

Martyna Płudowska\*  
Rafał P. Bartczuk  
Andrzej E. Sękowski  
Elżbieta Masiak

## *Inconspicuous Consumption Scale: Development and Validation*

### ABSTRACT

We propose a new definition of inconspicuous consumption as an individual disposition and present an instrument for measuring this variable. The article describes the successive stages of the construction of the Inconspicuous Consumption Scale (ICS). The initial set of test items was generated using the method of competent judges - qualitative and quantitative evaluation using CVR Lawshe. Next, an exploratory factor analysis was carried out using data obtained from a sample of 690 participants. In the first step, parallel analysis and the maximum average partial (MAP) criterion were conducted, while in the next step, we again performed exploratory hierarchical factor analysis using

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\* Correspondence regarding this paper should be sent to Martyna Płudowska (ORCID: 0000-0001-6246-9152), Institute of Psychology, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, e-mail: martyna.pludowska@kul.pl; Rafał P. Bartczuk (ORCID: 0000-0002-0433-7327), Paediatric Regional Centre for Digital Medicine, The Children's Memorial Health Institute, e-mail: r.bartczuk@ipczd.pl; Andrzej E. Sękowski (ORCID: 0000-0003-1042-0941), Institute of Psychology, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, e-mail: andrzej.sekowski@kul.pl; Elżbieta Masiak (ORCID: 0000-0001-5587-9022), Institute of Psychology, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin.

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maximum likelihood ML with the promax rotation. Confirmatory structure was performed on data collected from 497 respondents (confirmatory factor analysis CFA using the robust ML estimator with the Satorra-Bentler correction). The results of a preliminary selection of items and exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses have led to the development of an instrument which measures four factors that make up the global ICS: Knowledge, Services, Experiences, and Subtle Brand Signals. Reliability and validity studies carried out in Poland in a sample of 1,330 respondents show that the ICS has satisfactory psychometric properties. We have assumed that inconspicuous consumption (IC) consists of deliberate avoidance of visibility and investments directly aimed at improving the quality of life and caring for the environment, both from a local and global perspective. Treated as an individual, relatively enduring disposition in the area of consumer behavior, it appears to be a useful construct for explaining changes in the area of consumer behavior.

**KEYWORDS:** *inconspicuous consumption; status; consumer culture; values; personality*

## INTRODUCTION

For over 100 years since the publication of Thorstein Veblen's treatise *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), his conception of the role of material goods in demonstrating one's social position and status has seemed to perfectly reflect the social reality of the capitalist landscape. The concept of conspicuous consumption introduced by Veblen describes the practice of purchasing expensive goods in order to publicly display one's wealth as opposed to simply satisfying one's utilitarian needs. It involves wasteful extravagance and buying luxury products to maintain or attain a higher social status. The construct of conspicuous consumption has been operationalized several times and has been a basis for developing instruments measuring this variable (Chung & Fischer, 2001; Moschis, 1981; Roy-Chaudhuri et al., 2011).

Engagement in conspicuous consumption, along with the associated individualism, materialism and sensitivity to the opinions of others (Paulose, 2016; Roy Chaudhuri et al., 2011), seems to

perfectly reflect the values and climate of consumer culture (cf. Baudrillard, 1998; Dittmar, 2007; Kasser, 2002, Kasser et al., 2003). The last few decades, which have been the heyday of conspicuous consumption, have seen numerous analyses and studies of various aspects and manifestations of this concept, including status consumption (cf. Clark et al., 2007; Eastman et al., 1999), visible consumption (cf. Belk, 1978; Charles et al., 2009; Heffetz, 2011), and luxury consumption (Walters & Carr, 2017).

Although conspicuous consumption continues to be a popular consumer trend in many emerging and developed societies today, there are indications that new consumption patterns are emerging and developing. A weakening of the signalling ability of traditional luxury goods, a reluctance to stand out ostentatiously in times of economic hardship, and a growing desire for sophistication and subtlety in design, characteristic of certain consumer groups, are all factors that restrict the role of conspicuousness in the process of consumption (Eckhardt et al., 2015).

The emergence, development and spread of new consumption patterns can be interpreted in the category of society's transition to a new phase of modernity, referred to as "liquid" (Bauman, 2000). Eckhardt & Barthi (2020), following up on Bauman's findings on liquid modernity (2000; 2007), showed that global consumer trends are also changing in terms of the role consumption plays in the process of manifesting status and striving for distinction. 'In liquid modernity, status hierarchies are increasingly ephemeral and consumption-related status signals are also shifting' (Eckhardt & Barthi, 2020, p. 88). Awareness of the consequences of one's purchasing decisions, the presentation of social, environmental and cultural knowledge, and whether to use it effectively are becoming the new currency (*ibid.*). Thus, the shift from solidity to liquidity (cf. Bauman, 2000; Eckhardt & Barthi, 2020) in the process of using consumption to obtain and manifest status means that good taste and financial resources are not sufficient to effectively manage one's position in social hierarchies. Existing

elites still remain, but at the same time, we are seeing the emergence of new elites, who have become so due to their knowledge and flexibility. In liquid modernity, the role of traditional status manifestations such as luxury goods is diminishing in favor of symbolic markers of authenticity, such as the collection of desirable experiences and the display of knowledge (Eckhardt & Barthi, 2020). The construct that reflects the tendency to effectively manage these symbolic markers of knowledge, authenticity and awareness through specific consumer preferences and choices we propose to call inconspicuous consumption (IC). In a world of abundant goods and services, organizations' new task is to provide consumers with products and services that have special meaning – to satisfy their needs while also realizing and manifesting their professed values. In this context, IC may prove to be a useful construct both in the psychological analysis of consumer behavior and in marketing research and practice.

#### WHAT IS INCONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION?

It seems natural to define inconspicuous consumption starting with an analysis of conspicuous consumption, which – at least at first glance – is an opposing construct and which has a long tradition of both theoretical and empirical research. In classical terms, the latter construct describes the practice of buying expensive goods in order to show off one's wealth and high income (Mitchell, 2001) as a means of attaining a higher social status (Mullins, 1999). Understood in this way, conspicuous consumption is the practice of purchasing commodities and consuming them in public in order to strengthen one's social position (Grace & Griffin, 2009; Veblen, 1899). Over time, it has become apparent that this phenomenon needs to be viewed from a broader perspective, taking into account not only status-symbols but also taste-symbols as part of the construct. Attention has also started to be paid to

the fact that conspicuous consumption is no longer restricted only to the acquisition and exhibition of physical objects, but that it has also spread to the sphere of experiences and symbolic image (Bronner & de Hoog, 2018; Roy Chaudhuri et al., 2011). Since the way that consumption is used to signal status and class affiliation has changed considerably in contemporary consumer culture (Eckhardt et al., 2015), scholars have started looking for concepts that would properly reflect these transformations. One such concept is *inconspicuous consumption*, which, as the wording suggests, alludes to Veblen's construct and seems, at first glance, to be its opposite. But is it really so? Since there is evidence that non-consumption of certain goods may be ostentatious in itself, perhaps, "inconspicuousness is the new conspicuousness"? (Eckhardt et al., 2015, p. 812).

