Consumer Minimalism

ANNE V. WILSON
SILVIA BELLEZZA

Minimalism in consumption can be expressed in various forms, such as monochromatic home design, wardrobe capsules, tiny home living, and decluttering. This research offers a unified understanding of the variegated displays of minimalism by establishing a conceptual definition of consumer minimalism and developing the 12-item Minimalist Consumer Scale to measure the construct. Three distinct dimensions of consumer minimalism are identified: number of possessions (reflecting the ownership of few possessions), sparse aesthetic (reflecting the preference for simple and uncomplicated designs), and mindfully curated consumption (reflecting the thoughtful selection of possessions). A series of studies, using samples from a variety of populations ($N = 3,735$) demonstrates the validity and reliability of the tridimensional Minimalist Consumer Scale, situates the measure conceptually and empirically within a broader nomological network of related constructs (e.g., voluntary simplicity, frugality, green values, materialism), and documents the scale's ability to predict relevant consumer preferences and behaviors.

Keywords: consumer minimalism, decluttering, voluntary simplicity, frugality, materialism

American consumerism is often characterized by overt materialism, opulence, and an insatiable desire to acquire. This celebration of accumulation, however, has often been accompanied by an embrace of simplicity and austerity in consumption. In the 1960s, minimalism emerged as a visual art form that heavily influenced architecture, furniture design, and corporate advertisements (Pracejus, Olsen, and O'Guinn 2006). In the 1970s, John Lennon urged the world to "imagine no possessions" while singing in a completely white and empty room. Only a few years later, the now-iconic image of Steve Jobs sitting on his living room floor in his signature black turtleneck with only a lamp and stereo came to serve as a symbol of aspirational simplicity (Chayka 2020). Fashion in the 1990s featured pared-down silhouettes, monochromatic color palettes, and long-clean lines (Freestone 2020), while simple web design and sleek technology, pioneered by companies like Apple and Google, dominated the 2000s (Moran 2015).

Today, minimalism is commonly expressed through consumption in various ways, such as monochromatic home design, wardrobe capsules, tiny home living, decluttering, and more. Several popular television shows, like *Tiny House Nation*, and best-selling books, like Marie Kondo's *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, are dedicated to teaching consumers how to be more minimalistic. Many aspirational brands, such as Acne Studios, Muji, and Patagonia, also now actively endorse minimalist aesthetics and values, offering a smaller selection of monochromatic items and encouraging consumers to buy less. Put simply, while not a new phenomenon, minimalism—in all its various forms—has come to the forefront of mainstream consumer culture, with masses of consumers embracing notions of reduced consumption, sparse aesthetics, and decluttering.

Yet, the concept of minimalism in consumer culture has not been well-defined in either academic research or in

Anne V. Wilson (AVWilson@Wharton.UPenn.edu) is a lecturer of marketing at the Wharton School of University of Pennsylvania, PA 19104, USA. Silvia Bellezza (sbellezza@gsb.columbia.edu) is the Gantcher Associate Professor of Business at Columbia Business School, New York, NY 10027, USA. Please address correspondence to Anne V. Wilson. Both authors contributed equally to this article. Supplementary materials are included in the web appendix accompanying the online version of this article

popular press. To address this gap in the literature, we define consumer minimalism by identifying three key dimensions of the construct (i.e., number of possessions, sparse aesthetic, and mindfully curated consumption), and we develop the 12-item Minimalist Consumer Scale assessing these dimensions. We use grounded theory methodologies to identify the core dimensions of minimalism and generate scale items for assessing the extent to which people value minimalism. In keeping with the process of traditional scaling procedures (Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma 2003), we use exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, reliability assessments, and scale validation methods to empirically confirm the tridimensional structure of the scale and its twelve items. Moreover, we situate the construct of consumer minimalism within a broad nomological network of conceptually related constructs: materialism, voluntary simplicity, frugality, green consumption, product retention tendencies, preferences for experiences over possessions, fashion orientation, and desire for distinction. Finally, we examine the predictive validity of the measure by assessing its ability to predict consumption preferences and behavior. Our samples, comprised of more than 3,700 respondents, are drawn from various populations, including lay consumers and minimalists recruited from online panels and social media groups.

Our research offers several theoretical and practical contributions. First, we define the construct of consumer minimalism and develop the Minimalist Consumer Scale for assessing the extent to which consumers adhere to the three dimensions of minimalism. In doing so, this research serves as a foundational step in understanding, defining, and measuring the construct of minimalism in consumer behavior, and contributes to the nascent literature on minimalism in marketing (Eckmann and Landwehr 2020; Liu, Yildirim, and Zhang 2019; Mathras and Hayes 2019; Min et al. 2021; To and Patrick 2017). Second, through a comprehensive investigation of the nomological network, this work also extends research on related constructs, such as voluntary simplicity (Etzioni 1999; Leonard-Barton 1981; Shaw and Newholm 2002), frugality (Lastovicka et al. 1999), materialism (Richins and Dawson 1992), green consumption (Haws, Page Winterich, and Walker Naylor 2014), and product retention tendencies (Haws et al. 2012), among others.

This research also makes important practical contributions. Having both a concrete definition and a scale to assess consumers' minimalist values is useful for brand managers seeking to better understand minimalist consumers, and for segmentation, targeting, and positioning purposes. Indeed, an increasing number of brands endorse minimalist aesthetics and values. Brands like Muji and Everlane epitomize functional and aesthetic simplicity, retailers such as Patagonia and Cuyana actively encourage limited and mindful consumption, Acne Studios and Jil Sanders embrace minimalist luxury, and many

subscription, rental, and sharing services market themselves as a means of eschewing owning goods. As a result, understanding consumer minimalism, and thereby identifying and predicting the behavior of minimalist consumers, is of both theoretical and practical relevance.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Consumer Minimalism

While traces of a quest for simplicity and minimalism date back to the early 1800s (Minimalism.co 2021), the term "minimalism" itself gained significant traction with a movement in American visual arts beginning in the mid-1960s, often attributed to a reaction against the excessive nature of abstract expressionism (Fineberg 1995). In short, minimalist artists sought to strip art of its exaggerated emotion and superfluous symbolism and instead emphasize simplicity (Minimalism 2012). Thus, minimalism refers to a style of work—whether visual art, architecture, music, or literature—that is, sparse and reduced to its essentials (VanEenoo 2011).

Over the ensuing decades, minimalism has expanded in influence from a cultural arts movement to consumer culture more broadly, through advertising, fashion, and design (Chayka 2020; McCracken 1986; Pracejus et al. 2006). Cultural meanings transferred into consumption are often fluid and dynamic, with their manifestations changing over time (McCracken 1986; Richins 1994). This fluidity and dynamism of meaning are evident in the multiple forms in which consumer minimalism is expressed, and the varied types of consumers who call themselves and are described as "minimalist." For example, monochromatic homeowners, wardrobe capsule enthusiasts, tiny home residents, converted van dwellers, luxury minimalists, and voluntary downshifters all emblematize "minimalism" and the deemphasis of excessive consumerism (Chayka 2020; Currid-Halkett 2017; Fagan 2017). Moreover, different types of minimalists express minimalist values through different aspects of the consumption process: in keeping with the aesthetic art movement, some minimalists emphasize how goods are used and visually displayed (Becker 2018); meanwhile, others stress the importance of reducing how much they buy (D'Avella 2015); and still, others focus on the disposal of owned goods (Kondō 2014).

Despite the prevalence of minimalism in consumer culture, the overall scholarly understanding of consumer minimalism remains limited. Perhaps due to its many forms, the construct of consumer minimalism has not yet been well-defined. Even within minimalist culture, the concept of minimalism remains fuzzy and nebulous, with no clear consensus on what determines whether a consumer is a minimalist or not. Therefore, in the current work, we define consumer minimalism, identify its key

sub-dimensions that link its variegated manifestations, and develop a reliable and valid scale to measure the construct.

Construct Development

To develop the construct of consumer minimalism, we used an approach aligned with grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This methodology allows for developing a theory that is faithful to everyday realities and induced from diverse data (Glaser 1978). As described in more detail below, our process involved collecting and aggregating data from various sources before engaging in open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding (Urquhart 2012). For a depiction of our grounded theory process, see figure 1 in the web appendix.

Data. We began the process of construct definition by collecting qualitative data relating to minimalism from popular press and surveying minimalists and lay consumers. Specifically, we drew data from books (e.g., *The More of Less: Finding the Life you Want under Everything You Own*, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, *The Minimalist Home*, *Soulful Simplicity*, *The Longing for Less*, *The Minimalist Mindset*), movies (e.g., *Minimalism: Live a Meaningful Life*), television shows (e.g., *Tiny House Nation*, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*), blogs (e.g., *BuzzFeed, Miss Minimalist, Becoming Minimalist, The Minimalists, Be More with Less, Simply + Fiercely*), news and media outlets (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *USA Today*, *Vogue*, *Apartment Therapy*), exhibitions (*Judd* at the MOMA, *Minimalism Maximalism* at the Fashion Institute of Technology), store visits (e.g., Dover Street Market, Muji, Acne Studios), and Google image searches of minimalist homes and décor. See web appendix for selected images of the collected material.

We also surveyed lay consumers as well as members of online minimalist groups and communities to solicit their attitudes and beliefs regarding consumer minimalism. Specifically, we joined over twenty minimalist-themed private Facebook groups (e.g., The Minimalist Life, Minimalist Living, Practical Minimalism, Path to Minimalism, Minimalist Designs, Efficient Minimalism Living; for a full list of groups, see web appendix) and asked members of these groups ($N = 96$; 85.4% female; $M_{age} = 39.7$) to complete a short survey in exchange for the chance to win a $25 Amazon gift card. In addition, we gathered lay consumers' views of minimalism by recruiting 200 respondents (44.5% female; $M_{age} = 35.1$) from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) for a paid online study. Both surveys asked participants to indicate their beliefs about consumer minimalism and asked them to define consumer minimalism in their own words. See web appendix for methodological details and results of both surveys. We used these data sources—both the primary survey data and

secondary sources gathered—as the inputs for our theory building.

