comparative scenarios where individuals perceive themselves as benefiting or gaining an advantage from others' failures or misfortunes (Jaques, 2008). In the context of consumer behavior, schadenfreude can significantly

impact purchasing decisions, particularly when the products involved carry social or ethical connotations (Leach et al., 2003). Counterfeit products, often viewed negatively due to their illegality and ethical implications, present a unique domain where schadenfreude may play a role (Souiden et al., 2018). Previous research has suggested that consumers' motivations for purchasing counterfeit products include the thrill of getting a good deal and the satisfaction of defying social norms (Gani et al., 2019). When it comes to counterfeit green products—those falsely claiming to be environmentally friendly—a sense of schadenfreude may compound these motivations. Consumers who experience schadenfreude may derive satisfaction from purchasing counterfeit green products because they perceive themselves as outsmarting others, including the original producers and more unsuspecting consumers who purchase genuine green products at higher prices (Moisieiev et al., 2020). This sense of superiority and the emotional gratification from feeling cleverer than others can enhance their purchase intentions (Loebnitz and Grunert, 2019).

Furthermore, the social comparison element intrinsic to schadenfreude aligns with the competitive nature of consumerism, where individuals constantly seek to enhance their status and self-worth through their purchasing choices (Festinger, 1954). In the context of a GCC nation, where social hierarchies and prestige are significant cultural factors, the role of schadenfreude in purchasing decisions can be even more pronounced. With its mix of traditional values and rapid modernization, the GCC region presents a unique environment where consumers are increasingly exposed to global brands and products, including counterfeit goods. The high value placed on social status and appearance in these societies may drive consumers to engage in behaviors that allow them to signal their savvy and resourcefulness, even if it involves ethical compromises (Nwankwo and Gbadamosi, 2020). Given this background, Emotional drivers, such as schadenfreude, have been shown to significantly affect consumer decision-making processes, where positive emotions derived from social comparisons can lead to increased engagement in specific consumer behaviors (Yadav and Chakrabarti, 2022). In the context of counterfeit products, motivations such as thrill-seeking, desire for a bargain, and defiance of social norms are prevalent (Iyer et al., 2022). Schadenfreude can intensify these motivations by adding an emotional layer of satisfaction and perceived superiority. Social comparison theory posits that individuals evaluate their status and worth by comparing themselves to others (Festinger, 1954), and schadenfreude-driven consumers may feel superior to those who purchase genuine products, reinforcing their intention to buy counterfeits. In the GCC region, where social status and appearance are highly valued, schadenfreude may particularly influence consumer behavior. The competitive social environment can drive consumers

to enhance their status and self-image, even through ethically questionable means (Alserhan et al., 2015). By examining schadenfreude's role in purchasing counterfeit green products, this study contributes to understanding the emotional and psychological drivers of consumer behavior in the GCC, extending the existing literature on schadenfreude and consumer behavior, and providing insights for addressing the challenges posed by counterfeit goods in the market. Hence, we propose:

H1: Schadenfreude significantly influences intentions to buy counterfeit green products.

2.2. Corporate social irresponsibility and schadenfreude

Corporate social irresponsibility (CSI) refers to the actions and policies of a corporation that negatively impact society, the environment, or stakeholders (Valor et al., 2022). Unlike corporate social responsibility (CSR), which emphasizes ethical behavior and positive contributions, CSI highlights organizations' detrimental behaviors and decisions. The perception of CSI can significantly influence consumer emotions and behaviors, including schadenfreude. Schadenfreude, the pleasure derived from another's misfortune, is particularly relevant in the context of CSI. When consumers perceive that a corporation engages in irresponsible practices, they may experience schadenfreude when that corporation faces setbacks or failures. This response can be attributed to several psychological and social factors. Firstly, social comparison theory suggests that individuals derive self-enhancement by comparing themselves to others who are worse off (Festinger, 1954). In the case of CSI, consumers may feel morally superior when an unethical corporation suffers, leading to feelings of schadenfreude.