Berger and Ward (2010, p. 556) define IC as "the use of subtle signals that are only observable to people with the requisite knowledge to decode their meaning". This is a fairly narrow definition, but the authors make it clear that it covers one specific type of IC only. Eckhardt et al. (2015) also adopt an approach like this. They emphasize that IC refers to the use of subtly labelled products which are misrecognized by most observers, but facilitate interaction with those who have the appropriate cultural capital to recognize and correctly interpret the message they carry with them. A similar definition of the phenomenon in question has been adopted by Wu, Luo, Schroeder and Borgerson (2017), who propose that IC consists in using subtle brand signals which are not readily observable by most consumers, while avoiding overt display of one's own social status. IC thus involves the consumption of luxury goods without, however, overtly demonstrating one's wealth.

A broader understanding of the construct is proposed by Currid-Halkett (2017). According to that author, IC includes more subtle, less materialistic forms of consumption. They are still often associated with communicating one's own status to others

in-the-know, although they may well take the form of “goods and services purchased for the sake of making one’s life easier, improving well-being (both intellectual and physical)” (p. 49). What is characteristic of IC is the fact that the consumer choices made as part of it are not noticeable at first glance to an uninitiated outside observer, but at the same time they contribute to the shaping and strengthening of the inconspicuous consumer’s identity and social-economic position. IC conceived of in this way takes two forms: cost-of-information IC and cost-prohibitive IC (*ibid.*).

Cost-of-information IC is the practice of purchasing and using goods that does not require large financial outlays but requires knowledge in the area of broadly understood culture. The consumption patterns characteristic of this type of IC are supposed to reflect knowledge, worldliness, and open-mindedness. Consumers buy the same products and use the same services as “everyone else” but in “better” versions as they make their consumption decisions with more social and environmental awareness. For example, they buy food products from local producers, wear clothes made by pro-ecological companies that are engaged in charity, and eat out in small, local restaurants. Cost-of-information IC is also referred to as nonpecuniary IC, because such products and services do not cost much more than their “regular” counterparts. It is all about buying certain specific types of food products (gourmet, organic, and humane comfort foods) or clothes (e.g. organic cotton or clothes with no labels), as well as choosing specific places from which to purchase those goods and services (e.g. farmers’ markets, restaurants with exotic or authentic food). Information, knowledge, and the value system one has acquired while gaining knowledge, as well as the awareness of what is better, more environmentally friendly and more humane, turn these consumer behaviours into symbols of cultural capital, allowing consumers to distinguish themselves from the mainstream. “Kale salad may not seem as overtly snobby as the opera but it’s still a means of preserving class lines, albeit more subtly” (*ibid.*, p. 55).

The second type of IC – cost-prohibitive IC – concerns not so much status as quality of life, and is associated with large expenses on health care, education, travel, and childcare. This type of IC can be divided into three subtypes. The first one is labour-intensive IC (utility driven over status), which consists in outsourcing everyday chores to others in order to make time for oneself. Examples include hiring a babysitter, a gardener, or a cleaning lady. The second type is experience-driven IC (non-utilitarian but also not status-seeking). Experience-driven consumers spend money on travel, exotic holidays, trips outside the city, private instrument lessons, hobbies and other pleasant experiences. Interestingly, these experiences, e.g. travelling, have a second-order effect – they generate knowledge and cultural capital that is further used to subtly draw symbolic class boundaries. The third subtype is “IC that counts”. It encompasses expenses on education, health care, personal insurance and retirement, which can be treated as investment in one’s present and future quality of life (*ibid.*). When one looks at the decisions and behavior characteristic of cost-prohibitive IC, it becomes clear that these investments are more costly than many ordinary status symbols, such as a watch or a purse, and much less visible to an outside observer. Although they are mainly motivated by the need to foster one’s well-being, accrue experiences and improve one’s quality of life, these consumption practices have a stratifying character, i.e. they create class lines (*ibid.*).

What cost-of-information and cost-prohibitive IC have in common is the fact that they are not readily discernible to an external observer, and that they shape and reinforce the identity of inconspicuous consumers (*ibid.*).

Analyzing the definitions of Berger and Ward (2010), Eckhardt et al. (2015), Wu et al. (2017) we can see that these authors focus on the role of subtle markers of luxury when defining IC. Currid-Halkett’s (2017) definition and conceptualization goes beyond inconspicuous luxury consumption. We adopt the assumption

of Eckhardt et al. (2015, p. 808) that "luxury consumption does not need to equate to conspicuous consumption". However, we propose, following Currid-Halkett (2017), that the scope of IC should also include other (besides the less visible, quiet products of luxury brands) inconspicuous consumption behaviors. According to Eckhardt & Barthi status signaling now relies upon inconspicuousness, non-ownership including experiences, and authenticity based on knowledge and craftsmanship, all of which are difficult to emulate. Moreover, the purpose of IC is not necessarily to signal status (Currid-Halkett, 2017), although clearly the consumption practices included in this category are stratifying in nature. Whether the direct intention of the inconspicuous consumer is to strive for a high quality of life, concern for the local environment or the planet - in his or her consumer choices is guided by the knowledge he or she possesses, an acquired awareness. These characteristics ultimately distinguish him or her from the mainstream. It is this function of inconspicuous consumption – standing out and expressing one's uniqueness – that Lee et al. (2021) emphasize. As Dubois et al. (2021, p. 84) note:

As the scope of luxury consumption behaviors widens – within and outside traditional luxury categories – people have started to look beyond the realm of consumption in pursuing the meaning and benefits of luxury. Consumers increasingly invest in domains such as parenting, education, and health to acquire cultural capital and status recognition that were traditionally attained through luxury.

Taking into account the approaches discussed above and the results of the studies on IC conducted to date, we propose the following definition of this concept: IC is a relatively constant disposition to purchase products and services without overt display motive, instead using symbolic signals of authenticity, awareness and knowledge. IC is a means of improving the quality of life and

gaining cultural capital – however, both signaling and multiplying this capital occurs as part of IC behavior. IC is a relatively enduring consumer trait that produces urges and motivations for specific consumer behavior (cf. Strelau, 2010; Sun & Wu, 2011; Zhang et al., 2007). It manifests itself as a conscious decision not to buy conventional status-goods and instead to purchase unostentatious brands and products that use subtle design signals and to invest in one's own and one's family's health, leisure, education and personal development. Inconspicuous consumer choices are viewed as expressing the consumer's knowledge about what is good for an individual and their awareness and concern for the welfare of the environment and society. Defined in this way, IC is not solely the consumption of luxury products, but a more comprehensive (consumer) orientation, the aim of which is to consciously attain a high quality of life through specific consumer choices. In addition to purchasing high-quality products from niche brands, without an eye-catching logo, e.g. clothing, accessories (direct avoidance of conspicuousness), IC also involves buying good-quality food, produced in small, artisanal factories and local farms, and organic cosmetics (invisible products that do not cost a lot of money, though they are slightly more expensive than their "ordinary" counterparts). It also encompasses the preference to spend money on experiences (leisure, travel, relaxation), rather than on durable material goods, and investing in one's current and future well-being (e.g. outsourcing household chores and spending money on education, health, and personal development). IC understood in this way communicates status; it allows one to distinguish oneself from the mainstream, but in a way that is difficult to discern at first glance.