Open Coding. The first step involved analyzing our data using a bottom-up, open-coding procedure (Urquhart 2012). Bottom-up coding involves allowing the dimensions of the research problem to be suggested by the data, rather than by imposing preconceived notions or theories onto the data. Meanwhile, open coding refers to the process of scrutinizing the data and attaching low-level conceptual categories—or codes—to the data. We utilized a process of constant comparison, which involved combing all the data and recording conceptual categories, properties, or dimensions as they emerged. Whenever we encountered a concept that represented an apparent dimension of consumer minimalism, we considered whether it was subsumed by a same or similar concept already recorded and, if not, took note or modified prior codes. As such, our open-coding process was iterative and reflective, laying the foundation for the abstraction of theory. After exhausting the data for novel concepts and codes, the process resulted in the identification of approximately 200 open codes or concepts that emerged as relevant to minimalism (figure 5 in the web appendix).

Selective Coding. Next, consistent with grounded theory methods (Urquhart 2012), we engaged in a selective coding process to abstract theoretical components from the data. Specifically, selective coding involves manually and thoughtfully clustering the open codes around concepts to identify overarching categories. Like the open-coding step, this process is also iterative and reflective, involving constant reorganization and modification of codes before settling on an organizing schema that aptly captures the open codes. Through this process, we categorized our approximately 200 open codes into 16 selective codes or higher-order concepts. See figures 6 and 7 in the web appendix for the categorization of the open codes under these selective codes.

Theoretical Coding. Next, we engaged in theoretical coding to relate the higher-order concepts from the selective coding step to each other (Urquhart 2012). Because the current work's goal is to define the latent construct of consumer minimalism, we used the theoretical coding step to distill the selective codes down to those that reflect core dimensions of consumer minimalism. Accordingly, we dropped categories that could be construed more clearly as motivations or consequences of consumer minimalism[1] (e.g., liberation and enrichment, environment or ethical concerns, consumption malaise, or desire for control over consumption) rather than as necessary features or central dimensions of the construct itself. This process resulted in

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1   Antecedents and consequences of consumer minimalism will be further discussed in the General Discussion.

FIGURE 1

STIMULI FOR STUDY 7E

NOTE.—For the first pair of images, minimalist room is to the left; for the other pairs, minimalist room is to the right.

our identification of consumer minimalism's three core dimensions: number of possessions, sparse aesthetic, and mindfully curated consumption.

The Three Dimensions of Consumer Minimalism

Number of Possessions. First, the number of possessions a person owns emerged as a central dimension of consumer minimalism. In particular, minimalism can be expressed, in part, by possessing few things. For example, when asked to define minimalism, minimalists provided responses such as, "Minimalism: living with less, [. . .] avoiding purchases, and critically considering needs to determine what you are willing to live without;" "Having less stuff;" "Use and consume what is necessary. Only buy what is needed and what needs to be replaced. Enjoy life, not unnecessary possessions;" and "Minimalism is owning as few objects as possible [. . .] owning only what you need and use, restricting purchases to items in those categories, and throwing out things that you do not need or use." Laypeople offered similar responses, including, "Desiring to have less;" "I think minimalism refers to having the fewest number of items possible in order to live and operate;" and "Live with few possessions." Likewise, many of the books we found teaching minimalist values emphasized the notion of limiting the number of things one owns. For example, Kondō (2014) has popularized the notions of keeping only objects that "spark joy" and disposing of all other possessions by "decluttering."

The idea of purging possessions also appeared repeatedly throughout websites, books, blogs, and movies that teach consumers how to be more minimalist. Social media groups often encouraged consumers to engage in minimalist challenges that require disposing of a particular number of goods over a set period. Indeed, in many of the Facebook groups we joined, members posted photos and images of the items they disposed of throughout such challenges. Book and blog titles included *Goodbye, Things: The New Japanese Minimalism* (Sasaki 2017) and *Minimalism: Less Things in Your Life to Live More Fully* (Gordon 2019). In summary, whether referring to acquisition or disposal, limiting the number of current possessions emerged as a central dimension of consumer minimalism.

Sparse Aesthetic. The second dimension that emerged from the data was a preference for a sparse and uncluttered aesthetic. More specifically, minimalist spaces, collections, and items are usually composed of simple designs, clean lines, limited ornamentation, and monochromatic colors. Consumers' definition of minimalism included, "An aesthetic that emphasizes simplistic design," "Plain, simple, smaller," "Aaesthetic movement characterized by simple, linear designs free from ornamentation and excess color," and "Sparseness and simplicity." Indeed, our image searches of minimalism also corroborate such notions yielding images of monochromatic living spaces and

wardrobes; even the covers of minimalist books and movies tended to be simpler and sparser in design. Many blogs and books touched on the notion that minimalism involves a preference for neutral or monochromatic colors, neatness and little clutter, and simplicity of appearance. Popular press and brands encouraging pared-down wardrobes also often featured small collections of clothing or "uniforms" that comprise limited colors, patterns, and designs.

Consistent with our observations on the aesthetic dimension, extant work also notes that minimalist design is characterized by simplicity via limited decoration, plain colors (often white), basic geometric shapes, and open space (Meyer 2000; Pracejus et al. 2006). In contrast, the maximalist design is characterized by richness and a profusion of decorative patterns with limited white space (Ghoshal and Belk 2019; Rivers 2007). To further corroborate this dimension with data, we coded dresses from the "Minimalism Maximalism" exhibition at the Fashion Institute of Technology Museum (figure 8 in the web appendix). This exhibition, held in New York City in 2019, included dresses and accessories particularly representative of Minimalism and Maximalism and also offered a historical perspective on the two styles. Consistent with the sparse aesthetic dimension, the minimalist dresses had significantly fewer colors, fewer patterns, and less volume than the maximalist dresses (see details in web appendix). Accordingly, a preference for a sparse aesthetic was identified as the second key dimension of consumer minimalism.

Mindfully Curated Consumption. The third dimension that emerged reflects the idea that minimalists are very intentional about what they choose to acquire and keep, thoughtfully selecting particular goods and curating their collection of possessions. Consistent with our conceptualization, minimalism has been posited to manifest as a voluntary, strategic, and thoughtful curation of goods (Mathras and Hayes 2019). As one cultural commentator notes, "In the past century, we've swung from 'buying happiness' to the notion that 'curating and purging certain bought items brings happiness'" (Janning 2019). This dimension of curation and mindfulness is critical in differentiating the minimalist ethos from other seemingly similar consumer behaviors. For example, "forced minimalism," resulting from financial or logistical circumstances rather than agentic choice, does not carry the same cultural and symbolic meaning as mindful and curated minimalism (Fagan 2017; Rodriguez 2018) and would therefore not fall under our conceptualization of consumer minimalism.

The data frequently conveyed minimalists' tendencies to engage in a constant process of curating their goods to ensure that they own only things that continue to add value and that the goods displayed are only those they wish to emphasize or use frequently. For example, in the popular documentary *Minimalism: A Documentary About the Important Things*, one protagonist states, "Minimalism is

about living deliberately. So every choice that I make, every relationship, every item, every dollar I spend…I do constantly ask the question, is this adding value? Am I being deliberate with this decision?" (D'Avella 2015). Likewise, respondents to our surveys defined minimalism, saying, "Minimalism is the intentional promotion of the things we most value and the removal of everything that distracts us from it…;" "Minimalism is … being more intentional and deliberate in all of your decisions;" "I think minimalism is being aware of your consumption and making mindful choices to enhance your life…;" "Minimalism is bringing in less and being content and mindful of what you do have;" "Intentional care and curation of lifestyle;" and "…simplifying your practice of living to fit the essentials while being very selective about those essentials." Being aware of what one owns and avoiding the accidental purchase of duplicates or unneeded items also appeared repeatedly in the data.

In summary, an emphasis on the importance of intentionality and curation were common refrains across sources. In fact, the most important elements of minimalism for the respondents drawn from existing minimalist groups related to these notions (i.e., "Being intentional when acquiring new things" and "Being mindful of one's consumption," see figure 2 in the web appendix).

Consumer Minimalism as a Value

Through the grounded theory work and an analysis of related constructs, we were also able to glean insight into the nature of consumer minimalism, leading to our conceptualization of consumer minimalism as a value. According to Rokeach (1973, 5), a value is "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence." A value often transcends immediate goals and guides actions and attitudes toward more ultimate goals (Rokeach 1973). Values are also distinguishable from personality traits. Personality traits are typically defined as descriptions of consistent and chronic patterns of thought and disposition (McCrae and Costa 2003; Parks-Leduc, Feldman, and Bardi 2015), while personal values are enduring goals that guide perception, judgment, and behavior (Parks-Leduc, Feldman, and Bardi 2015; Rokeach 1973). It is clear from our grounded theory work that minimalism is indeed most commonly an aspiration or goal that guides perceptions, judgments, and behaviors, rather than a description of chronic thought or disposition. This is evident in the numerous examples of popular "how to" and self-help books, blogs, and movies designed to teach people how to be minimalist—reflecting the aspirational quality of minimalism for many—as well as the many examples of consumers who report desiring to be more minimalist despite having difficulty always enacting the value in their own life.

The aspirational aspect of minimalism is also made clear in the fact that minimalism often becomes competitive, with consumers striving to be the "most" minimalist or own the least. Those who are able to practice the most ascetic discipline are often revered by others in the community too. Indeed, soon after tiny homes started gaining popularity, "microhomes" were introduced, which is, as one reporter explains, "Taking the tiny house movement tinier" (Johnson 2011). Among minimalists, there is also often pride taken in being able to declare just how few things one owns. These examples also highlight the active effort often exerted to enact the value of minimalism, distinguishing it from being merely a passive habit of consumption.

