

The feeling of boredom is an inseparable part of our lives, and although we know it is not pleasant, we usually know how to escape it: we engage in various activities like reading, watching TV or practicing sports that are aimed to “boost” us in these dull moments. However, sometimes we experience boredom as a deep deterrence to the sense of meaning and we need to engage in activities or to turn to views that compensate this existential threat. In such situations, people engage in prosocial behaviors, affirm their heroes or identify themselves with political extremes. Finally, when experiencing boredom, at least some people just go shopping or start browsing on-line shops. Although this seem to be a very common practice in the contemporary society, it is quite surprising that **the relation between boredom and buying has not been systematically investigated in social psychology or in consumer behavior.**

Although the feeling of boredom is often perceived as a fairly trivial, it can also be a chronic and persistent stressor with significant psychosocial consequences. Empirical evidence reveals that experiencing boredom is linked to a wide range of psychosocial problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse, problem gambling, or overeating and binge eating. In this project, I expect that experiencing boredom will also trigger so called excessive buying or overconsumption. This is a phenomenon occurring when people consume to an extent that exceeds just satisfying needs, and it refers not only to excessive food intake but also to buying and consuming an excessive amount of material goods, experiences, or even information. In contemporary society, we observe a dramatic shift from a focus on buying to satisfy physical needs toward using consumer goods as a modern means of acquiring and expressing a sense of self-identity, regulating emotions, or gaining social status through the symbolic meaning associated with material goods or with buying itself. Therefore, the present project will be aimed at discovering the mechanism explaining potential relation between experiencing boredom and excessive buying, and at exploring conditions under which the feeling of boredom can be soothed by buying. First of all, I am interested in whether boredom indeed trigger excessive buying and whether buying lower the feeling of boredom. Then, we will investigate why do people turn to buying in the face of boredom—is it just because buying is a stimulating activity, or is it because of the sense of meaning that buying might provide? Finally, we will test for the boundary conditions for the relation between boredom and excessive buying. For example, if this relation is due to the arousal stemming from buying, then the effect should be relatively independent from the level of materialism observed in participants. However, if this relation is due to the sense of meaning derived from buying, then the effect should be stronger among participants high in trait materialism and weaker or even insignificant among those low in trait materialism. I base this assumption on the fact that people high in materialistic value may see the sense of meaning in purchasing, and especially in acquiring material possessions. Still, contrary to their expectations, acquiring material possessions does not provide them with a high level of psychological well-being, because—most probably—the sense of meaning derived from such behavior is only superficial and short-term. However, there seems to be one exception to the general rule that excessive buying is negatively associated with happiness and psychological health: that is the case of experiential purchases, it is spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience, such as visits to nice restaurants, trips or concert tickets. Since spending money on life experiences make people happier than spending on tangible objects that they can obtain and keep in their possessions, experiential purchases might provide a higher sense of meaning than material purchases, and by doing so, the former might serve as a better boredom compensatory tool than the latter. For that reason, I expect that if the relation between boredom and excessive buying is due to the arousal stemming from the process of buying, then this effect should be relatively independent from the type of purchase. However, if this relation is due to the sense of meaning derived from buying, then the effect should be stronger for experiential purchases than for material purchases, especially for participants who value the former more highly than the latter.

The project will consist of **experimental** and **diary studies** using both various methods of manipulation and measuring boredom and buying behavior. By examining the link between boredom and buying from these different angles, we will be able to address limitations associated with one particular approach with another methodology. For example, the diary study will offer a window in real-life settings that will be complemented by a test of causal relations available through lab and online experimentation. Altogether, I hope that the project will result in comprehensive answer to questions on the mechanisms and boundary conditions of the effect of the state of boredom on excessive buying.