Secondly, the concept of moral outrage plays a role. Moral outrage arises when individuals perceive a violation of ethical standards and can lead to punitive desires toward the violator (Liu et al., 2023). When a corporation's irresponsible actions are exposed, consumers' moral outrage can transform into schadenfreude, as they feel justified in their pleasure at the corporation's misfortune. This is especially pertinent in the GCC context, where cultural and social norms emphasize ethical conduct and communal welfare. Furthermore, the theory of justice suggests that people have an inherent need to believe in a just world where good actions are rewarded and bad actions are punished. CSI disrupts this sense of justice, leading individuals to take pleasure in the misfortunes of the offending corporation as a way to restore balance. In the context of the GCC, where communal values and justice are highly regarded, the response to CSI may be particularly strong, fostering schadenfreude. Empirical evidence supports the link between CSI and schadenfreude. Studies have shown that consumers are likely to experience schadenfreude when corporations perceived as unethical or

irresponsible face negative outcomes (Salimian et al., 2024). This reaction is not only a form of emotional response but also a way for consumers to express their disapproval of corporate misconduct.

The hypothesis that CSI significantly influences schadenfreude is grounded in several well-established theories and empirical findings. Firstly, social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) provides a robust framework for understanding how individuals derive pleasure from the misfortune of others, especially those perceived as unethical. In the case of CSI, consumers' feelings of moral superiority can intensify schadenfreude when they observe irresponsible corporations facing adverse outcomes. Secondly, the concept of moral outrage (Mazzoli et al., 2024; Mitchell, 2024) supports the hypothesis by explaining how ethical violations by corporations can lead to punitive desires and pleasure at the corporation's misfortune. In the GCC context, where communal and ethical standards are paramount, the moral outrage resulting from CSI can be a significant driver of schadenfreude. Thirdly, the theory of justice suggests that people are motivated to see justice served. When corporations engage in irresponsible actions, consumers may experience schadenfreude as a way to restore their belief in a just world. This reaction is particularly relevant in the GCC, where cultural norms emphasize fairness and justice. Empirical studies further validate the hypothesis. Research has consistently shown that consumers react negatively to CSI, often experiencing schadenfreude when irresponsible corporations suffer (Orth et al., 2019). This emotional response serves as a personal and social mechanism for expressing disapproval of corporate misconduct.

In conclusion, theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence support the hypothesis that corporate social irresponsibility significantly influences schadenfreude. This relationship is particularly relevant in the GCC context, where cultural and social norms highly value ethical behavior and justice. By examining this hypothesis, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional drivers of e-consumer behavior in response to corporate misconduct. Given the cultural and social significance of ethical behavior in the GCC, it is reasonable to hypothesize that:

H2: Corporate social irresponsibility significantly influences schadenfreude.

2.3. Personality traits, schadenfreude, and intentions to buy

Personality traits play a critical role in shaping consumer behaviors and emotional responses. Among these traits, narcissism and jealousy have been extensively studied for their impact on social interactions and decision-making processes. In the context of consumer behavior, these traits can significantly influence schadenfreude and

subsequent purchase intentions, particularly in a GCC nation where social status and reputation are paramount. Narcissism, characterized by grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy, has been linked to various consumer behaviors, including luxury consumption and brand attachment (Sedikides and Hart, 2022). Narcissistic individuals are highly motivated to maintain and enhance their self-image, often seeking products that signal status and superiority. This self-enhancement drive can amplify the experience of schadenfreude, as narcissistic individuals are more likely to derive pleasure from others' misfortunes, especially when it reinforces their sense of superiority (Campbell et al., 2004). In the GCC context, where social recognition and prestige are highly valued, the influence of narcissism on schadenfreude is particularly salient.

Jealousy, an emotion that arises from the perception that others have something desirable, can also play a significant role in consumer behavior. Jealousy is often associated with feelings of inferiority and resentment, leading individuals to desire the downfall of those they envy (Hancock et al., 2020). This emotion can trigger schadenfreude as a coping mechanism to mitigate the negative feelings associated with jealousy. Consumers experiencing jealousy may derive pleasure from the misfortunes of those they perceive as rivals, influencing their emotional responses and purchase intentions (Siddique and Rajput, 2022). In the collectivist cultures of the GCC, where social comparisons are frequent and intense, jealousy can be a powerful driver of schadenfreude. The interplay between these personality traits and schadenfreude can also extend to specific purchase behaviors, such as the intention to buy counterfeit green products. Narcissistic individuals, driven by their need for admiration and status, may be particularly inclined to purchase counterfeit green products to signal their environmental consciousness without compromising their desire for luxury. This behavior reflects a complex interaction between self-enhancement motives and ethical considerations, highlighting the nuanced ways in which narcissism can influence consumer choices.