Furthermore, in reference to materialism, which has also been defined as a consumer value, Richins and Dawson (1992, 307) write, "materialistic consumers are said to make a religion out of things," and note, "for materialists, possessions and their acquisition are at the forefront of personal goals that dictate 'ways of life.'" Consistent with this conceptualization of minimalism as a value, we contend that minimalism also reflects an enduring belief that certain behaviors or end-states are preferred, has religious-like qualities and practices, and entails a "way of life" that dictates judgments and decisions. Our grounded theory data collection revealed the abundance of communities and support groups available to self-ascribed or aspiring minimalists for convening with one another, discussing tenets and strategies of minimalism, and celebrating the gospel of well-known minimalists (Chayka 2016). Minimalism also involves ritualistic practices in the strategic acquisition and disposal of goods, such as thanking belongings before letting them go (Kondō 2014). Moreover, our data revealed that minimalist influencers and enthusiasts carry an air of virtuousness and moral superiority in eschewing rampant capitalism and offer opportunities for reinvention and self-fulfillment through minimalism.

In addition, much like materialism (Richins and Dawson 1992) and green consumption values (Haws et al. 2014), minimalism appears to dictate both consumption and nonconsumption choices. For example, people who value minimalism may prefer to spend time on self-enriching pursuits rather than earning money (Millburn and Nicodemus 2015) and may prefer to spend their time in quieter, less stimulating environments (Chayka 2020). Finally, many minimalist blogs and books seek to extend the application of the dimensions of minimalism beyond the consumption space and into other areas of life, such as by being minimalist with one's digital social networks (Newport 2019) and only fostering relationships with people who are essential or add value to one's life (Katuna 2017).

In conclusion, building on this conceptualization of the construct and integrating the three identified dimensions of consumer minimalism led to the following definition: *consumer minimalism is a value that embraces the mindful*

acquisition and ownership of few, curated possessions, with a preference for a sparse aesthetic.

Consumer Minimalism and the Nomological Network of Related Constructs

We propose that consumer minimalism has a broad network of related constructs. First, voluntary simplicity is probably the most obviously related measure to consumer minimalism in terms of face validity, and indeed the two constructs have been viewed similarly in recent work (Mathras and Hayes 2019). Voluntary simplicity is defined as "the degree to which individuals select a lifestyle intended to maximize their control over daily activities and to minimize their consumption" and is characterized by ecological awareness, attempts to become more self-sufficient, and efforts to decrease personal consumption of goods (Leonard-Barton 1981). While consumer minimalism and voluntary simplicity certainly intersect in the willful pursuit of material simplicity—and are thus expected to be positively related—voluntary simplicity typically involves behaviors that would be considered self-sufficient, thrifty, and eco-friendly, which minimalism does not necessarily involve. For example, items from the Voluntary Simplicity Scale (Cowles and Crosby 1986; Leonard-Barton 1981) include: "Make furniture or clothing for the family," "Contribute to ecologically-oriented organizations (such as Greenpeace, Sierra Club, etc.)," and "Ride a bicycle on errands within two miles of home." The notion of self-sufficiency, which is a central feature of voluntary simplicity, did not emerge as necessary to engage in consumer minimalism. Furthermore, the idea of being anti-consumerism is also integral in voluntary simplicity, but not an essential aspect of minimalism. For example, minimalism, as expressed through modern home designs, art, architecture, and advertisements, can be quite consumer-centric (Pracejus et al. 2006). Moreover, some minimalism forms can be wasteful and non-environmental, such as minimalists who frequently purge and churn items to only keep a certain number of possessions at a given time. Finally, the preference for a sparse aesthetic and that for a curated selection of goods are not captured by voluntary simplicity but are foundational dimensions of consumer minimalism. Thus, while voluntary simplicity may overlap with certain expressions of minimalism, voluntary simplicity on its own cannot fully or adequately capture consumer minimalism.

Frugality is another construct that we expect to relate to some dimensions of consumer minimalism. Frugality is defined as "a unidimensional consumer lifestyle trait characterized by the degree to which consumers are both restrained in acquiring and in resourcefully using economic goods and services to achieve longer-term goals" (Lastovicka et al. 1999). As in the case of voluntary simplicity, consumer minimalism and frugality overlap on

limiting the number of possessions and on reducing new acquisitions and are therefore expected to be positively associated. Nevertheless, there are core differences between the two constructs, as well as many cases in which minimalism departs from the construct of frugality. Most notably, frugality is often dictated by economic constraints, and the scale indeed reflects an overarching goal of reducing consumption to save money (e.g., "I am willing to wait on a purchase I want so that I can save money," "There are things I resist buying today so I can save for tomorrow"). In contrast, minimalism is not the by-product of inadequate financial resources and is often associated with greater wealth and substantial spending. Many minimalists spend vast sums of money on material goods to appear to appreciate the simplicity of life (Currid-Halkett 2017), and, as Chayka (2020) notes, "It takes a lot of money to look this simple." Indeed, "minimalist luxury" refers to wealthy people choosing to stand out from mainstream consumers by deliberately limiting their consumption of luxury goods (Liu et al. 2019). Such luxurious displays of minimalism in consumption involve significant expense or a preference for spending more money on fewer, higher quality items and materials (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). Even the iconic famous image of Steve Jobs in his living room, revered for its sparse aesthetic and absence of objects, features a Tiffany lamp and a stereo that costs more than $8,000 (Chayka 2020)—a far cry from frugality. Unlike frugality, minimalism is not so much about a deliberateness in spending or saving money, so much as a deliberateness on what one's money is spent on or how one curates their collection of belongings. And even decluttering, which may seem to have little to do with social class, is a privilege that can be enjoyed most fully by those who have a sufficient number of possessions to be pared down (Pinsker 2016). While frugal consumers are reluctant to dispose of their possessions, minimalists are often eager to let go of as many objects as possible to declutter their lives. Finally, while frugality can sometimes result in a sparse aesthetic, aesthetic concerns are not as central to frugality as to consumer minimalism.

Green consumer values are also expected to relate to, yet be distinct from, consumer minimalism. Green consumers tend to consider the environmental impact of their consumption behaviors and tend to make decisions consistent with environmentally sustainable consumption (Haws et al. 2014). While it is evident that consuming less is beneficial to the environment and the theme of sustainability did frequently emerge in relation to minimalism during the construct development phase—leading to our expectation of a relationship between the two constructs—the concern for the environment present in every single item of the GREEN Scale is not present in the Minimalist Consumer Scale, and none of the dimensions of minimalism are covered in the GREEN Scale. Moreover, as noted above, minimalists often purge their possessions and replace them with

more minimalist ones, a wasteful behavioral tendency inconsistent with valuing the environment. While concern for the environment may lead some consumers to embrace consumer minimalism as a value, it is not a necessary aspect for consumer minimalism.

We also expect consumer minimalism to be related to, but distinct from, a preference for experiences over possessions. Experiential purchases "are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience: an event or series of events that one lives through," whereas material purchases "are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a material good: a tangible object that is kept in one's possession" (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). The Experiential Buying Tendency Scale measures habitual experiential purchasing over material purchases (Howell, Pchelin, and Iyer 2012). While it is certainly possible that being mindful of one's possessions and limiting the number of acquisitions may lead consumers to spend more on intangibles and that preferring experiences over things may lead some consumers to value minimalism, the Minimalist Consumer Scale and the Experiential Buying Tendency Scale do not overlap on any of our three dimensions. Preferring experiences over things does not necessarily predict a sparse aesthetic preference in design, nor does it suggest that consumers would engage in a more mindful selection of belongings when they do purchase material goods.

Finally, we also include in the nomological network two constructs posited to have a negative relationship with consumer minimalism, but that are not merely the inverse. Specifically, we explore the relationship with materialism, which has been defined as a consumer value with three components: acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success (Richins and Dawson 1992). While it is certainly plausible that minimalism and materialism are negatively related, with the number of possessions and acquisition centrality possibly being the most correlated dimensions, there is no concept related to aesthetics or mindful selection of objects in the Materialism Scale and, conversely, there is no concept related to the pursuit of happiness or success through limiting possessions in the Minimalist Consumer Scale. Moreover, minimalism is not necessarily anti-materialistic. In fact, a limited number of possessions, preference for sparse aesthetics, and mindful curation of goods often lead to venerating material goods. As Chayka (2020) remarks, "…blank interiors simultaneously deny and reinforce consumerism. The empty house frames any object like a piece of avant-garde art to be valued as such—even if it's an IKEA dresser." Moreover, minimalism in design often focuses on celebrating the beauty of form and materiality. And as mentioned, some minimalism forms involve spending large sums of money on particular luxury goods (Liu et al. 2019). For minimalists, the process of curation can be very central to their lives, and the few things that they do choose

to own can be highly personally valued (Mathras and Hayes 2019). As a result, while we expect the Minimalist Consumer Scale to be negatively correlated with materialism—since the materialism scale focuses mostly on acquiring an abundance of expensive material goods—minimalism and materialism are distinct values.

In addition, we propose that consumer minimalism is not merely the inverse of product retention tendencies (Haws et al. 2012). Derived from the literature in clinical psychology about compulsive hoarding, the Product Retention Scale captures tendencies of keeping physical objects (e.g., "Getting rid of stuff is difficult for me"). Product retention centers on consumers' propensity for keeping possessions rather than their active curation of which possessions they keep—which often includes purging and disposal—and does not speak to how possessions are acquired or preferences for specific aesthetics in those possessions. As such, we expect consumer minimalism to be negatively related to the tendency to keep items, given the general inclination toward limiting possessions and decluttering, but view minimalism as a value that is distinct from a tendency to retain products.

