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## Article

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## **Consumer Deceleration and Well-being under the conditions of Control over Consumption, Social Class, and Spirituality: A Social Acceleration Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explains how and when consumer deceleration - the perception of slowed-down temporal experience – adds to consumer well-being. This investigation is the first attempt to quantify consumer deceleration (a recently coined concept). Secondly, it has utilized social acceleration theory, which is relatively less utilized in the Eastern context, to investigate the consequences of consumer deceleration empirically. Specifically, we argue that consumer deceleration can safeguard consumers from the clutches of fast-moving life, enable them to connect to their inner self, discover their spiritual self, slow down their movement, relax them, and consequently add to consumer well-being. We suggest that the deceleration-well-being path is intervened by consumers' control over consumption (an anti-consumption attitude towards impulsive buying). This mechanism will be attenuated for higher social classes and spirituality. Our evidence is based on a self-administered questionnaire survey utilizing drop-and-collect and via emails (n=299). Data was analyzed through the Hayes Process macro in SPSS, and the findings support our notion that consumer deceleration increases well-being under the underlying conditions except for social class. We provide the theoretical and practical implications of these results. We also suggest some potential research avenues around consumer deceleration.

**Keywords:** Consumer deceleration, consumer well-being, control over consumption, spirituality, social acceleration theory.

## 1. Introduction

Consumers are always in a rush due to the ever-increasing pace of life; they need a respite from all the hustle and fastness. Therefore, consumers tend to turn towards slowness and embrace deceleration. This phenomenon has recently been formally conceptualized as *consumer deceleration*, which refers to “the perception of slowed down temporal experience achieved via a decrease in certain quantities (traveled distance, use of technology, experienced episodes) per unit of time through altering, adopting, or eschewing forms of consumption” (Huseman & Eckhardt, 2019, p. 1142).

The prior research on consumer deceleration is restricted to the theoretical understanding only. For example, it focuses on the nature of consumer deceleration, its types, and the origin of consumer deceleration. The theory of social acceleration did introduce the term consumer deceleration, but how one can achieve it in daily routine was missing. How consumer deceleration can be helpful for the well-being of consumers in a market setting is unknown. These gaps existed as there were no empirical studies on consumer deceleration. How consumer deceleration can be quantified is yet to be developed. The current study is unique in that it incorporates all these gaps and identifies boundary conditions that can be helpful for consumer well-being achieved by decelerating their life.

Earlier, this aspect was noted from the consumer perspective, linking it to consumer behavior. To advance this view, Rosa (2013) argues that when people are tired of social acceleration, they turn towards oases of deceleration where time feels like passing slowly. Consumers are tired of the acceleration and need deceleration to slow down their lives to enjoy it—the continuous acceleration results in decreased consumer well-being due to stress (Osbaldiston, 2013). The consumption patterns are expected to affect consumer well-being (Scott & Maclaran, 2012). The sped-up daily life or acceleration (the reverse of deceleration) limits consumer well-being (Vostal, 2019), creating a sense of restlessness. The consumer will turn towards slowness, the antidote to the evil fast world, which results in positive and emancipator connotations. It is observed that consumers turn to the marketplace to achieve well-being (Huseman & Eckhardt, 2019).

Despite these traces of linkages between the accelerated pace of life and *consumer well-being* – the “overall evaluations of their lives and their emotional experiences” (Diener et al., 2016, p. 1) it is yet to fully understand how, why, and when these impacts are likely. With this motivation to understand, drawing on the social acceleration theory, we argue that consumer deceleration can safeguard consumers from the clutches of fast-moving life, enable them to connect to their inner self, discover their spiritual self, slow down their movement, relax them, and consequently add to consumer well-being. We propose that the relationship between consumer deceleration and well-being is mediated by consumers’ *control over consumption* - an anti-consumption attitude towards impulsive buying. Finally, we argue that this mechanism will attenuate the consumers belonging to the higher social classes and consumers’ spirituality.