## MEASUREMENT OF INCONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

Previous research on IC has been carried out within various research models – from sociological analyses of household expenditure, through qualitative research on IC of luxury products, to self-report scales measuring consumers' intention to purchase subtle luxury fashion goods. The first group of studies includes analyses of consumer expenditure and habits categorized by the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics. Currid-Halkett (2017), who analyzed data in The Consumer Expenditure Survey by US Census Bureau, found that since 2007, top-income households had been spending more and more money on expensive but largely invisible experiential goods (e.g. education, childcare, healthcare) that were part of IC, while reducing expenditure on traditional, tangible status-goods. An example of qualitative research on the IC of luxury goods is the ethnographically inspired study by Wu and colleagues (Wu et al., 2017). They investigated forms of IC in China using participant observation, interviews, and an analysis of photos of specific products. Although the results of both sociological and qualitative studies contribute a lot to the discussion on contemporary consumer trends, neither of these forms of research provides insight into IC understood as a person's individual characteristic. Therefore, it seems necessary to develop an instrument which could be used to measure IC from the perspective of the psychology of individual differences, as a trait along with its determinants, manifestations and consequences for an individual's well-being.

The objective of the present study was to develop and validate an instrument for measuring individual differences in IC.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCALE

### **Study 1 Selection of items**

The scale items were generated on the basis of theoretical assumptions concerning IC (a literature review) and opinions of experts (competent judges). The basis for the construction of test items was the operationalization of the definition of inconspicuous consumption in terms of Berger and Ward (2010), Eckhardt et.al. (2015) and Wu et al. (2017) and the manifestations of IC proposed by Currid-Halkett (2017).

The initial set of test items consisted of 30 positively worded statements. It was handed over to a group of thirteen competent judges who were asked to assess the quality of the generated items. The competent judges were doctors and professors of psychology and sociology, specializing in research in the psychology and sociology of consumer behavior, psychology of individual differences and methodology of social research. The judges were provided with the definition of the construct and were asked to evaluate the items both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative assessment was made on a three-point scale: 3 – the item is relevant and captures the essence of the phenomenon; 2 – the item is relevant but does not capture the essence of the phenomenon, and 1 – the item is irrelevant. The judges were also asked to provide qualitative comments on the linguistic accuracy, clarity and general correctness of the wording.

Content validity was quantified using Lawshe's CVR (1975). The CVR (Content Validity Ratio) is a quantitative method for assessing the relevance of items based on expert judgment. Critical CVR for panel size = 13 is .538 (Ayre & Scally, 2014) – out of the 30 initially generated items, 19 were qualified for further analysis. Based on the experts' comments and the justifications they provided with regard to the items they believed did not capture the essence of IC, some items whose Lawshe's coefficient slightly deviated from the critical value were reformulated (items 3, 24

and 26 in the Appendix). Given the judges' comments and suggestions, we also added 12 items to the scale (items 24 to 35 in the Appendix). Ultimately, a 35-item instrument with a 7-point Likert-scale was constructed.

### **Study 2 Structural exploration and preliminary reliability assessment**

The data for the presented study was collected in Poland. The country seems particularly interesting, due to its stages of economic development. In the third quarter of 2018, Poland was included in the group of developed countries as the first country from Central and Eastern Europe (FTSE Classification of Markets). Prior to this period, Poland was classified as a developing country. This meant that if a trend was observed in other markets – in the case of Europe those to the west of Poland – it took a while to appear in Poland. The most important symptom of this affliction, was price sensitivity (cheap products were the most popular). The last few years represent a period of intense change in this area (Kostrzewska, 2021), which means that consumer behavior characteristic of IC may have become more important.

The analyses were carried out using data obtained from a sample of 690 participants (414 women and 276 men) aged 19 to 62 years  $M = 36.68$ ;  $SD = 11.44$ . The research sets were distributed by online survey among convenient respondents; the “snowball” sampling method was used starting among the acquaintances. The largest percentage of the respondents lived in cities of 100,000 to 500,000 inhabitants (32.2%) and towns with populations of 20,000 to 100,000 residents (23.8%). Every fifth participant lived in the countryside, and the least numerous group in the sample were inhabitants of large cities with populations of over 500,000 people (15.7%) and small towns (10%). The educational breakdown was as follows: higher education (38.7%), secondary education (42.6%), vocational education (17.8%), and elementary education (0.9%). The vast majority of the respondents were professionally active

(73.5%). Students constituted 12.8% of the participants, retirees/disability pensioners 4.3%, and unemployed 9.4%. Most of the respondents (68%) declared that their monthly net income was lower than the national average in Poland, which at the time of the study was PLN 3,775.

In the first step of the study, the dimensionality of the item set was assessed using parallel analysis and the maximum average partial (MAP) criterion (Velicer, 1976), a method that minimizes the average squared partial correlations among items to identify the optimal number of factors. Parallel analysis suggested there were five, and MAP – three, underlying dimensions. Accordingly, we conducted an exploratory hierarchical factor analysis with the promax rotation for the given five factors using the maximum likelihood (ML) method, a standard estimation technique in factor analysis that assumes multivariate normality. The analysis of the content of the factors showed that the first four were related to the theoretical findings regarding the IC construct, while the fifth factor turned out to be related to having children ("26. If I had children, I would be willing to hire a bilingual nanny", "28. It is worth investing in developing your child's interests, even if it is costly.", "14. Investing in your own and your children's development is one of the best ways to spend money."), and only secondarily to some aspects of consumption. Given this observation, we analyzed the dimensionality of the scale by removing the three items that were unambiguous indicators of this dimension [items: 14 ( $\lambda = .674$ ), 28 ( $\lambda = .848$ ), 26 ( $\lambda = .358$ )]. The dimensionality analysis performed using the reduced dataset showed that there were four factors. The result was the same for both parallel analysis and MAP.

We again performed exploratory hierarchical factor analysis using ML with the promax rotation. The four factors explained 15% (F1), 6% (F2), 6% (F3), and 5% (F4) of the variance in the observable variables. Further analyses were carried out using the items that had a factor loading greater than .4 on one of the factors, with the remaining factor loadings not exceeding .3.