SCALE DEVELOPMENT

Study 1: Item Generation and Refinement

We generated an initial pool of 150 items (i.e., 50 items per dimension) to reflect the three dimensions of consumer minimalism. Item generation relied on examining the qualitative and quantitative data gathered for the construct definition and converting frequently mentioned characterizations of minimalist consumers into items. Items were written in line with the construct's nature as a consumer value; for example, all items were worded to connote intentionality and reflect beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state is personally preferred. This allows for the possibility that a person could highly value minimalism and therefore score high on the scale, despite not successfully enacting the value in their own life (e.g., they value a sparse aesthetic and it is a desirable and aspirational outcome for them, but they have difficulty controlling the clutter in their home). Following the item generation step, ambiguous and repetitive items were eliminated, resulting in a revised pool of 105 items (i.e., 35 items per dimension). Eleven faculty and Ph.D. students in marketing served as judges who evaluated the content validity of the items. For each dimension, the judges rated the items on clarity ("not clear," "somewhat clear," "extremely clear") and representativeness ("not representative," "somewhat representative," "extremely representative"). Based on the judges' ratings, 36 items scoring below average on clarity and representativeness were dropped. To achieve parsimony, we also used our own judgment of item face and content validity (as per Netemeyer et al.

2003) and further dropped 12 additional statements with very similar meanings. Thus, we retained 45 items (i.e., 15 items per dimension) for further assessment.

Study 2: Item Reduction and Preliminary Scale Assessment

The 45 items identified in study 1 were formatted into seven-point Likert-type response scales (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 7 = strongly agree) and rated by a sample of 422 American respondents (51% female, M_{age} = 32.2) recruited through Prolific Academic ("Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about yourself"). Given the repetitiveness of the task, we interspersed an attention check among the 45 items ("Please select five on this scale if you are reading"). We excluded 12 respondents who failed the check, leaving 410 valid responses (51% female, M_{age} = 32.4); although keeping all the responses does not affect the significance of the following results or the conclusions. Half of the sample was randomly assigned to rate the items in the form of a matrix, and the other half was randomly assigned to rate the items as stand-alone statements; format had no effect and therefore is not discussed further. The order of appearance of the three dimensions and the 15 items per dimension was randomized.

Items were first evaluated for each dimension using principal component analysis and inspection of interim correlations, corrected item-to-item correlations, item means, and variances. Statistical criteria for item retention were (i) an average inter-item correlation above 0.50, (ii) an average corrected item-to-total correlation above 0.70, and (iii) an average factor loading above 0.70. Items were also considered for clarity of meaning and face validity regarding each item's relationship to the appropriate dimension. These analyses resulted in a final set of twelve items, four items per dimension (table 1). See table 2 in the web appendix for means and standard deviations of each item across all studies in the paper and web appendix.

To evaluate the remaining 12 items and their structure, we conducted an additional series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. A principal component analysis with varimax rotation identified three underlying factors with Eigenvalues greater than one. The three factors were consistent with our specified dimensions in the item generation and refinement steps, specifically, number of possessions, sparse aesthetic, and mindfully curated consumption. As expected, the rotated factor pattern indicated that all items loaded strongly onto their respective factors (loadings from 0.77 to 0.86), and no items cross-loaded onto other factors. Each factor was represented by the expected four items created to reflect each dimension. All factors had high alphas (all ≥0.86; table 2), and the alpha for the full scale was α = 0.88.

TABLE 1

MINIMALIST CONSUMER SCALE DIMENSIONS AND ITEMS

Minimalist consumer scale dimensions and items

Number of possessions
I avoid accumulating lots of stuff
I restrict the number of things I own.
"Less is more" when it comes to owning things.
I actively avoid acquiring excess possessions.
Sparse aesthetics
I am drawn to visually sparse environments
I prefer simplicity in design.
I keep the aesthetic in my home very sparse.
I prefer leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.
Mindfully curated consumption
I am mindful of what I own.
The selection of things I own has been carefully curated.
It is important to me to be thoughtful about what I choose to own.
My belongings are mindfully selected.

NOTE.—The prompt is "Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements about yourself," and the response format is a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

To confirm the three-factor structure of the scale, we conducted two additional tests. First, we subjected the multi-dimensional factor structure for the Minimalist Consumer Scale to a confirmatory factor analysis. We fit the model using lavaan version 0.5-23 (Rosseel 2012) in R version 3.3.1 (RCoreTeam 2016). We used maximum likelihood estimation with full information maximum likelihood for missing data. We standardized the latent factors, allowing free estimation of all factor loadings. As table 2 shows, the model fit was acceptable with a TLI of 0.99, a CFI of 0.99, and RMSEA of 0.02 (CI$_{90\%}$ = 0.00–0.04). The full three-factor model fit the data significantly better than a single-factor solution ($\chi^2(3)$ = 131.08, $p < .001$), or a three-factor solution that did not allow covariances among the three latent factors ($\chi^2(3)$ = 222.01, $p < .001$). As expected, the indicators all showed significant positive factor loadings, with standardized coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.83. Table 3 reports the latent factor correlations. The correlations between the number of possessions factor and the sparse aesthetic and mindfully curated consumption factors were moderate to large across both studies, while the correlation between the sparse aesthetic and mindfully curated consumption factors was small to moderate.

We also confirmed that a three-factor solution fits the data significantly better than a two-factor solution with number of possessions and mindfully curated consumption factors combined as one factor ($\chi^2(3)$ = 401.49, $p < .001$). Moreover, we confirmed that the average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor was greater than the shared variance between factors (i.e., the squared pairwise correlations between factors), providing evidence for the discriminant validity of the three dimensions (Fornell and Larcker 1981; table 3 in the web appendix).

TABLE 2

CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSES AND GOODNESS OF FIT INDICES

	Study 2 (N = 410)					Study 3 (N = 394)				
	Factor loadings estimates			AVE	CA	Factor loadings estimates			AVE	CA
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3			Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3		
Number of possessions				0.63	0.87				0.66	0.89
I avoid accumulating lots of stuff.	0.78					0.83				
I restrict the number of things I own.	0.80					0.80				
"Less is more" when it comes to owning things.	0.79					0.78				
I actively avoid acquiring excess possessions.	0.81					0.83				
Sparse aesthetics				0.62	0.86				0.57	0.84
I am drawn to visually sparse environments.		0.81					0.80			
I prefer simplicity in design.		0.72					0.68			
I keep the aesthetic in my home very sparse.		0.78					0.76			
I prefer leaving spaces visually empty over filling them.		0.83					0.77			
Mindfully curated consumption				0.62	0.86				0.66	0.88
I am mindful of what I own.			0.78					0.78		
The selection of things I own has been carefully curated.			0.77					0.79		
It's important to me to be thoughtful about what I choose to own.			0.78					0.78		
My belongings are mindfully selected.			0.82					0.89		
Average variance explained		0.62					0.63			
Cronbach's alpha		0.88					0.91			
χ^2, df		131.01, 51					58.19, 51			
Comparative fit index		0.99					0.97			
Tucker-Lewis index		0.99					0.96			
RMSEA (CI$_{90\%}$)		0.02 (0.00–0.04)					0.06 (0.05–0.08)			

NOTE.—Bold indicates the three dimensions and italic indicates the 12 items of the Consumer Minimalism Scale.

TABLE 3

LATENT FACTOR CORRELATIONS

	Study 2 (N = 410)			Study 3 (N = 394)		
	Number of possessions	Sparse aesthetic	Mindfully curated consumption	Number of possessions	Sparse aesthetic	Mindfully curated consumption
Number of possessions	1	0.60***	0.51***	1	0.78***	0.58***
Sparse aesthetic		1	0.27***		1	0.45***
Mindfully curated consumption			1			1

NOTE.— ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

Study 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The objective of study 3 is to further confirm the tridimensional structure of the Minimalist Consumer Scale. To this end, we recruited 400 American respondents (47.3% female; $M_{age} = 32.3$) through Prolific Academic for a paid online study. Participants rated the twelve items identified in study 2 ($M = 4.69$, SD = 1.08; 12 items $\alpha = 0.91$). As in study 2, to make sure that the question format would not interfere, half of the sample was randomly assigned to rating the items in the form of a matrix, and the other half was randomly assigned to rating the items as stand-alone statements (format had no effect and therefore is not discussed further). All items were presented in randomized order. We also interspersed an attention check within the scales' items ("Please select five on this statement if you are reading"). Six respondents failed the check and were

excluded from the analyses, thus leading to 394 valid responses (48% female; M_{age} = 32.2); keeping all the responses does not affect the significance of the following results or the conclusions. Lastly, we collected gender, age, income ("Please indicate your household income in the previous year before taxes?" intervals ranging from "less than $10,000" to "$150,000 or more;" M = "from $60,000 to $69,999") and socioeconomic background ("How would you rate the socioeconomic background of your family?" 1 = not wealthy at all, 7 = extremely wealthy; M = 3.68).

We subjected the multi-dimensional factor structure for the Minimalist Consumer Scale to the confirmatory factor analysis as in study 2. As table 2 shows, the model fit was acceptable with a TLI of 0.96, a CFI of 0.97, and RMSEA of 0.06 (CI$_{90\%}$ = 0.05–0.08). The full three-factor model fit the data significantly better than a single-factor solution ($\chi^2(3)$ = 682.41, p < .001), or a three-factor solution that did not allow covariances among the three latent factors ($\chi^2(3)$ = 58.19, p < .001). We also confirmed that a three-factor solution first the data significantly better than a two-factor solution with number of possessions and mindful and curated consumption factors (the most highly correlated factors) combined as a single factor ($\chi^2(3)$ = 144.50, p < .001). As expected, the indicators all showed significant positive factor loadings, with standardized coefficients ranging from 0.68 to 0.89 (table 2). The entire scale showed high reliability (α = 0.91); and each component also had good reliability: number of possessions α = 0.88, sparse aesthetic α = 0.84, and mindful and curated consumption α = 0.88.