Consumers reduce their consumption to slow down, making them feel good and ultimately resulting in their well-being (Huseman & Eckhardt, 2019; Oral & Thurner, 2019). Consumers sometimes willingly alter their consumption practices to control their consumption. Thus, studying the consequences of consumer deceleration, including control over consumption, is helpful because it will lead to consumer well-being. As a boundary condition, when a consumer decelerates for spirituality, it enhances further consumer well-being. In other words, consumers with high spirituality were more likely to decelerate, thereby increasing the impact of consumer deceleration on consumer well-being. Finally, the study also aims to test whether the social class of consumers plays a role – maybe when the upper-class consumers are decelerating, controlling their consumption is more likely to increase their well-being.

This study is expected to contribute to our understanding of the research question of how consumer deceleration leads to consumer well-being and when this process will be fast. The underlying question is, how will consumer deceleration affect consumption practices, and if consumers control their consumption, how will it affect their well-being? Secondly, what happens to this mechanism if the consumers differ in spirituality and social class? To answer all these questions, we will use a quantitative approach for which a questionnaire is designed to measure each variable.

We aim to empirically test the mediating role of control over consumption between consumer deceleration and well-being and the moderating roles of spirituality and social class. In this way, we will learn that when a consumer controls or reduces its consumption, it will enhance the chances of consumer deceleration, leading to increased consumer well-being. The remainder of the paper reviews the literature on consumer deceleration, consumer well-being, control over consumption, spirituality, and social class to provide the foundations for the conceptual framework and hypothesis development. Next, we will outline the methodology adopted, followed by a presentation and discussion on the implications, limitations, and research directions for future research.

## **2. Hypotheses Development**

### *2.1 Theory of Social Acceleration*

The theory indicates that the modern social world is becoming quicker and follows a systematic modernization pattern (Rosa, 2013). Per the theory, the experience of modernity is an experience of acceleration. Social acceleration always has an opposite relationship: hesitation, delay, and slowing down. Social acceleration forces are always higher, and deceleration can be an escape or reaction to the acceleration. According to Rosa (2013), The accelerated lifestyle affects so many aspects of life, and results can be seen in three forms:

First, the technological advancements in traveling have enabled people to cover large distances in less time. They use innovative machinery to communicate with each other.

Interestingly, these advancements are not initially presented with the notion that they would add to life's busyness. When selling a car, laptop, or mobile phone, sales personnel typically do not emphasize how these new devices would make life even more hectic. Instead, the focus is on highlighting the time saved, leading to increased free time through enhanced productivity or efficiency – a common mantra of the modern era. The subsequent increase in engaged time, involving more occupied hours and additional activities squeezed into those hours, is left for individuals to discover, often with eagerness and fascination.

Second, social acceleration introduces a shift from stability to dynamism in what was traditionally perceived as relatively calm circumstances. Activities such as relocating one's home, altering political affiliations, fluctuations in religious adherence, and transitioning between affiliations, whether in professional or personal contexts, all exemplify this hastening pace in our social lives. This acceleration manifests itself in the more fleeting and less predictable nature of romantic and marital relationships, contributing to a dynamic and rapidly evolving social landscape.

Third, life pace is intricately connected to the duration of daily experiences: leisurely meals have become infrequent, social interactions, while potentially increasing in frequency, may be confined to a tweet or a WhatsApp note during a momentary pause at a traffic light, and periods of rest are sporadic with brief holidays. Even extended family connections, although possibly frequent, often occur at a digitally mediated distance, via platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat. The result is a less settled, more dynamic, and increasingly accelerated life, with these various forms of acceleration reinforcing each other. This altered pace fundamentally transforms how we engage with the world and others, reshaping our identities in the process.

In the accelerated world, consumers try to slow down their lives and find consumer deceleration soothing and an escape from life's mundane speed, considering it a source of well-being. Consumer deceleration provides a break from all this and helps improve time scarcity, a break from technology, and a connection with the inner self.