Table 1. Results of an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (N = 690) and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (N = 497) of the Inconspicuous Consumption Scale.

Item	EFA				CFA
	F1	F2	F3	F4	
2. I take great care to ensure that the vegetables and fruit I buy come from organic farms.	.701	.166	-.109	-.039	0.739
31. I have got my favorite local food stores in which I often do my shopping.	.612	.086	-.118	.049	0.617
8. I am inclined to pay more for food products as long as they have been produced using environmentally-friendly methods.	.605	.224	.014	-.056	0.715
16. My eating habits are rooted in my knowledge.	.602	-.081	.092	.050	0.580
12. I gladly buy food produced in small, artisanal factories and farms, even if I have to pay a little more for it.	.597	.201	-.022	.007	0.710
32. I gladly buy organic cosmetics, even if they are more expensive than their regular counterparts.	.594	.312	-.045	-.069	
22. My shopping habits are an expression of my values.	.592	-.042	.102	.087	0.619
29. When choosing a café or a restaurant, I attach great importance to what products they use to prepare food and drinks.	.592	.250	-.102	-.017	0.652
20. I take great care to ensure that the clothes I buy are made of organic fabrics.	.585	.207	-.056	.081	0.682
27. I like to buy food products directly from growers/manufacturers.	.582	.159	-.070	-.024	0.649
15. Carrying a cloth shopping bag demonstrates the consumer's environmental awareness.	.512	-.191	.059	.003	0.402
25. When choosing a destination for a holiday, I take great care to ensure that I can learn something new and broaden my horizons during the trip.	.433	-.201	.065	.006	0.345
30. I often get inspiration from lifestyle magazines or websites (on fashion, health, travel, technology, culture, art, etc.).	.427	.142	-.016	-.020	0.443
9. I like to use healthier substitutes for regular products, e.g. lactose-free or almond milk instead of regular milk, gluten-free bread and pasta, etc.	.390	.366	.009	-.106	
17. Before I choose a physical activity to start, I read a lot about it or consult experts.	.338	.212	-.023	.102	

23. Nowadays, wearing designer clothes is in no way indicative of a high social position.	.173	-.124	.152	.001
3. I spend a lot on courses and training programs to develop my competences and skills.	-.012	.560	.098	.003
5. I like to outsource household chores (e.g. hire cleaners) to make time for myself.	-.079	<b>.455</b>	.033	.037
4. I am inclined to spend a lot of money on private health care.	.078	<b>.454</b>	-.002	-.150
19. If I had children, I would decide to send them to a private preschool or school.	.166	<b>.399</b>	-.113	-.018
34. I would gladly use the services of a therapist or coach to enhance my self-awareness and improve the quality of my life.	.097	<b>.334</b>	.091	-.065
7. I prefer to invest money in my own development than spend it on yet another object.	-.006	<b>.318</b>	.318	.169
35. Nowadays, a high social position is evidenced by education and knowledge rather than affluence and possessions.	.122	.193	.050	.065
13. I believe it is better to invest money in something that will allow me to have interesting sensations and experiences (e.g. holidays) than to spend it on material goods.	-.085	.057	<b>.859</b>	-.038
10. I prefer to spend money on something pleasurable (e.g. a weekend at a SPA) than to buy material goods.	-.149	.217	<b>.706</b>	-.030
21. I would be much happier if I received something non-material as a gift, such as a trip with my loved ones, than a concrete object.	.084	-.067	<b>.624</b>	-.001
24. When I visit new countries, I like to try the delicacies of the local cuisine.	.250	-.039	.272	-.119
33. The articles, books and podcasts I choose say more about me than the things I own.	.160	.248	.269	.020
1. I avoid buying clothes with a clearly visible manufacturer's logo.	-.079	.046	.196	.161
6. When I buy clothes, I choose brands that are little known to the average consumer.	.025	-.094	-.035	<b>.828</b>
11. The clothing brands I prefer can be described as niche brands.	-.025	-.015	-.017	<b>.798</b>
18. The average consumer won't recognize the logo/design of my favorite clothing brand.	.096	.142	-.078	<b>.514</b>

Twelve items were identified as belonging to the first factor, and the remaining factors consisted of three items each. The model obtained in this way was fitted in a CFA using the robust ML estimator with the Satorra-Bentler correction. The Satorra-Bentler correction (Satorra & Bentler, 1994) adjusts the chi-square test statistic to account for violations of multivariate normality, improving the robustness of model fit evaluation in CFA. Goodness of fit of the model:  $\chi^2(185) = 521.849$ ;  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .91; TLI = .90; RMSEA = .05;  $p_{\text{RMSA} \leq .05} = .306$ ; 90%CI<sub>RMSEA</sub> [.047, .055]; SRMR = .05. The model fitted the data well. To obtain the final version of the scale, we discarded three items with the lowest factor loadings in subscale 1 (Table 1), as they reflected weaker associations with the underlying factor and reduced the clarity of the scale's structure.

The dimensions extracted were given names reflecting the content of the items belonging to each of them. The items of the first factor, designated as Knowledge, are associated with obtaining information about the quality of the products one purchases as well as the place and methods of their production. The items reflect the consumer's awareness of matters related to ecology, environmental responsibility, and the benefits of supporting local economy. Within the dimension of Knowledge, IC combines the awareness of what is good for the consumer (what is organic, healthy, and comes from a proven source) with the knowledge of what is good for the environment and society (support of local production, small artisanal factories, organic farming). The inconspicuous consumer's knowledge and values motivate his or her consumer choices, and also manifest themselves in the inclination to pay more for better, more health-conscious and eco-friendly versions of "ordinary" products.

The second dimension, called Services, regards the consumption of services aimed at enhancing one's current and future quality of life. This factor includes items related to the use of

private health care services<sup>1</sup>, outsourcing of household chores (e.g. cleaning), and investing in the development of one's knowledge and skills (training courses). The dimension Services has a more pecuniary character compared to Knowledge – it requires much larger financial outlays.

The third factor is called Experiences. The items comprising this factor relate to expenditure on experiences. The preference to spend money on interesting experiences that evoke positive emotions (a holiday trip, a trip with family or friends) or give pleasure related to regeneration and relaxation (visit to a SPA) is conceptualized as an alternative to buying material goods: *I prefer to spend money on something pleasurable (e.g. a weekend at a SPA) than to buy material goods.*

The fourth factor, Subtle Brand Signals, consists of items whose content relates to the deliberate and conscious avoidance of conspicuousness. This dimension includes items associated with consumer choices regarding niche clothing brands which are not broadly known to the average consumer. The dimension of Subtle Brand Signals reflects the preference for brands whose logos and designs are not widely recognized.

The reliabilities of the factors, with the exception of Factor 2, can be considered satisfactory. The average correlations between the factors (.15– .57) confirmed the validity of extracting factors.