Study 4: Convergent and Discriminant Validity

In study 4, we assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the Minimalist Consumer Scale by examining its relationship with other related existing constructs and its precursors. In addition to the nomological network discussed in the introduction (i.e., voluntary simplicity, frugality, GREEN consumer values, experiential buying, product retention, and materialism), we explore possible relationships between consumer minimalism and both fashion orientation and distinction. Fashion orientation captures the extent to which consumers are aware of new trends and see themselves as leaders in fashion (e.g., "I am aware of fashion trends and want to be one of the first to try them," "It is important for me to be a fashion leader"; Gutman and Mills 1982), whereas distinction refers to the desire to differentiate oneself from mainstream consumers (e.g., "How important is it for you to avoid items that typical mainstream consumers would buy?"; Berger and Ward 2010) and is the process underlying some alternative signals of status, such as mixing and matching high- and low-status signals (Bellezza and Berger 2020). Given that many forms of minimalism have been associated with trendiness, status-seeking, and luxury (Liu et al. 2019; Pinsker 2016),

it is plausible that consumer minimalism may be positively related to fashion orientation and distinction. However, we view these constructs as conceptually distinct from consumer minimalism, and therefore expected moderate relationships. Importantly, demonstrating that consumer minimalism is only moderately associated with fashion orientation offers initial evidence that minimalism is not merely a current, transitory preference, but instead, a relatively more enduring consumer value.

Method. We recruited 621 American respondents (54.3% female; M_{age} = 39.5) for a paid online study on MTurk. In random order, respondents completed the 12-item Minimalist Consumer Scale (M = 4.95, SD = 1.09; 12 items α = 0.92), the 18-item Voluntary Simplicity Scale (Cowles and Crosby 1986; Leonard-Barton 1981), the 8-item Frugality Scale (Lastovicka et al. 1999), the 6-items GREEN Consumer Values Scale (Haws et al. 2014), the 4-item Experiential Buying Tendency Scale (Howell et al. 2012), the 4-item Product Retention Tendency Scale (Haws et al. 2012), the 9-item Materialism Scale (Richins and Dawson 1992), 3 items selected from the Fashion and Shopping Orientation Scale (Gutman and Mills 1982), and 2 items measuring distinction (Berger and Ward 2010). The order of appearance of the items within scales was randomized. To make sure respondents were reading the statements and paying attention, we interspersed two checks within the scales' items ("Select five for this item"), and we asked them to write a short sentence at the end of the survey ("Please briefly describe an object in your room or tell us what you see from your window, write at least 5 words"). We excluded 15 respondents who failed one of the checks and 28 respondents who wrote less than 5 words, thus leading to 578 valid responses (53.1% female; M_{age} = 39.6); keeping all the responses does not affect the significance of the following results or the conclusions.

Finally, we collected gender, age, household income as in study 3 (M = "from $50,000 to $59,999"), the MacArthur ladder of subjective social status (1 = 1st step—bottom of the ladder, 10 = 10th step—top of the ladder; M = 4.85), and the 6-item childhood socioeconomic status measure (α = 0.83, M = 3.77; Griskevicius et al. 2013).

Results. To assess discriminant validity, we first compared the AVE for each scale with the squared correlation between scales' pairs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). As table 4 in the web appendix shows, the AVE exceeded the squared correlations for all measures. Second, none of the confidence intervals at plus or minus two standard errors around the correlations between the scales included 1.0 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Thus, these two tests provide evidence for the discriminant validity of our scale.

In addition, a correlation analysis (table 4) showed that the Minimalist Consumer Scale correlated only moderately with all the other scales. As expected, the Minimalist

TABLE 4

NOMOLOGICAL NETWORK, SCALES' RELIABILITIES, AND CORRELATIONS

Construct (number of items)	Cronbach's alpha	Correlation							
		(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)
(a) Minimalist consumer (12)	0.92	**0.26*****	**0.46*****	**0.32*****	**0.21*****	**−0.21*****	**−0.31*****	**0.02**	**0.04**
Number of possessions (4)		0.25***	0.42***	0.29***	0.23***	−0.28***	−0.41***	−0.07	−0.01
Sparse aesthetics (4)		0.25***	0.29***	0.25***	0.21***	−0.15***	−0.23***	0.08*	0.11**
Mindfully curated consumption (4)		0.17***	0.49***	0.29***	0.09*	−0.11*	−0.12**	0.06	0.01
(b) Voluntary simplicity (18)	0.88		0.10*	0.48***	0.19***	0.14**	0.10*	0.36***	0.42***
(c) Frugality (8)	0.89			0.31***	0.08*	0.01	−0.27***	−0.19***	−0.12**
(d) Green consumer values (6)	0.95				0.19***	0.03	−0.06	0.15***	0.25***
(e) Experiential buying (4)	0.69					−0.05	−0.11**	0.13**	0.19**
(f) Product retention (4)	0.91						0.27***	0.12**	0.15***
(g) Materialism (9)	0.90							0.54***	0.36***
(h) Fashion orientation (3)	0.91								0.63***
(i) Distinction (2)	0.90								

NOTE.—Bold indicates correlations with the Minimalist Consumer Scale (12 items); light gray indicates correlations with the three dimensions of consumer minimalism (4 items each).

***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

Consumer Scale was positively and significantly related to voluntary simplicity ($r = 0.26$, $p < .001$), frugality ($r = 0.46$, $p < .001$), GREEN consumer values ($r = 0.32$, $p < .001$), and experiential buying tendency ($r = 0.21$, $p < .001$). The correlations between minimalism and these four constructs were small to medium, at best. The two scales most strongly correlated to each other were voluntary simplicity and GREEN consumer values ($r = 0.48$, $p < .001$). As predicted, relationships with materialism ($r = −0.31$, $p < .001$) and product retention tendency ($r = −0.26$, $p < .001$) were negative and significant, and the medium size of both correlations supports the notion that the Minimalist Consumer Scale is not simply just the opposite of these two adjacent constructs. Finally, the Minimalist Consumer Scale in this sample was not significantly correlated with fashion orientation ($r = 0.02$, NS) or distinction ($r = 0.04$, NS), suggesting that minimalism may be more than a transient fashion trend. Our range of correlations (from $−0.31$ to 0.46) for establishing convergent and discriminant validity is similar to the ranges observed in other scale development papers (Netemeyer et al. 2003). For example, validity correlations in Lastovicka et al.'s (1999) paper on frugality range from $−0.25$ to 0.54.

We also report a more granular analysis examining the correlations between all the scales and the three dimensions of consumer minimalism (table 4, light gray). Out of the three dimensions, Voluntary simplicity related most weakly to the mindfully curated consumption dimension ($r = 0.17$, $p < .001$); frugality related most weakly with the sparse aesthetic dimension ($r = 0.29$, $p < .001$) and most strongly to the mindfully curated consumption dimension ($r = 0.49$, $p < .001$); GREEN consumer values' correlations were fairly homogeneous across dimensions; experiential buying was least related to the mindfully curated consumption dimension ($r = 0.09$, $p = .028$); product retention tendency was least related to the mindfully curated consumption dimension ($r = −0.11$, $p = .011$) and most related (negatively) to number of possessions ($r = −0.21$, $p < .001$); similarly, materialism related most weakly to the mindfully curated consumption dimension ($r = −0.12$, $p = .004$) and most strongly (negatively) to number of possessions ($r = −0.41$, $p < .001$). Finally, while fashion orientation and distinction did not correlate significantly with the Minimalist Consumer Scale, they both correlated with the sparse aesthetic dimension (fashion orientation, $r = 0.08$, $p = .049$; distinction, $r = 0.11$, $p = .007$).

Finally, table 5 reports the Minimalist Consumer Scale and correlations with demographics across all studies in the paper and web appendix. Of note, the 6-item childhood socioeconomic status measure (Griskevicius et al. 2013) was the variable most related to consumer minimalism across datasets ($r = 0.14$, $p < .001$). We discuss some of these results in the General Discussion.

Additional Samples. Before collecting the data for study 4 with all the scales of the nomological network at once, we conducted two pilot studies examining the Minimalist Consumer Scale and a smaller selection of the related scales on two representative samples of Americans recruited through Qualtrics ($N = 396$) and Prolific Academic ($N = 490$). We report the detailed results of these additional datasets in the web appendix. Overall, the findings are very similar to study 4. The only differences in the patterns of associations were that the correlations with the Frugality Scale ($r_{\text{qualtrics}} = 0.36$, $p < .001$; $r_{\text{prolific}} = 0.32$, $p < .001$) and Materialism Scale ($r_{\text{qualtrics}} = 0.1$, *ns*; $r_{\text{prolific}} = −0.18$, $p < .001$) were not as strong in these samples. Moreover, in the Qualtrics sample, the associations with fashion orientation ($r = 0.28$, $p < .001$) and

distinction ($r = 0.26$, $p < .001$) were positive and significant, though of medium magnitude. Given that this additional sample was relatively wealthier than the sample in study 4 (see web appendix), these correlations possibly suggest that consumer minimalism is associated with a disposition toward fashion and distinction at higher levels of wealth. It is also conceivable that the forms of minimalism more commonly adopted by wealthier consumers are more strongly related to fashion orientation and distinction than the forms of minimalism expressed more commonly among less wealthy consumers; such differences may reflect the fact that wealthier consumers have not only the motivation to engage in minimalist consumption, but the means to do so.

Study 5: Test–Retest Reliability

We examine the test–retest reliability of the Minimalist Consumer scale in two samples with different time lags between collections: one week and five weeks. First, 163 graduate students (39.3% female; $M_{age} = 28.1$) at an American university completed the Minimalist Consumer Scale twice, one week apart, for course credit. The correlation of the Minimalist Consumer Scale between the two collection rounds was large ($r = 0.82$, $p < .001$), indicating that the scale has high test–retest reliability (Peter 1979). Moreover, the test–retest correlations for the three dimensions separately were also large (0.83 for number of possessions, 0.75 for sparse aesthetic, and 0.70 for mindfully curated consumption).