### *2.2 Consumer Deceleration and Consumer Well-Being*

Consumers worldwide are ready to decelerate (Huseman & Eckhardt, 2019), aiming for the experiences that lead to their well-being. People are more likely to decelerate when they feel connected to their inner self and a higher deity (Waaijman, 2006). That is why they choose those products or services that help them decelerate. Rosa (2013) elaborates that slow-down movements that promote deceleration assure well-being. He also highlights the importance of wellness and how slow-down activities can increase well-being through consumer deceleration. Subjective well-being refers to “all different forms of evaluating one's life or emotional experience, such as satisfaction, positive affect, and low negative affect” (Diener et al., 2016, p. 1). The experience of change in temporality can positively affect consumer well-being (Woermann & Rokka, 2015),

During deceleration, a consumer goes through a transformation, which considerably impacts the psychological well-being of the consumer (Paloutzian, 2005). Well-being is related to the consumer's good health; measuring physical and mental health is associated with living a life as a successful human (Breslow, 1972). Technology usage or an increase in screen time harms consumer well-being, whereas Breslow (1972) relates well-being with good health; the presence of technology is everywhere, and their increasing usage hurts consumer well-being (Elhai et al., 2016). Consumers' relationship with their technological gadgets is so intense that the consequences of this relation on consumer well-being can be easily seen as adverse. It is worth noting that consumers need touch screens, and fulfillment of this need will lead to lower well-being (Patrick et al., 2007; Peck & Johnson, 2011). The existing standard is not conducive to well-being, considering comprehensive mental and physical health indicators associated with the overuse of devices optimized for visual-verbal information and potential misuse of the technology and its negative impact on well-being (Sterling, 2005; Dunne & Raby, 2014).

The physical and mental health measures related to people are more likely to decelerate when they feel their life is moving too fast, and slowing down will benefit from relaxing them. It will lead them to such places, make them do activities, and use specific products and goods if they feel the time is slowing down. They try to find their spiritual self, which is beneficial for their psychological or emotional well-being, or to work correctly in their routine life. Thus, we propose our first hypothesis:

- *H1: Consumer deceleration will lead to consumer well-being.*

### *2.3 Mediation of High Control Over Consumption*

Consumption plays a vital role in consumer deceleration. According to Huseman and Eckhardt (2019), deceleration can be achieved by altering, adopting, or eschewing forms of consumption. During deceleration, the consumer tries to control his consumption, which gives him a sense of well-being and serenity (Hemetsberger et al., 2019). In modern society, consumption is speeding up, resulting from technological innovations, but consumer deceleration promotes control over consumption, giving the consumer a sense of slowing down. During deceleration, it feels like time slows down or stops, and consumers try to control their consumption. The slow-down takes a less materialistic approach, resulting in consumer well-being through deceleration.

While decelerating, consumers control their consumption by reducing it compared to their daily routine. It could be due to less choice or some practical considerations. Consumers reduce their consumption to get over a materialistic lifestyle (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017), increasing consumer well-being (Oral & Thurner, 2019). Transforming oneself results in asceticism (Gould, 2006), which reduces consumption due to that transforming experience that gives a sense of well-being- calmness, serenity, and wholeness (Sussan et al., 2012). The higher the control over consumption, the greater the consumer well-being (Oral &

Turner, 2019). Consumer rejects consumption to seek satisfaction and happiness (Lee & Ahn, 2016) and try to be under a high degree of control of consumption voluntarily. Advertisements do not affect them, creating happiness and better for every consumer's well-being. Thus, our second hypothesis is:

- *H2: High control over consumption will mediate the relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being.*

#### *2.4 Moderation of Spirituality*

Spirituality undoubtedly plays an essential role in consumer deceleration. There is well-established evidence of a strong link between spirituality and well-being (Seybold & Hill, 2001). *Spirituality* is “the engagement to explore—and deeply and meaningfully connect one’s inner self—to the known world and Beyond” (Kale, 2004, p. 93). Spiritual practices increase well-being (Heelas, 2016). When people want to find the inner reality of life and about themselves, they select silent places where time feels like passing slowly (Sacred site) to find personal, social, and spiritual well-being (Bradley, 2009; Scott & Maclaran, 2012). Huseman and Eckhardt (2019) conclude that consumers choose spirituality to discover the benefits of deceleration, contributing to their overall happiness. Rosa’s theory of social acceleration elaborates that consumer deceleration allows consumers to connect with their inner soul, which can benefit their well-being.