When individuals perceive others as having desirable attributes or possessions, jealousy can arise, leading to feelings of inferiority and resentment. Schadenfreude serves as a coping mechanism to alleviate these negative emotions by deriving pleasure from the misfortunes of those who are envied (Leach and Spears, 2009; Sundie et al., 2009). Empirical studies have shown that jealousy can enhance schadenfreude, as individuals experiencing jealousy are more likely to take pleasure in the setbacks of those they envy (ul Haq et al., 2024; Marticotte and Arcand, 2017; van de Ven et al., 2015).

Narcissism's significant influence on schadenfreude is grounded in self-enhancement theory, which suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain and enhance their self-esteem. Narcissistic individuals, with their

heightened need for admiration and superiority, are particularly prone to experiencing schadenfreude when others encounter misfortunes that reinforce their sense of dominance (Campbell et al., 2004). The pleasure derived from schadenfreude not only satisfies their need for self-enhancement but also aligns with their lack of empathy and competitive nature. This relationship will likely be pronounced in the GCC, where social recognition is a key component of social interactions. The hypothesis that narcissism significantly influences intentions to buy counterfeit green products is supported by the dual motivations of self-enhancement and status signaling inherent in narcissistic individuals (Sedikides et al., 2004). Narcissists are driven by a need to project an image of superiority and environmental consciousness, even if it means resorting to counterfeit products that mimic green credentials (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). This behavior reflects their desire to appear ethically conscious and socially responsible without compromising their pursuit of luxury and status. In the GCC context, where environmental awareness and social prestige are becoming increasingly important, narcissistic individuals may find counterfeit green products attractive to satisfy both motives. Hence, we hypothesize:

H3. Jealousy significantly influences schadenfreude.

H4. Narcissism significantly influences schadenfreude.

H5. Narcissism significantly influences intentions to buy counterfeit green products.

3. Research method

3.1. Data collection

An Arabic-translated questionnaire was employed for data collection in this study. In ensuring linguistic accuracy and cultural relevance, we used a back-translation method (Jiao et al., 2024): The survey was translated to Arabic and then back to English by independent bilingual experts. Additionally, a panel of local experts reviewed the survey to confirm contextual appropriateness for Saudi Arabian respondents, minimizing misinterpretations and enhancing data reliability. The target population comprises online consumers of counterfeit green products in Saudi Arabia. Previous research has indicated that well-known products that have claimed to be sustainable have been copied and counterfeited a lot (Xu et al., 2020). Furniture brands such as Saudi Modern Factory, Al Aamer Furniture, and Al-Abdulkadber Furniture Company Ltd were selected for this study due to the presence of both authentic and counterfeit products in Saudi Arabia, and the questionnaire items were specifically tailored around their products (Table 1). A convenience sampling method, a non-probability sampling technique, was utilized. Out of 210 distributed questionnaires, 200 were returned with complete and accurate information and were

subsequently used for data analysis. The convenience sampling method is particularly suitable when respondents are widely dispersed, offering benefits such as cost efficiency and time savings, as Fink (2017) noted.

3.2. Measures

A 19-item questionnaire was utilized, employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A five-point Likert scale enhanced the response rate and quality by minimizing respondents' frustration. Of the 25 items, three items on jealousy were adapted from Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014), four items on narcissism were based on Poushneh et al. (2024), four items on corporate social irresponsibility (CSI) were adapted from Pérez and del Bosque (2015). Four items for schadenfreude were adapted from Leach et al. (2003), and purchase intention for green counterfeit products was based on Salimian et al. (2024) (Table 1).