Second, seven weeks after completing study 3, the same 393[2] participants were invited to participate in a paid online study through Prolific Academic. The survey was identical to study 3. Within 48 hours, 246 participants (63% response rate; 45.5% Female, $M_{age} = 33.2$) responded; one participant failed the attention check, resulting in 245 valid double observations. Replicating the previous results, the reliability correlations between the two collection rounds were large for the combined scale ($r = 0.79$, $p < .001$), as well as for the individual dimensions (0.82 for number of possessions, 0.72 for sparse aesthetic, and 0.70 for mindfully curated consumption). Taken together, these results demonstrate the reliability of the Minimalist Consumer Scale over time.

Study 6: Known-Groups Validity

In this study, we assess the Minimalist Consumer Scale's known-groups validity by recruiting members of two types of Facebook groups. Specifically, we posted an invitation to take a survey in exchange for the chance to win a $25 Amazon gift card in a set of Facebook groups centered around minimalism (e.g., Just Minimalism,

2   We invited all but seven participants, six of which failed the attention check in study 3 and 1 who provided a non-valid Prolific ID.

TABLE 5

MINIMALIST CONSUMER SCALE AND CORRELATIONS WITH DEMOGRAPHICS ACROSS STUDIES

Demographics	Correlation											
	Study 3 (N=394)	Study 4 (N=578)	Study web. app. (N=396)	Study web. app. (N=490)	Study 5 (N=163)	Study 6 (N=104)	Study 7a (N=112)	Study 7b (N=197)	Study 7c (N=196)	Study 7d (N=200)	Study 7e (N=199)	Meta-analysis
Gender[a]	-0.05	-0.02	0.04	-0.18**	-0.06	-0.13	-0.09	0.01	0.07	-0.08	-0.02	-0.05*
Age	0.13*	0.12**	-0.13**	0.08	0.11	-0.10	-0.01	0.03	-0.10	0.05	0.20**	0.03
Income	0.10*	0.00	-0.02	0.06		0.03	-0.02		0.1	-0.14*	0.13	0.03
SES background[b]	0.16**					-0.06	-0.03	0.14	0.14*	-0.09	0.07	0.07**
Status ladder[c]		0.08	0.14**	0.16*								0.08**
Childhood SES (6 items)[d]	0.16***	0.16***	0.12*	0.13**								0.14***

NOTE.—

***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

[a]Gender coded as 2 = female.

[b]Socioeconomic background (Bellezza and Berger 2020).

[c]MacArthur ladder of subjective social status.

[d]Childhood socioeconomic status measure (Griskevicius et al. 2013).

Efficient Minimalist, Minimalism is Fun) and in a set of Facebook groups centered around books and reading (e.g., Monthly Book Club, Book of the month, Book Recommendations). The pre-registration material can be found at https://aspredicted.org/HTA_EWA. The survey consisted of our scale ($M = 4.97$, SD = 1.11; 12 items α = 0.91), and also asked participants if they considered themselves to be a minimalist (yes/no), and to indicate the Facebook group where they saw the survey posted. As pre-registered, we expected that members of the minimalist-oriented groups would score higher on our scale relative to members of the books and reading groups, a domain chosen for its general nature and lack of direct relationship to minimalist values. One hundred and four people completed the survey (female = 96%; M_{age} = 47.8), with 64% of respondents recruited through the minimalist groups and 43% of respondents self-identifying as minimalists. Finally, participants provided their gender, age, income measured as in study 3 (M = "from \$70,000 to \$79,999"), socioeconomic background measured as in study 3 ($M = 3.62$), and any additional comments.

Results. As predicted, members of the minimalist Facebook groups had significantly higher average scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale (M_{min} = 5.37, SD = 1.12) relative to members of the books and reading Facebook groups (M_{book} = 4.24, SD = 0.87, $t(102) = 5.73$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.17$).[3] Members of the minimalist groups also scored higher than those recruited through the books and reading groups on the number of possessions dimension (M_{min} = 5.38 vs. M_{book} = 3.81, $t(102) = 6.14$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.26$), sparse aesthetic dimension (M_{min} = 5.05 vs. M_{book} = 3.95, $t(102) = 4.41$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.9$), and mindfully curated consumption dimension (M_{min} = 5.69 vs. M_{book} = 4.96, $t(102) = 3.43$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.7$). The same analysis examining the means of self-ascribed minimalists versus respondents who did not see themselves as minimalists revealed the same pattern of results, with significantly higher scores for self-ascribed minimalists on all means. In conclusion, these results demonstrate that our scale is a valid instrument for discerning between groups of people we would expect to differ a priori in the degree to which they value consumer minimalism.

Studies 7a–e: Predictive Validity

The goal of this set of studies is to further validate the scale in terms of predictive validity, which we assess in five different ways. First, in study 7a, we test whether scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale predict the extent to which consumers' actual home environments reflect the

three dimensions of minimalism. Next, two incentive-compatible studies (7b and 7c) show that the Minimalist Consumer Scale is associated with consumer behaviors and preferences that are more reflective of valuing minimalism; namely, choosing quality over quality, and selecting minimalist brands. In study 7d, we show that scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale are related to desire to forgo receiving free products. Finally, in study 7e, we test whether scores on our scale predict preferences for minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) apartment interiors.

Study 7a: Consumers' Home Environments

We conducted this study to assess our scale's predictive validity by testing whether higher scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale predict whether consumers' actual home environments appear more minimalist to others. We recruited 200 participants from MTurk for a paid online study and asked them to complete the Minimalist Consumer Scale, and to upload photos of rooms in their homes. Of those who completed the survey ($N = 171$), we excluded sixty people who provided photos that research assistants responsible for coding the images indicated were not of the requested nature or could not be evaluated due to poor quality, resulting in 112 participants (43.8% Female, M_{age} = 41.2). This exclusion, as well as the hypothesis and all analyses, were pre-registered (https://aspredicted.org/KIG_WXL).

In random order, participants completed our scale ($M = 4.61$, SD = 1.15; 12 items α = 0.92) and uploaded photos of their living room, bedroom, and closet/wardrobe ("Below, we would like you to upload a photo of your living room, your bedroom, and your closet/wardrobe. Please try to get as much of the room or space in the picture as possible and make sure that the lighting is good"). Finally, participants provided their gender, age, income measured as in study 3 (M = "from \$60,000 to \$69,999"), socioeconomic background measured as in study 3 ($M = 3.77$), and any additional comments for the researchers.

After collecting all responses, we asked three research assistants, blind to the hypotheses, to code all uploaded photos on the three minimalism dimensions. Specifically, we provided research assistants with the following definitions: "*Number of possessions* reflects how many things a person owns; *Sparse aesthetic* indicates uncluttered spaces, usually composed of simple designs, clean lines, limited ornamentation, and monochromatic colors; *Mindfully curated consumption* means that one's possessions are thoughtfully and intentionally selected" and with examples of photos taken from the internet that would score low and high on the three dimensions, for their reference.

Next, research assistants rated each image on the following items: "This room or wardrobe contains many possessions;" "This room or wardrobe has a sparse aesthetic;" and "The items in this room or wardrobe appear mindfully

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3   Given that the means of the groups did not have equal variances (Levene test = 4.03, $p = .047$), we also performed Welch's test, to account for unequal variances, and confirmed the similarly significant difference between groups.

FIGURE 2

PREFERENCES FOR MINIMALIST VERSUS NON-MINIMALIST INTERIORS AS A FUNCTION OF THE MINIMALIST CONSUMER SCALE
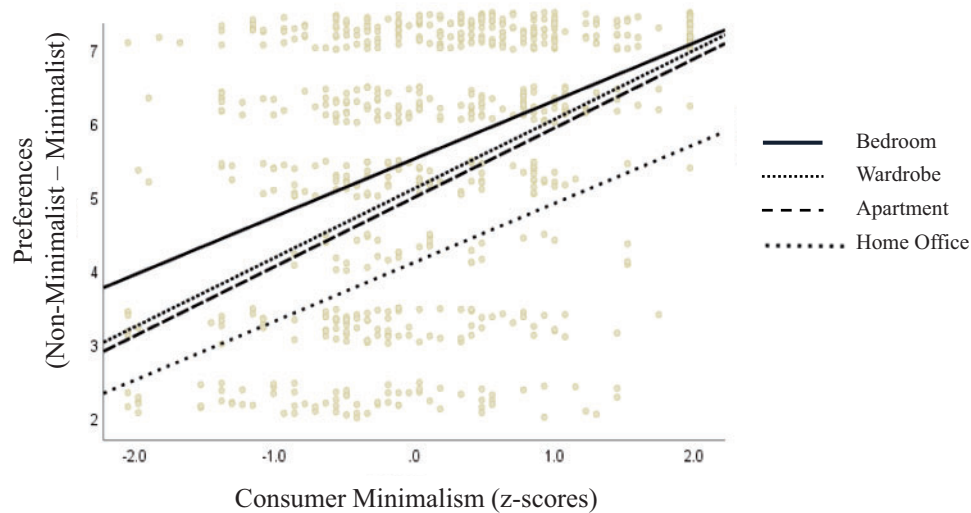
NOTE.—Jittered raw data to prevent over-plotting.

curated" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). See web appendix for examples of images uploaded by participants. Ratings for number of possessions were reverse-coded so that higher scores reflect fewer possessions (i.e., higher scores on minimalism).