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<sup>1</sup> In Poland, the state health insurance program guarantees access to most basic health care services; private health care allows patients to avoid waiting lists for consultations and procedures and ensures access to higher quality services.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the ICS subscales in Study 1 (N = 690) and Study 2 (N = 497).

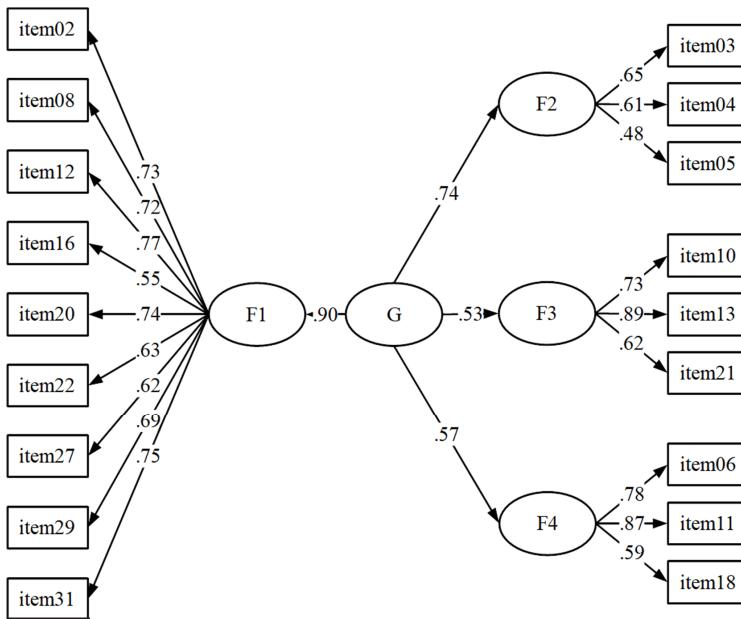
Subscale	Study	k	M	SD	Range	Kurtosis	Skewness	$\alpha$
Knowledge	Study 1	9	4.35	1.160	1.0-7.0	-0.27	-0.193	0.88
	Study 2	9	4.39	1.105	1.3-7.0	-0.10	-0.086	0.89
Services	Study 1	3	3.23	1.168	1.0-7.0	-0.21	0.231	0.53
	Study 2	3	3.55	1.243	1.0-7.0	-0.30	0.131	0.60
Experiences	Study 1	3	4.69	1.341	1.0-7.0	-0.33	-0.292	0.77
	Study 2	3	4.68	1.218	1.0-7.0	-0.13	-0.041	0.78
Subtle Brand Signals	Study 1	3	3.47	1.288	1.0-7.0	-0.35	0.101	0.75
	Study 2	3	3.68	1.252	1.0-7.0	-0.28	-0.185	0.78
Inconspicuous Consumption - overall score	Study 1	18	4.08	0.870	1.0-6.8	0.02	-0.151	0.85
	Study 2	18	4.18	0.907	1.2-6.8	0.09	-0.021	0.89

### **Study 3 Confirmation of the structure of the ICS**

The suggested structure was confirmed using data collected from 497 respondents, including 278 women and 219 men. The age of the subjects ranged from 25 to 45 years ( $M = 35.28$ ,  $SD = 5.61$ ). Due to the fact that IC practices had previously been observed among educated wealthy inhabitants of large cities in Poland (Currid-Halkett 2017), the confirmatory sample only included people with higher education and a net income above the national average who lived in one of the following five Polish cities with a population exceeding 500,000 inhabitants: Warszawa (Warsaw), Kraków (Cracow), Wrocław, Poznań, and Łódź. A computer-assisted web interview survey was conducted among registered users of the Polish nationwide research panel Ariadna. The panel is operating in Poland based on voluntary paid cooperation. The respondents were rewarded for taking part in the study.

The study was carried out in a sample of individuals with a higher social status, and a confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the robust ML estimator (Satorra-Bentler correction). Goodness of fit of the model:  $\chi^2(131) = 293.941$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $CFI = .94$ ;  $TLI = .93$ ;  $RMSEA = .05$ ;  $p_{RMSEA \leq .05} = .487$ ;  $90\%CI_{RMSEA} [.043, .057]$ ;  $SRMR = .056$ . The model fitted the data well. The results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis of the ICS (N = 497).



#### Study 4 Invariance analysis

The scale's invariance across gender was analyzed. The analysis showed that the invariance was weak (equality of factor loadings):  $LRT(14) = 12.375; p = .548; \Delta CFI = -0.002$ . To investigate invariance across age, we divided the sample into two subsamples: (1) 35 years and younger, and (2) older than 35 years. The chi-square test turned out to be significant ( $LRT (14) = 30.563; p = .006$ ), however, given that chi-square tests are sensitive to sample size, some researchers have suggested that changes in other fit statistics that occur with imposition of parameter constraints should also be considered in testing for factorial invariance across groups (eg, Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Based on this, Cheung and Rensvold (2002) recommended that researchers report  $\Delta CFI$  with the results on testing for invariance. Under the assumption of multivariate

normality, they suggested that the hypothesized invariance of the respective parameters should not be retained when there is a decrease of .01 or larger in CFI. In our case,  $\Delta\text{CFI} = -0.006$ , which suggested the presence of a weak invariance.

### Study 5 Validity

The internal validity of the ICS was established by analyzing correlations (Pearson's  $r$ ) between the scale's dimensions. This analysis was carried out using the data previously used in the confirmatory analysis. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlations between ICS subscales (N = 497).

Dimensions	Services	Experiences	Subtle brand signals
Knowledge	.46*** [.79***]	.45*** [.54***]	.47*** [.58***]
Services		.28*** [.49***]	.37*** [.56***]
Experiences			.21*** [.30***]

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; the correlations calculated on the basis of factor scores from the CFA model are given in square brackets, the correlations outside the brackets were calculated on the basis of scores obtained by summing up item scores.

All the correlation coefficients were significant, and the strongest correlations were found between Knowledge and all the remaining dimensions: Subtle Brand Signals, Experiences and Services. This was to be expected since it is consumer awareness, which is a derivative of knowledge, that is, so to speak, the basis of or the inspiration for IC. The weakest correlations were noted between the scales of Experiences and Services, and Experiences and Subtle Brand Signals. The Experiences scale, unlike Services and Subtle Brand Signals, has a fairly strong emotional component as it is related to seeking excitement and positive emotions through specific consumer choices. The Services scale is associated with an instrumental approach to consumption as providing specific measurable benefits, while the scale of Subtle Brand Signals expresses avoidance of conspicuousness, a deliberate and

conscious decision not to demonstrate one's status through the public use of brands commonly considered to be luxury brands.