3.3. Reliability and validity

As illustrated in Table 1, the factor loadings exhibit strong values exceeding 0.6. Pertinent experts in the field verified the questionnaire's face validity. We assessed the validity of the constructs through a rigorous process, ensuring both convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was established with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above the 0.5 benchmark and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding 0.7, confirming adequate internal consistency (Gohary et al., 2016). For discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied, showing that the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs. These validations strengthen the reliability and distinctiveness of the constructs, enhancing the overall credibility of our SEM analysis. Additionally, factor analysis was employed to assess construct validity, as shown in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha was utilized to evaluate the reliability (Table 1), and with each criterion surpassing the 70% threshold, the reliability of the questionnaire is thus confirmed.

3.4. Data analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized alongside SPSS 20 and AMOS 20 software to test the research hypotheses. SEM is a sophisticated statistical method designed to concurrently evaluate and forecast causal relationships among multiple independent and dependent variables (Richter et al., 2016). This approach enables the specification of intricate internal connections between observed and latent variables, with AMOS being particularly well-suited for estimating such models. In SEM research, the sample size may be calculated using online sample size calculators (Arya et al., 2018; Goi et al.,

2023); we have used a similar approach where we used Soper's (2017) sample size calculator. Given that this study included 19 questions, 400 questionnaires were distributed, and 309 valid responses were collected and analyzed.

Various indices were employed to assess the model fit (Dash et al., 2024), including the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), parsimony-adjusted normed fit index (PNFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF or χ^2/df). The GFI measures the proportion of variance accounted for by the estimated population covariance, with values above 0.9 indicating a satisfactory fit). The CFI, used to confirm the factor structure of the scale, should exceed 0.9 (Sashittal and Jassawalla, 2019). The PNFI, which adjusts for degrees of freedom based on the NFI, should be greater than 0.5 (Dash and Paul, 2021; Hooper et al., 2008). According to MacCallum and Austin (2000), the RMSEA evaluates the discrepancy between the hypothesized model and the observed data, with values below 0.05 considered acceptable (Bairrada et al., 2018). Lastly, Kuppelwieser et al. (2022) suggested that a χ^2/df ratio between 2:1 and 1:1 indicates an acceptable fit between the model and the sample data.

4. Results and discussion

Analyzing the data collected through the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach provides insightful findings regarding the influence of schadenfreude and narcissism on e-consumer purchase intentions in the GCC context (Table 2). The hypotheses developed earlier in this study were tested using SPSS 20 and AMOS 20 software to evaluate the causal relationships among the variables. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between corporate social irresponsibility (CSI) and schadenfreude. Consumers who perceive a company as engaging in socially irresponsible practices are more likely to experience schadenfreude when that company encounters difficulties. This finding aligns with social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), which suggests that individuals derive pleasure from the misfortunes of those they perceive as unethical or morally inferior. This response is particularly relevant in the GCC context, where cultural norms strongly emphasize ethical behavior and communal welfare (Serravalle et al., 2022). The feeling of moral superiority and the desire to see justice served to amplify schadenfreude in response to CSI.

The analysis supports the hypothesis that jealousy significantly influences schadenfreude. Individuals experiencing jealousy towards others who possess desirable attributes or resources tend to derive pleasure from those individuals' misfortunes. This finding is consistent with prior research, which has demonstrated that jealousy can lead to schadenfreude as a coping mechanism to deal with feelings of inferiority and resentment (Smith

and van Dijk, 2018; van Dijk et al., 2006). In the highly competitive social environment of the GCC,

where social comparisons are frequent, jealousy can be a potent driver of schadenfreude.