Results (Study 7a). For each participant, we took the average of the three research assistants' ratings for all three images (i.e., living room, bedroom, and wardrobe) for all dimensions of minimalism. In other words, we took the average of 27 ratings for each respondent (three images rated by three judges on three dimensions; inter-rater reliability = 0.67). As predicted, a regression with participants' average score on the Minimalist Consumer Scale as the independent variable and image ratings as the dependent variable indicated that higher scores on the scale predicted higher ratings of minimalism for the photos of participants' homes ($\beta = 0.25$, $t(111) = 2.72$, $p = .008$).[4] Moreover, we also performed the analysis for the three dimensions of minimalism separately. As expected, higher scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale predicted fewer possessions ($\beta = 0.24$, $t(111) = 2.59$, $p = .011$), more sparse aesthetic ($\beta = 0.24$, $t(111) = 2.54$, $p = .012$), and more mindfully curated consumption ($\beta = 0.19$, $t(111) = 1.99$, $p = .049$). There was no significant main effect of order in which participants responded to the scale or uploaded

images and no significant interaction between order and scores on the scale. Importantly, results hold when controlling for participants' income. See web appendix for these results and additional analyses (e.g., examining the results per room).

Study 7b: Minimalists Prefer Quality over Quantity

Existing research shows that most consumers prefer to concentrate their budget on multiple ordinary goods in lieu of fewer high-end products (Sun et al. 2021). However, we expect that this tendency to choose quantity over quality depends on the extent to which people value minimalism. In other words, we expect that people who score higher on the Minimalist Consumer Scale will be more likely to opt for fewer high-end products over a greater number of lower-end products relative to people who score low on the scale.

To test this, we recruited 200 participants from MTurk for a paid online study. In random order, respondents completed the Minimalist Consumer Scale ($M = 5.02$, SD = 0.98; 12 items $\alpha = 0.9$), and made an incentive-compatible choice inspired by study 4 in the paper by Sun et al. (2021). Specifically, respondents considered the web pages of similar-looking sweaters offered by two different brands (one high-end and durable brand, but more expensive, and the other mid-range and affordable) and were asked to make an incentive-compatible choice: "As a thank you for

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4   Owing to the fair inter-rater reliability, we also performed the same analysis with each judge's ratings separately and found similarly significant results for each judge in isolation.

your input, we are holding a raffle wherein one randomly drawn participant will receive $80 to spend on sweaters from one of the two brands. If you win the raffle, which would you prefer?" $80 for ONE high-end sweater or $80 for FOUR mid-range sweaters for $20 each (see web appendix for all stimuli and images). Two respondents failed the attention check, resulting in 197 participants (45.2% female; M_{age} = 43.2). This exclusion, as well as the hypothesis and all analyses, were pre-registered (https://aspredicted.org/9w34q.pdf).

Results (Study 7b). As in the original study by Sun et al. (2021), the majority of respondents opted for concentrating the budget on multiple mid-range products (60.9%) rather than on one high-end product (39.1%). However, as predicted, a binary logistic regression with participants' average score on the Minimalist Consumer Scale as the independent variable and product choice as the dependent variable (coded as 1 for concentrating the budget on one high-end product and 0 otherwise) indicated that people who scored higher on the scale were more likely to choose one high-end sweater over multiple mid-range sweaters (b = 0.34, SE = 0.16, $\chi^2(1)$ = 4.8, p = .028).

Study 7c: Choosing Minimalist Brands

The goal of this study is to examine the relationship between valuing minimalism and brand preferences. We expect that higher scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale predict a stronger preference for brands perceived as minimalist versus non-minimalist. To test this, we recruited 202 participants from MTurk. Two respondents failed the same attention check as in previous studies, resulting in 200 participants (37% female; M_{age} = 38.0).

In random order, participants completed the Minimalist Consumer Scale (M = 5.03, SD = 1.05; 12 items α = 0.92), and read about the following raffle: "As a thank you for participating in this survey, we are going to be holding a REAL raffle for which one randomly-drawn participant will receive a $25 gift card to the brand of their choice. If you are selected as the winner, you may choose a gift card from one of the following sets of brands." Participants then chose between one set of brands (non-minimalist set) that included Anthropologie, Urban Outfitters, and Columbia Sportswear, and another set of brands that included MUJI, Everlane, and Patagonia (minimalist set).[5] In the non-minimalist set, the description of the brands indicated, "These brands are known for their maximalist appeal, offering larger collections of goods that consist of many colors and patterns," while the description of the minimalist set of brands read, "These brands are known for their minimalist appeal, offering smaller collections of goods that

consist of monochromatic colors." The presentation of the order of gift card sets was randomized. We then asked participants to indicate which set they would like to choose a gift card from if they won the raffle. Finally, participants provided their gender, age, income (measured as in study 3; M = "from $50,000 to $59,999"), socioeconomic status, and any comments.

Results (Study 7c). As expected, a binary logistic regression with participants' average score on the Minimalist Consumer Scale as the independent variable and choice of brand set as the dependent variable indicated that people who scored higher on the scale were more likely to choose a gift card from the set of minimalist brands (b = 0.48, SE = 0.15, $\chi^2(1)$ = 10.04, p = .002). As a further check, we conducted a post-test (web appendix) with students confirming that the minimalist brands were viewed as more minimalist than the other set of brands.

Study 7d: Foregoing Free Products

This study aims to establish further the predictive validity of our scale by exploring a different choice context, testing the hypothesis that people who value minimalism more will be more likely to forgo the opportunity to receive free products. We hypothesized that higher scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale would predict interest in receiving fewer products than lower scores on our scale—even when those products are presented as part of a free giveaway. We recruited 203 participants from MTurk, four of whom failed the attention check, resulting in 199 participants (55.8% female; M_{age} = 39.9). This exclusion, as well as the hypothesis and all analyses, were pre-registered (https://aspredicted.org/DUQ_YUM).

In random order, participants completed the Minimalist Consumer Scale (M = 4.63, SD = 1.05; 12 items α = 0.91), and responded to the following consumption scenario, "Imagine that you sign up for a new internet service provider. While you are completing the sign-up process, you see the following: Thank you for choosing us as your internet provider! Every person who signs up this month is eligible to receive the following products for free!" Below this text, we presented participants with an image of a portable table tennis set accompanied with the description, "play table tennis on almost any table," an electric heated blanket with the text, "stay warm all winter long," and a YETI 24 oz Rambler Mug that read, "keeps drinks hot or cold for hours" (figure 9 in the web appendix). We then told participants that they could select up to three of the items being offered and asked them to indicate the product(s) they would choose to receive. Finally, participants provided their gender, age, income measured as in study 3 (M = "from $60,000 to $69,999"), socioeconomic background measured as in study 3 (M = 3.56), and any additional comment.

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5   While we tried to match the sets of brands on price image (Hamilton and Chernev 2013), we did not rule out the possibility that one set is perceived as more luxurious than the other.

Results (Study 7d). As expected, a regression with average scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale as the independent variable and the number of items participants said they would choose to receive as the dependent variable indicated that higher scores on our scale were negatively associated with the number of free items participants reported wanting to receive ($\beta = -0.28$, $t(198) = 4.08$, $p < .001$). In other words, the higher people scored on our minimalism scale, the fewer free products they wanted to receive. Additional regression analyses also indicated each of the three dimensions of minimalism was also negatively associated with the number of free items participants were interested in receiving: higher scores on the number of possessions dimension ($\beta = -0.24$, $t(198) = 3.41$, $p < .001$), sparse aesthetic dimension ($\beta = -0.25$, $t(198) = 3.69$, $p < .001$), and mindful curation dimension ($\beta = -0.22$, $t(198) = 3.22$, $p = .002$) were all significantly predictive of a preference for receiving fewer free items.

Study 7e: Preferences for Living Environments

This study aims to further validate our scale by testing whether scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale predict preferences for minimalist (vs. non-minimalist) apartment interiors. Accordingly, we recruited 206 participants from MTurk to complete a paid online study. We excluded six respondents who failed the attention check, leading to 200 valid responses (50.5% female, $M_{age} = 40.2$). The exclusion of these participants, as well as the sample size and all analyses, were pre-registered (https://aspredicted.org/BFX_SMK). In random order, participants both completed our scale ($M = 4.69$, SD = 1.12; 12 items $\alpha = 0.91$), and indicated their preference for four pretested sets of minimalist versus non-minimalist interiors (figure 1). In particular, participants looked at each pair of images and indicated (i) whether they would rather live in one of two apartments ("Which apartment would you rather live in?"), (ii) whether they found one of two wardrobes more appealing ("Which wardrobe is more appealing to you?"), (iii) which of two bedrooms they liked more ("Which bedroom do you like more?"), and (iv) which of two home offices they would prefer ("Which home office would you prefer to be yours?").

All preferences were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = definitely the one on the left, 4 = equal preference, 7 = definitely the one on the right). Each image was pretested with a separate MTurk sample (pretest in web appendix) to ensure that each pair of images contained two photos that significantly differed on minimalism. We varied whether the minimalist or non-minimalist images appeared on the left or the right of the screen. Before the analyses, we coded all response scales so that higher values indicate stronger preferences for minimalist options. Finally, participants provided their gender, age, income measured as in study 3 (M = "from \$60,000 to \$69,999"),

socioeconomic background measured as in study 3 ($M = 3.54$), and any additional comments for the researchers.

Results (Study 7e). As predicted, a regression with participants' average score on the Minimalist Consumer Scale as the independent variable and preferences for each option as the dependent variable indicated that higher scores on the scale predicted stronger preferences for the minimalist option in each set. More specifically, higher scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale predicted stronger preferences for the minimalist apartment ($\beta = 0.42$, $t(199) = 6.59$, $p < .001$), the minimalist wardrobe ($\beta = 0.44$, $t(199) = 6.87$, $p < .001$), the minimalist bedroom ($\beta = 0.38$, $t(199) = 5.81$, $p < .001$), and the minimalist home office ($\beta = 0.35$, $t(199) = 5.20$, $p < .001$; figure 2). There was no significant effect of order, nor interaction between scores on the Minimalist Consumer Scale and whether participants completed the scale before or after indicating their preferences of the different sets. We also conducted a post-test to ensure that the images were perceived as equally expensive. Results indicated that the minimalist and non-minimalist images for each set did not significantly differ from each other in perceived expensiveness. See web appendix for detailed results.