In the next step, we tested the external (criterion) validity of the ICS. To this end, we analyzed relationships of the subscale scores and the global score of the newly developed scale with the scales measuring variables that they should, theoretically, correlate with. The following external criteria were used: values measured with the Polish version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire PVQ-40 (Cieciuch & Zaleski, 2011); personality dimensions measured with the Polish version of the NEO-FFI (Zawadzki et.al., 1998); rational, demonstrative and compensatory consumer behaviors measured with the Scale of Rational Consumer Behavior (*Skala Racjonalnych Zachowań Konsumentycznych*), the Scale of Demonstrative Consumer Behavior (*Skala Demonstratywnych Zachowań Konsumentycznych*) and the Scale of Compensatory Consumer Behavior (*Skala Kompenzacyjnych Zachowań Konsumentycznych*) (Adamczyk, 2013); and materialism understood as the opposite pole of humanism measured with the Humanism-Materialism Scale (HUMAT) of the Values and Cultural Scripts Questionnaire (Boski, 2010). Taking into account the theoretical assumptions about IC and the results of research carried out to date, we expected:

- positive correlations between IC and Self-Transcendence values

In line with the theoretical assumptions underlying the ICS, IC consists in purchasing "better", more health-conscious and eco-friendly versions of ordinary products. Inconspicuous consumer behavior is an expression of knowledge about what is good for the environment and local economy and what is more humane. The values belonging to the motivational domains of Universalism and Benevolence reflect collectivist interests and are concerned with enhancement of others (Grunert & Juhl, 1995). The concern for the welfare of society and the environment expressed through

IC should therefore be associated with the preference for Universalism values, which “combine two subtypes of concern – for the welfare of those in the larger society and world and for nature”, and Benevolence values, which “emphasize voluntary concern for others’ welfare” (Schwartz, 2012, p. 7). Previous research also showed that Universalism correlated positively with environment-friendly behavior (Thøgersen & Ölander, 2002) and that Universalism and Benevolence were positively associated with environmentally conscious consumer attitudes (Grunert & Juhl, 1995) and organic purchasing (Krystallis et.al., 2008). Taking into account the characteristics of the ICS factors, we expected that the Universalism and Benevolence values would correlate the most strongly with Knowledge.

– positive correlations between IC and Openness to Change values

IC also manifests itself as a preference for experience shopping, as opposed to the tendency to collect items, which is characteristic of conspicuous consumption. Assigning great importance to experiences, both those focused on intellectual stimulation, as well as those related to emotional satisfaction or sensual pleasure (e.g. travelling, going to a SPA) should be associated with the preference for Stimulation values (a varied life, an exciting life, novelty) and Hedonism values (pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself) (Schwartz, 2012). IC also aims to bring consumers closer to being “their version of better humans in all aspects of their lives” (Currid-Halkett, 2017, p. 20). IC is an attempt to distinguish oneself from “mainstream” society (consumer culture, ostentatious demonstration of wealth, spending money on visible, status goods, and following fashion, advertising and marketing), through one’s own consumer choices driven by knowledge, awareness and values. Thus understood, IC should correlate

positively with Self-Direction values (independent thought and action – choosing, creating, exploring) (Schwartz, 2012).

- positive correlations with the personality traits Extraversion and Openness to Experience

Previous research findings indicated that Extraversion and Openness to Experience were positively correlated with experiential buying tendency (Howell et.al., 2012) and pro-environmental behavior (Pavalache-Ilie & Cazan, 2018). Because these constructs are similar in meaning to the essential components of IC, we expected Extraversion and Openness to Experience to correlate positively with IC, especially the dimensions of Knowledge and Experiences.

- positive correlations with Rational Consumer Behaviors and Demonstrative Internally Oriented Consumption Behavior

Previous studies suggest that there is a directly proportional relationship between rational consumer behavior and consumer independence, understood as not being influenced by third parties when making purchasing decisions, as well as consumer modesty, understood as not showing off what one owns (Adamczyk, 2013). Therefore, rational consumption should correlate positively with IC, especially with the dimensions of Knowledge and Subtle Brand Signals. Demonstrative consumption is usually identified with conspicuous consumption, which is common in consumer culture, but research suggests that it is not a one-dimensional construct (*ibid.*). A factor analysis of data collected from a Polish sample ( $N = 1000$ ) reported by Adamczyk (2013) showed that there existed two types of demonstrative consumer behavior. The first one, called Classic Demonstrative Consumer Behavior (internally oriented), encompasses items related to the preference

for branded products with a strong emphasis on acquiring knowledge about the current market offer and new products (e.g. "I pay attention to what company has produced the product I am buying"; "I like to buy branded products"; "I always try to find out about new products on the market"). The preference for branded products (good quality products, manufactured with care for the environment) and staying up to date with the latest products on the market can therefore be an internal manifestation (not oriented toward an external observer) of not only one's beliefs about what is worth buying/investing in, but also one's own identity. This is consistent with the view that "private identity formation has close relationships with inconspicuous consumption in the new luxury world" (Wu et al., 2017, p. 6). Taking into account the theoretical assumptions about IC, according to which it expresses consumer knowledge and awareness (consumption as a projection/manifestation/derivative of identity, social stratification as a secondary effect), we expected positive relationships with the first of the factors described (Classic Demonstrative Consumer Behavior). Conversely, IC should not correlate with the second factor – Demonstrative Externally Oriented Consumer Behavior. This scale includes items related to increasing one's own status in the eyes of others (e.g. "I buy things which I can use to impress my friends/acquaintances/colleagues"). We also expected no significant correlations between the ICS and Compensatory Consumption Behavior (e.g. "I often buy things simply because I feel the need to shop", "Sometimes I feel guilty when I have bought something").

– positive correlations with Life Satisfaction

One of the goals of inconspicuous consumer practices is to promote well-being: they constitute a sort of investment in the consumer's present and future welfare (Currid-Halkett, 2017). Buying better (healthier) food products, investing in private

health care, and outsourcing household chores can be viewed as measures that one takes deliberately to achieve a high quality of life (better health, more free time). Additionally, previous research findings indicate that pro-ecological behavior (Corral-Verdugo et al., 2011) and experiential purchases are positively associated with positive emotional experiences and a sense of happiness (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

– negative correlations with materialism

HUManism-MATerialism is a bipolar dimension, whose one pole is related to a positive, pro-social attitude towards other people (e.g. "I show people selfless cordiality and give them a helping hand") and the other encompasses interests and activities aimed at increasing one's own material status (e.g. "I'm interested in public matters as long as they can affect my financial situation and peace of mind"; "I try to make tangible, material profit out of everything I do in my life" (Boski, 2010). IC is treated as a manifestation of distancing oneself from traditional material goods; it is consumption which, by definition, takes less materialistic forms (Currid-Halkett, 2017).