Table 1: Constructs, items, and factor loadings

Constructs	Items code	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha
Jealousy	JE1	I feel jealous that others have things that I do not have	0.88	0.81
	JE2	The thought that others have things that I do not have it always hurts me	0.75	
	JE3	Sometimes, I am jealous of others	0.86	
Corporate social irresponsibility	CS1	The counterfeit furniture manufacturers do not hold themselves responsible to society	0.81	0.75
	CS2	Improving community welfare is not a counterfeit furniture manufacturers' concern	0.90	
	CS3	Counterfeit furniture manufacturers are not responsible for the environment	0.83	
	CS4	Counterfeit furniture manufacturers do not help solve social problems	0.69	
Schadenfreude	SC1	I enjoy bad things that happen to counterfeit furniture manufacturers	0.70	0.80
	SC2	I am pleased with the bad things happening to counterfeit furniture manufacturers	0.80	
	SC3	I am satisfied with what happened to the counterfeit furniture manufacturers	0.79	
	SC4	I like what happened to the counterfeit furniture manufacturers	0.82	
Intentions to buy counterfeit green products	IC1	I would like to buy counterfeit green furniture	0.91	0.86
	IC2	I do not mind buying counterfeit green furniture	0.83	
	IC3	I prefer counterfeit green furniture over a green-compliant furniture brand	0.93	
	IC4	I intend to buy counterfeit green furniture	0.88	
Narcissism	NA1	I tend to want others to appreciate me	0.93	0.84
	NA2	I tend to want others to pay attention to me	0.97	
	NA3	I tend to seek prestige or status. I tend to expect special favors from others	0.85	
	NA4	I tend to want others to admire me	0.88	

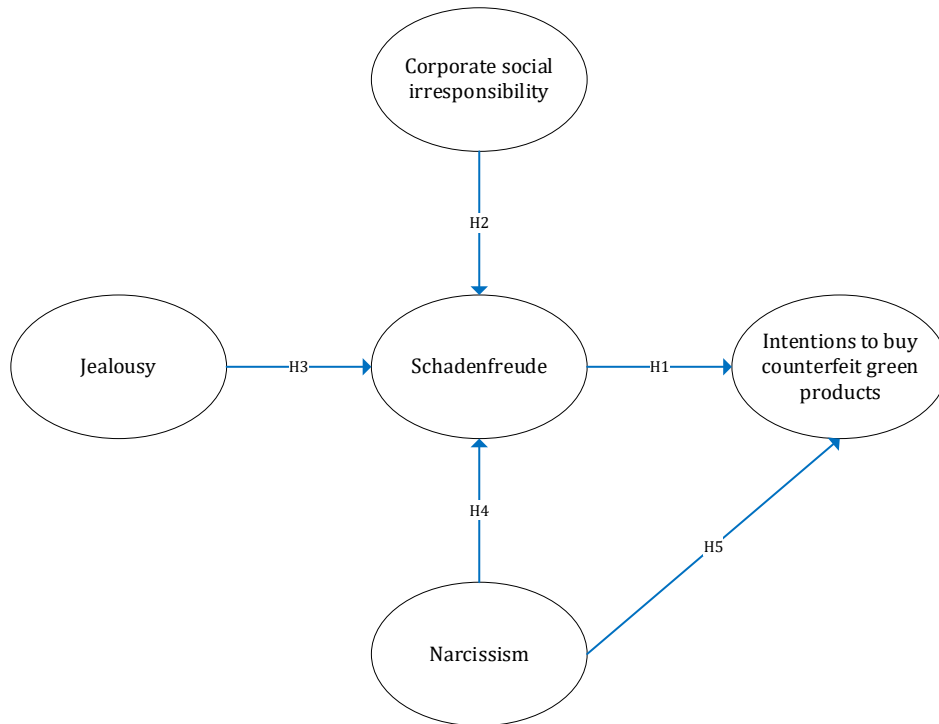


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

Table 2: Structural equation modeling results

Hypothesis	Regression paths	SE	CR	P-value	Result
H1	SC → IC	.041	2.143	0.046	Supported
H2	CS → SC	.153	1.327	0.002	Supported
H3	JE → SC	.060	1.472	0.032	Supported
H4	NA → SC	.013	2.841	0.021	Supported
H5	NA → IC	.252	3.103	0.000	Supported