Discussion. In conclusion, studies 7a-e demonstrate the predictive validity of the Minimalist Consumer Scale and its dimensions by soliciting images of consumers' home environments and through choice scenarios in consumption contexts. Specifically, study 7a demonstrates that the Minimalist Consumer Scale predicts the extent to which consumers' home environments appear minimalist according to independent coders. Meanwhile, studies 7b–d indicate that our scale predicts consumer behaviors and decisions reflective of minimalism, namely, opting for quality over quantity, choosing minimalist brands, and forgoing the opportunity to receive free products. Study 7e shows that the scale also predicts consumers' preferences for minimalist versus non-minimalist apartment interiors. Taken together, this set of studies confirms the predictive validity of the Minimalist Consumer Scale in terms of its ability to predict consumer behaviors and preferences.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the current work, we establish consumer minimalism and validate the Consumer Minimalism Scale to measure this construct. Using grounded theory methods, exploratory factor analyses, reliability assessments, and scale construct validation, we identify three key dimensions of consumer minimalism (number of possessions, sparse aesthetic, and mindfully curated consumption) and create a twelve-item scale (four items per dimension) for measuring the extent to which people value consumer minimalism. We also provide an empirical demonstration of the usefulness of the

measure by showing that the Consumer Minimalism Scale predicts the likelihood of choosing higher quality, but more expensive goods over lower quality, less expensive goods.

The current work provides a foundational step in understanding the psychology of minimalism. As such, this work adds to nascent research on consumer minimalism (Eckmann and Landwehr 2020; Liu et al. 2019; Mathras and Hayes 2019; Min et al. 2021; To and Patrick 2017) while extending the literature on related constructs such as voluntarily simplicity, frugality, and materialism (Etzioni 1999; Lastovicka et al. 1999; Richins and Dawson 1992; Shaw and Newholm 2002). We demonstrate that consumer minimalism reflects a unique and novel construct. While there are certain types of minimalism for which existing constructs may overlap, and also instances wherein minimalism may be arguably motivated by an alignment of existing constructs or some constructs for which alignment may be a consequence of valuing minimalism, the value itself does not seem adequately captured by other existing constructs.

Moreover, rather than examining different expressions of minimalism as distinct consumer behaviors or value orientations, our construct development allows researchers and marketers to consider the common underlying dimensions that unite all types of minimalism. At the same time, different consumption contexts likely result in varying emphasis on the three dimensions of the consumer minimalism value, rather than necessarily always reflecting a high emphasis on all three dimensions of the value. These relative weightings—which may be determined by individual preference, cultural norms or ideals, or the particular antecedents to or intended outcomes of valuing minimalism—are likely to influence the particular expression of minimalism for some consumer or group of consumers.

Directions for Future Research

Defining the construct of consumer minimalism facilitates future research on the topic. First, investigating the antecedents to valuing consumer minimalism would be fruitful, as well as understanding the influence of these antecedents on the various forms in which minimalist values are expressed. For example, minimalist tendencies may in some cases be inculcated by a desire for catharsis from over-consumption, whether due to personal experience, a response to societal trends (Rodriguez 2018), or experience with non-minimalist behaviors in one's childhood home. In our studies, minimalism was positively correlated with some measures of socioeconomic status, supporting the possibility that material abundance may be a precursor to minimalism. Much like materialism in American culture, where cyclical periods of booms and busts tend to lead to a waxing and waning emphasis on materialist values (Blumberg 1974), it is also feasible that minimalism could

result from periods of material scarcity or abundance, leading consumers to recalibrate their sense of what is essential or what they need to own and consume. Consumers refine their preferences for space and money after a contraction and re-expansion because they learn to prioritize what matters to them (Ross, Meloy, and Carlson 2020), thus it is also possible that being forced to live with less—either as the result of financial or space constraints—could also predict a subsequent embrace of minimalism. Given these multiple possible antecedents to the emergence of minimalist values, future work is needed to more deeply understand how and when personal experiences, macroeconomic conditions, and resource availability might lead consumers to value consumer minimalism, and in turn, how different antecedents may influence the specific expression of minimalism in consumption.

Relatedly, further research is needed to investigate the evolution of minimalist values in light of changes in the current marketplace. For example, there may be a link between the increase in interest in minimalism and the emergence of the "sharing economy" and the influx of rental services, which relate to notions of de-emphasizing ownership of material goods (Morewedge et al. 2021; Zervas, Proserpio, and Byers 2017). Minimalists may use these rental services because they offer an opportunity to consume without owning possessions; on the other hand, minimalists may wish to reduce consumption generally, such that they are less likely to use such services. In addition, while minimalists may similarly treat shared goods the way they treat goods they own—approaching such services mindfully, preferring to use fewer things, and favoring a sparse aesthetic—it is also possible that minimalists may only care about these dimensions of consumption when it pertains to owned goods and may prefer maximalist options when sharing or renting as an outlet for indulgence. Investigating these questions would add to our understanding of minimalism and be of practical use to marketers hoping to engage minimalist consumers in sharing and rental economies effectively.

Exploring additional behavioral consequences of minimalism would also be a fruitful avenue for future work. For instance, how do minimalists navigate decisions which necessitate tradeoffs between economic or functional utility against minimalist values, such as when products are bundled so that it is cheaper to acquire more of a particular item? A minimalist may be more likely to forgo economic and functional utility to avoid owning many things to preserve their sparse aesthetic and curated collection of belongings. Indeed, we see some initial evidence of this notion in minimalists' rejection of free goods in study 7c. On the other hand, focusing on long-term consumption utilities might seem more mindful and aligned with minimalist values, leading to product or service bundles' uptake.

Finally, future work may explore the personal and social consequences of valuing minimalism. We document a positive relationship between some indicators of socioeconomic status and minimalism, suggesting that minimalism may, in some contexts, operate as a social status signal. The effort required to mindfully curate one's possessions and maintain a sparse aesthetic, as well as the ability to convey limited consumption as an active choice—rather than as a consequence of circumstances—could reasonably lead to inferences of status in the eyes of others. While wealthy and less wealthy consumers both can and do embrace minimalist values, it is possible that wealthy people deliberately embrace minimalism to signal social status in a cluttered culture. Future research should more thoroughly investigate whether and when minimalism serves as a status symbol and what drives that perception.

Managerial Implications

Minimalist brands often emphasize one dimension of minimalism more than the others. Some emphasize functional and aesthetic simplicity, others actively encourage limited and mindful consumption, and many subscription, rental, and sharing services market themselves as a means of owning fewer possessions. Our research suggests that brand managers should consider the effect of positioning a brand around a single focal dimension of minimalism versus combinations of two dimensions versus all three dimensions on both impressions of the brand and the types of consumers likely to be most attracted to the brand. In a similar vein, some minimalist brands like Acne Studios and Jil Sander have positioned themselves as high-end or aspirational, while others like Everlane, Eileen Fischer, and Muji have positioned themselves as everyday, accessible brands. Brand managers should consider where they are placing their minimalist brand on this continuum as well; positioning a minimalist brand as either high- or low-end likely influences perceptions of the brand, beliefs about brand values, and feelings of connectedness with the brand.

More generally, our research is useful for managers who wish to better understand minimalist consumers for segmenting, targeting, and positioning purposes. Having a concrete and clear understanding of the conceptual underpinnings of minimalism and a tool for assessing minimalism, our Minimalist Consumer Scale, is useful for better engaging minimalist consumers and creating effective strategies for appealing to such consumers. Understanding the meaningful sub-dimensions of consumer minimalism can help managers better tap into each dimension to attract consumers who are minimalist or interested in becoming more minimalist. Knowing how to reach consumers who value minimalism is essential not only because it allows marketers to capture a significant market currently, but also because it is clear that minimalism is increasing in its

influence; the digitization of goods, multi-functional technologies, and the desire to be more mobile exert downward pressure on the desire and need for more stuff, and may strengthen the staying power of consumer minimalism.

In conclusion, the current work defines minimalism in consumer behavior as a value that embraces the mindful acquisition and ownership of few, curated possessions, with a sparse aesthetic preference. We demonstrate that consumer minimalism is a unique construct situated within a broader nomological network of related constructs, such as voluntary simplicity and frugality, but not fully captured by any of them. The three core dimensions of minimalism identified in this work also unify the variegated displays of minimalism observed currently and historically in the marketplace. In sum, this research fills a gap in the literature and provides a concrete academic understanding of consumer minimalism as a multi-dimensional value.

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

The qualitative data for the grounded theory work were collected between 2017 and 2020 from a multitude of sources, including digital book repositories and university libraries, searches on Amazon.com for books on the topic of minimalism, scouring the internet for any news and popular press articles, attending exhibitions related to minimalism, and surveying people in private Facebook groups centered around being minimalist as well as on MTurk. The faculty and Ph.D. student judges for study 1 were recruited at Columbia Business School and Harvard Business School in 2020. Participants in studies 2 and 3 were recruited online through Prolific Academic in 2020. Participants for study 4 were recruited online through MTurk in 2020. Respondents for the two pilot studies reported in the web appendix were recruited online through Qualtrics and Prolific Academic in 2020. Respondents for study 5 were graduate students enrolled in the Marketing Core course at Columbia Business School in 2020. Respondents for study 6 were recruited from private Facebook groups related to the topics of minimalism and reading in 2020. Participants in studies 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, and 7e as well as the pretest for study 7a were recruited online through MTurk in 2020 and 2021. The two authors jointly designed the studies, analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript. Data have been archived and are available at https://osf.io/5ke9w/.

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