The validity of the ICS was tested in three samples. Correlations of IC with values (PVQ-40) and life satisfaction (SWLS) were calculated using the dataset previously used in the confirmatory factor analysis; correlations with rational, demonstrative and compensatory consumer behaviors were explored in a sample of 143 participants (106 women); correlations with personality traits (NEO-FFI) and materialism (HUM-MAT) were studied in a sample of 417 respondents (213 women) – part of the dataset previously used in the exploratory analysis.

The correlation analysis (Table 4) demonstrated that both the individual dimensions of the ICS and the global score were associated in the predicted directions with the variables included in the study. With regard to the value dimensions, the global ICS

score correlated most strongly with Openness to Change and Self-Transcendence, as well as the following value categories belonging to these dimensions: Stimulation, Self-Direction, Universalism, Benevolence and Hedonism. The study also revealed a directly proportional relationship between IC and Extraversion, Openness to Experience, and Rational and Demonstrative Internally Directed Consumption Behavior. The global score of the newly created scale correlated negatively with Materialism (a weak correlation) and positively with Life Satisfaction.

Knowledge correlated the most strongly with Self-Transcendence, Openness to Change, and the values belonging to these categories. Out of all the factors extracted, Knowledge correlated the most strongly with Rational and Classic Demonstrative Consumer Behavior. It was also the most strongly personality-conditioned ICS scale; it correlated positively with Extraversion, Openness to Experience (a moderate correlation), Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (a weak correlation), and negatively with Neuroticism (a weak correlation).

Table 4. Results of correlation analysis in the study of the external validity of the Inconspicuous Consumption Scale.

Scales	Knowledge	Services	Experiences	Subtle Brand Signals	Global ICS score
Benevolence	.36***	.20***	.26***	.12**	.35***
Universalism	.45***	.08	.27***	.14**	.39***
Self-Direction	.37***	.26***	.35***	.13**	.39***
Stimulation	.39***	.39***	.40***	.29***	.48***
Hedonism	.24***	.31***	.32***	.17***	.33***
Achievement	.26***	.34***	.22***	.16***	.32***
Power	.22***	.35***	.06	.16***	.26***
Security	.31***	.09	.10*	.10*	.26***
Conformity	.21***	.07	.05	.12**	.18***

Scales	Knowledge	Services	Experiences	Subtle Brand Signals	Global ICS score
Tradition	.26***	.12**	.03	.22***	.25***
Self-Transcendence	.45***	.13**	.28***	.14**	.40***
Openness to Change	.44***	.37***	.43***	.24***	.51***
Self-Enhancement	.26***	.38***	.17***	.17***	.33***
Conservation	.32***	.11*	.07	.18***	.28***
Life Satisfaction	.25***	.29***	.17***	.13**	.30***
Rational Consumer Behavior	.43***	.18*	.19*	.21*	.42***
Classic Demonstrative Consumer Behavior	.31***	.27**	.10	.19*	.33***
Demonstrative Externally Oriented Consumer Behavior	.04	.10	.02	.01	.05
Compensatory Consumer Behavior	-.02	.17*	-.01	-.10	-.01
Extraversion	.33***	.28***	.32***	.06	.36***
Neuroticism	-.17***	-.10*	-.15**	.09	-.15**
Openness to Experience	.31***	.26***	.26***	.01	.32***
Agreeableness	.19***	-.02	.10*	.02	.14**
Conscientiousness	.24***	.04	.17***	-.03	.20***
Materialism	-.28***	.10*	-.20***	.05	-.19***

\*p &lt; .05; \*\* p &lt; .01; \*\*\* p &lt; .001

The factor Services correlated the most strongly with Self-Enhancement and Openness to Change values, as well as with Life Satisfaction, Classic Demonstrative Consumer Behavior, Extraversion and Openness to Experience. Interestingly, it was the only one of the ICS scales to correlate (very weakly, but positively) with materialism.

The Experiences scale was the most strongly associated with Openness to Change values (Stimulation, Self-Direction and Hedonism). As for personality traits, this scale, as predicted, showed a directly proportional relationship with Extraversion and Openness to Experience, and was inversely related to Materialism. The last of the scales, Subtle Brand Signals, correlated the most strongly with Stimulation, Tradition and Rational Consumer Behavior. This dimension showed the weakest correlations with the analyzed external criteria. This may be evidence of its psychological specificity and distinctness.

In the next step, we tested whether the ICS scores could potentially have been affected by social-desirability bias. This seemed all the more justified that the choices made by inconspicuous consumers may appear to be sound and socially desirable.

Table 5. The results of the correlation analysis (Pearson's  $r$ ) between the ICS and Agentic and Communal Management (BIMI) scales.

BIMI scales	Knowledge	Services	Experiences	Subtle Brand Signals	Global ICS score
Agentic Management	.21***	.28***	.04	.08	.22***
Communal Management	.24***	.04	.03	.04	.18***

\*\*\*  $p < .05$

We correlated the ICS scores with the Bidimensional Impression Management Index (BIMI) (Blasberg et.al., 2013) using part of the dataset previously employed in the exploratory analysis ( $N = 417$ ; 213 women and 204 men). The analysis showed that there was a weak positive correlation between the ICS (the global score, Knowledge and Services) and Agentic Management (the tendency to exaggerate one's own social or intellectual status). The global ICS score and the dimension of Knowledge correlated weakly positively with Communal Management (denying socially deviant impulses and claiming pious attributes) (Table 5.).

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the study reported in this paper was to develop and validate the Inconspicuous Consumption Scale (ICS). Based on a review of the literature devoted to IC and the results of previous research, we proposed a new, broader definition of this phenomenon. Apart from the tendency to shun conventional, conspicuous status goods, this newly defined and broadly understood construct of IC includes beliefs and behaviors that are manifestations of consumer knowledge and awareness, a preference for experience purchases over material purchases, and investing in services that affect the consumer's current and future well-being.

The 18-item scale developed in this study consists of four factors: Knowledge, Services, Experiences, and Subtle Brand Signals. The four-factor structure that emerged in the exploratory factor analysis was confirmed in the confirmatory factor analysis performed on data collected in a sample of individuals with a higher socioeconomic status. The reliability values obtained in the study should be considered satisfactory, with the exception of the factor Services (the results for this factor should be interpreted with caution). The criterion validity of the instrument was confirmed by demonstrating relationships of the ICS and its dimensions with

Self-Transcendence and Openness to Change values, personality traits, in particular Extraversion and Openness to Experience, Rational and Demonstrative Consumer Behavior, as well as Materialism and Life Satisfaction. The scale correlated weakly with the instrument measuring social-desirability bias, which demonstrates that the respondents completing the test displayed a low tendency to present themselves in a better light. The scale showed invariance across gender and age.