SE: Standard error; CR: Composite reliability

The data also confirm that narcissism significantly influences schadenfreude. Narcissistic individuals, characterized by their need for admiration and superiority, are more likely to experience schadenfreude when others suffer. This aligns with self-enhancement theory, which posits that narcissistic individuals engage in behaviors that

reinforce their grandiose self-image (Sedikides and Gregg, 2008). In the GCC, where social status and recognition are highly valued, narcissists' pleasure at others' misfortunes is intensified, reflecting their competitive and self-centered nature. Moreover, as schadenfreude emerged as a significant driver of purchase intentions, reflecting the emotional

gratification derived from perceiving oneself as smarter or superior to those purchasing genuine green products (Marticotte and Arcand, 2017; Leach and Spears, 2009). This extends the application of social comparison theory within consumer behavior, demonstrating how the pleasure of others' misfortunes can translate into specific purchasing decisions, particularly in competitive social environments like the GCC (van Dijk et al., 2006; Sundie et al., 2009). The influence of schadenfreude on purchasing intentions underscores the complex interplay between psychological traits and consumer behavior, suggesting that marketers need to consider these emotional drivers when developing strategies for promoting authentic, sustainable products (Kim and Kim, 2018).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in digital markets by integrating the psychological constructs of narcissism and schadenfreude with established consumer behavior theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Identity Theory (Ajzen, 1991; Tyler et al., 2021). The results suggest that traditional models of consumer behavior can be enriched by incorporating emotional and psychological dimensions, offering a more holistic view of the factors influencing the consumption of counterfeit goods (Chen and Lin, 2021; Pueschel et al., 2017). This has practical implications for marketing practices, particularly in contexts where consumers are motivated by status and self-enhancement, indicating that positioning strategies emphasizing authenticity and ethical consumption may counteract the appeal of counterfeit alternatives (Al-Issa and Dens, 2023; Sundie et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the results indicate that narcissism significantly influences intentions to buy counterfeit green products. Narcissistic individuals' desire to appear environmentally conscious and socially responsible drives them to purchase counterfeit green products, which offer the illusion of ethical consumption without compromising their pursuit of luxury and status (Yang et al., 2021). This behavior is particularly pronounced in the GCC, where environmental awareness and social prestige are becoming increasingly important. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional drivers of e-consumer behavior in the GCC. The significant influence of CSI on schadenfreude highlights the importance of ethical corporate behavior in maintaining positive consumer perceptions. Companies operating in the GCC must be cognizant of the cultural emphasis on ethical conduct and the potential backlash from irresponsible practices. The impact of jealousy on schadenfreude underscores the role of social comparisons in consumer behavior (Ven et al., 2015). Marketers in the GCC should be aware of the competitive social environment and the potential for jealousy to drive negative emotions such as schadenfreude (Sawada and Hayama, 2012). Addressing these emotions through positive

messaging and ethical branding can help mitigate their adverse effects. The relationship between narcissism and schadenfreude, as well as narcissism's influence on the intention to buy counterfeit green products, provides insights into the complex motivations of narcissistic consumers (Awad and Youn, 2018). For marketers, understanding these motivations can inform strategies to appeal to narcissistic individuals' desire for status and admiration while promoting genuine ethical consumption (Djafarova and Fouts, 2022).

Conclusively, by examining the roles of schadenfreude and narcissism, the research provides valuable insights for marketers and policymakers aiming to influence e-consumer behavior in this dynamic and culturally unique market. The findings underscore the importance of ethical corporate behavior and the need for nuanced marketing strategies that consider the psychological drivers of consumer decisions.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the complex relationships between schadenfreude, narcissism, and e-consumer purchase intentions in a GCC nation, focusing on how these factors interplay with corporate social irresponsibility (CSI) and jealousy. The findings provide significant insights into consumer behavior's psychological and emotional drivers within a culturally unique and rapidly developing market. Our analysis has demonstrated that corporate social irresponsibility significantly influences schadenfreude among consumers. When corporations are perceived to act irresponsibly, consumers experience pleasure from these corporations' misfortunes, reflecting a desire for moral balance and justice. This finding is aligned with social comparison theory and is particularly pertinent in the GCC context, where ethical behavior is highly valued. The cultural emphasis on communal welfare and ethical standards amplifies consumers' schadenfreude in response to CSI (Valor et al., 2022; Festinger, 1954).

Furthermore, the study confirms that jealousy is a significant driver of schadenfreude. Consumers who envy others' possessions or status are more likely to experience schadenfreude, using it as a coping mechanism to mitigate feelings of inferiority and resentment (Loureiro et al., 2017). This dynamic intensifies in the GCC's competitive social environment, where frequent social comparisons are influential. Narcissism also plays a crucial role in shaping schadenfreude. Narcissistic individuals, characterized by a need for admiration and a sense of superiority, derive significant pleasure from the misfortunes of others, especially when these misfortunes reinforce their self-perceived dominance (Sedikides and Gregg, 2008). The social fabric of the GCC, which places a high premium on status and recognition, further intensifies this relationship. Additionally, narcissism significantly influences the intention to purchase counterfeit

green products. Narcissistic consumers are motivated to project an image of environmental consciousness without compromising their desire for luxury and status, making counterfeit green products appealing (Awad and Youn, 2018). This behavior reflects a complex interplay between self-enhancement motives and ethical considerations, highlighting the need for marketers to understand and address these nuanced consumer motivations.

The findings of this research have several practical implications. For marketers, understanding consumer behavior's emotional and psychological drivers can inform more effective strategies. Ethical branding and positive messaging can mitigate the adverse effects of jealousy and schadenfreude, fostering a more positive consumer perception. For policymakers, promoting corporate social responsibility and ethical conduct can help maintain positive consumer sentiments and reduce the incidence of schadenfreude linked to CSI. The insights provided by this research are valuable for marketers and policymakers seeking to influence consumer behavior in a culturally unique and rapidly growing market. The importance of ethical corporate behavior and the nuanced understanding of psychological drivers underscore the need for tailored marketing strategies that resonate with the values and motivations of GCC consumers.

Further, the findings of this research have several theoretical implications. This study contributes significantly to the field of consumer behavior by integrating psychological traits such as narcissism and schadenfreude, demonstrating how these traits can influence unethical consumption behaviors, such as the purchase of counterfeit products (Workman and Lee, 2021; Griskevicius et al., 2007). By exploring the roles of these traits, the research extends the application of social comparison theory and self-enhancement theory in the context of consumer behavior, highlighting how individuals' need for superiority and pleasure from others' misfortunes can drive their purchasing decisions (Festinger, 1954; Sedikides and Gregg, 2008). This integration provides a nuanced understanding of how psychological factors intersect with consumer choices, particularly in the context of markets characterized by high social conformity and status emphasis, such as the GCC region (Shukla and Purani, 2012).

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of convenience sampling restricts the generalizability of the findings, as convenience samples often do not accurately represent the broader population, leading to potential sampling biases (Dangelico et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant in cross-cultural contexts where consumer behavior may vary significantly due to regional differences, making it challenging to extend the results beyond the specific context of Saudi Arabia within the GCC (Cleveland et al., 2022). Future research may consider using different sampling approaches, such as the stratified sampling approach. Second, the cross-sectional

research design limits the ability to draw causal inferences from the data, as such designs only capture a snapshot of the relationships at a single point in time, failing to account for potential changes over time or the directionality of the observed effects (Cleveland et al., 2022). Third, future studies may also consider using qualitative research design, which may help garner better insights into the domain (Ishrat et al., 2021; 2023; Khan et al., 2024). Finally, the study's focus on Saudi Arabia provides valuable insights into the specific socio-cultural dynamics of the region, but it may not fully capture the nuances of other GCC countries, where variations in cultural norms, consumer values, and regulatory environments could influence consumer behavior differently (Al Balushi et al., 2024).

Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs to better understand the causal relationships between narcissism, schadenfreude, and purchase intentions over time, as cross-sectional studies provide only a snapshot and cannot capture the evolution of these relationships (Cleveland and Bartsch, 2019; Güngör and Çadırcı, 2022). Additionally, expanding the scope of this research to include other GCC countries or diverse cultural contexts can provide comparative insights and highlight the influence of cultural nuances on consumer behavior, particularly in regions with varying levels of collectivism and individualism (Le and Kieu, 2019; Tascioglu et al., 2017). Given the increasing importance of digital platforms in shaping consumer behavior, future studies should also examine how these traits interact with digital marketing techniques, including personalized advertising and influencer endorsements, to influence consumer decisions regarding counterfeit products (Shree et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2021).

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Data were anonymized and securely stored to protect participant privacy. Also, all the respondents were above 18.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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