The study found that IC expresses concern for others, society and nature - values correlated with IC (mainly in the Knowledge dimension) belonging to the motivational domains of Universalism and Benevolence reflect an orientation toward collective interests (Grunert & Juhl, 1995; Schwartz, 2012). According to the results, IC is also expressed as a tendency to think and act independently (positive correlations of ICS scores with values from Self-direction category) as well as seeking stimulation, both cognitive and emotional as evidenced by directly proportional correlations of IC with values from the categories Stimulation, Hedonism, as well as personality traits: Extraversion and Openness to Experience. IC correlates positively with Rational Consumer Behaviors meaning spending resources in such a way as to ensure maximum utility (Adamczyk, 2013). This variable was also found to be positively correlated with the Demonstrative Internally Oriented Consumption Behavior. This type of demonstrative consumption means a preference for branded products with a strong emphasis on gaining knowledge about current offerings on the market, news. It is treated as an internally oriented tendency – the brandedness of the product is a guarantee of quality while access to information about the offer, comparison of offers allows to make the best decision. IC's internally oriented demonstrativeness may mean that consumers with a high intensity of this tendency are internally motivated to devote resources and time to enjoying products perceived as unique, without the need to signal externally their wealth and status (cf. Wang, 2021). Inconspicuous consumption,

according to the results obtained, means a departure from a materialistic approach to life, distancing oneself from traditional material goods (see Boski, 2010), which is in line with the results of the analyzes conducted so far (Currid-Halkett, 2017). The orientation of IC on shaping welfare, postulated by Currid-Halkett (*ibid.*), was confirmed by the presented study. We found significant, positive correlations between inconspicuous consumption and life satisfaction.

Inconspicuous consumption, understood in accordance with the proposed definition, seems to reflect the values associated with post-materialism (Inglehart, 1981), such as Self-Direction and Universalism. On the other hand, the ICS correlates positively (though clearly more weakly) with values belonging to the categories situated at the opposite end of the circular continuum, identified with the materialistic pole (cf. Wilson, 2005). Perhaps, IC is an expression of focusing less on oneself and more on the good of the environment and society. On the other hand, this protest against the short-sightedness and selfishness of the materialistic consumer culture is still staged through... consumption (cf. Pecoraro & Uusitalo, 2014). Though it is less ostensible, more conscious, and more welfare-oriented (Currid-Halkett, 2017) than status-seeking, it still has a stratifying function.

We have assumed that IC consists of deliberate avoidance of visibility and investments directly aimed at improving the quality of life and caring for the environment, both from a local and global perspective. Treated as an individual, relatively enduring disposition in the area of consumer behavior, it appears to be a useful construct for explaining changes in the area of consumer behavior in developed markets. There are premises in the literature (cf. Eckhardt & Barthi, 2020) that good taste and financial resources are not sufficient currency to effectively manage one's position in social hierarchies. Both taste symbols and status symbols prove inadequate in certain contexts. CC is still a popular consumer trend and is fulfilling its function (cf. Roy Chaudhuri &, Majumdar,

2010). Its premises and principles, among others: "Objects are valued for their symbolic communicative property rather than their intrinsic functional utility" (ibid., p. 57) entail the natural consequence of concluding that visibility is important, because if others cannot observe the consumption of these "status symbols" and "taste symbols," that consumption becomes meaningless. In the case of IC, it's different - the choices and consumer behavior carried out within its framework are meaningful in themselves - you don't need an outside observer to feel better.

The rise of IC in recent years has undoubtedly been linked to social and cultural changes, including the demodernization of luxury (Eckhardt et al., 2015), the rise of masstige products (Paul, 2018; 2019). These phenomena and the implications of the research undoubtedly provide a valuable source of knowledge, used for brand management and for developing marketing strategies. From the perspective of the past few years, the prediction of Eckhardt et al. seems apt. (2015) who stated that "in the near future we will see a mix of conspicuousness and inconspicuousness, indicating the need for access to data and experts with culturally specific insight in real time, across several geographies, capable of spotting trends" (p. 819). We propose that analyses devoted to changes in the area of consumption should also include IC understood as an individual characteristic, the measurement of which can contribute to predicting consumer motivation and behavior in the coming years.

## CONCLUSIONS

Inconspicuous consumption appears to be a manifestation of the social, cultural, and economic transformations of liquid modernity. It also manifests itself as a reaction to criticism of traditional consumer society, with its characteristic materialism and conspicuous consumption. Our survey shows that the inconspicuous

consumer is aware of the pernicious pursuit of accumulating things and seeing them as a source of satisfaction and happiness, as well as the global consequences of a consumerist lifestyle. Efforts to show off one's success and social standing through visible, expensive goods, which have been effective currency for decades, may not be enough today. It is not good taste and wealth (as in the case of conspicuous consumption), but knowledge of what is good for the individual, society, and planet, flexibility, and openness to change that determine uniqueness and place in the social hierarchy. Our research findings show that IC is a complex construct that can be analyzed beyond its narrow understanding; intentional avoidance of visibility in consumption may include other categories of consumption than just a preference for certain luxury brands and products. What drives IC is the knowledge of products and services that contribute to individual well-being in the short and long term, as well as the social and environmental responsibility of consumers. Using ICS in research can add to existing knowledge of consumer behavior. It would be interesting to examine how IC may vary by culture and consumer wealth. A multidimensional scale to measure IC also offers the possibility of a profile diagnosis of this construct; it would be interesting to check differences in the intensity of the extracted four dimensions of IC among consumers differing by age cohort and gender. From the perspective of marketing research, it also seems important to use the presented scale for research involving the needs and motivations of consumers, representing a specific pattern of IC. This information can prove to be an important guide in psychographic segmentation, marketing strategy planning, and product positioning.

## Appendix

### Final version of the Inconspicuous Consumption Scale (ICS)

1. I take great care to ensure that the vegetables and fruit I buy come from organic farms.
2. I spend a lot on courses and training programs to develop my competences and skills.
3. I prefer to spend money on something pleasurable (e.g. a weekend at a SPA) than to buy material goods.
4. I am inclined to pay more for food products as long as they have been produced using environmentally-friendly methods.
5. When I buy clothes, I choose brands that are little known to the average consumer.
6. I gladly buy food produced in small, artisanal factories and farms, even if I have to pay a little more for it.
7. I am inclined to spend a lot of money on private health care.
8. I believe it is better to invest money in something that will allow me to have interesting sensations and experiences (e.g. holidays) than to spend it on material goods.
9. My eating habits are rooted in my knowledge.
10. The clothing brands I prefer can be described as niche brands.
11. I take great care to ensure that the clothes I buy are made of organic fabrics.
12. I like to outsource household chores (e.g. hire cleaners) to make time for myself.
13. I would be much happier if I received something non-material as a gift, such as a trip with my loved ones, than a concrete object.
14. My shopping habits are an expression of my values.
15. I like to buy food products directly from growers/manufacturers.
16. When choosing a café or a restaurant, I attach great importance to what products they use to prepare food and drinks.

17. I have got my favorite local food stores in which I often do my shopping.
18. The average consumer won't recognize the logo/design of my favorite clothing brand.

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