Spirituality is expected to enhance the pleasurable and extraordinary experiences for consumers experiencing it and thus positively impact consumer well-being. It is seen that spirituality or advertising related to spirituality can be connected to consumer happiness, thus triggering consumer well-being. It focuses on actualizing human potential, which helps fulfill one’s true nature and evokes self-acceptance, self-determination, and personal growth to enhance well-being (Oprea et al., 2016). Consumers set goals in their lives to perform actively and positively to achieve the purpose of life to be more creative and productive (Ryff & Singer, 2008). The products or services encourage consumers to find and fulfill their life's purpose and increase their well-being (Kahana et al., 2012; Kothari, 2004). The firms focusing on flourishing consumer well-being consider the spiritual needs of consumers (Dodds et al., 2021). Consumers turn to religion when faced with stressful times, which they believe affects mental well-being positively (Simkin, 2020). This relationship is prevalent in subjective well-being and religiosity studies. Consumers with higher spirituality will also have higher subjective well-being. Consumers long for deceleration for the spiritual experiences where they feel a strong connection with their inner self and higher divine being (Huseman & Eckhardt, 2019; Canniford & Shankar, 2013; Waaijman, 2006). Overall, spirituality can enhance the relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being. Thus, we propose our hypothesis:

- *H3: Consumer spirituality moderates the relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being.*

2.5 Moderated Mediation of Social Class

Social class influences so many aspects of one’s life; it also matters for the impact of consumer deceleration on consequences. Consumer of every social class cannot slow down their life for deceleration. A qualitative investigation finds that people below the middle class are discouraged from attending the expensive products or services useful for deceleration (Huseman & Eckhardt, 2019). Thus, only those who can afford them are conducive to deceleration and control their consumption to achieve consumer well-being. Rosa (2013) explains that deceleration is an ideology for the upper class to break from modernization and the ever-increasing pace of life. The lower-class consumer’s ability to decelerate is minimal. The ability to give up the fast lifestyle and go for a slow-down life is not a matter of choice but is related to material dispositions and class status (Vostal, 2019). The main difference between different social classes’ capacity to decelerate is the presence of resources and time. Slowing down is not for everyone; it mostly approaches the middle class, as getting a slower life is a luxury not everybody can afford (Archer, 2016; Vostal, 2019). We propose our third hypothesis:

- *H4: The indirect effect of consumer deceleration and well-being via consumer control over consumption will be more for the consumer above the middle class.*

The hypothesized model of our research is presented in Figure 1:

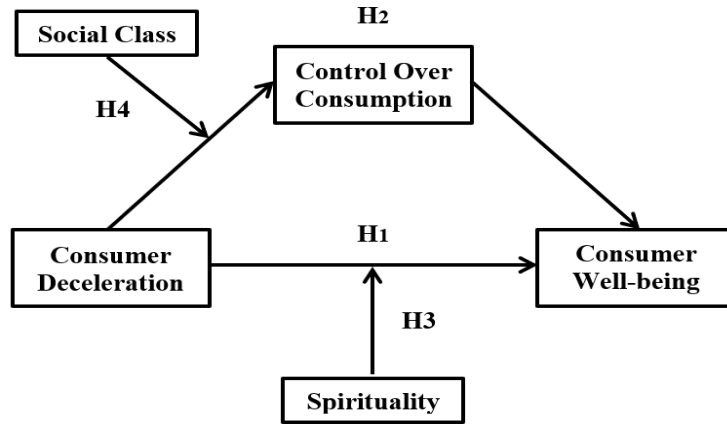


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Quality

Following a positivistic approach, a quantitative research design was used to test the deductively grounded hypotheses, i.e., the direct and indirect relationships among the variables (Saunder et al., 2019). In business, surveys are quick, inexpensive, efficient, and



accurate information assessment. This study utilized the survey strategy because it is one of the most popular techniques to describe, contrast, or understand individuals' perceptions, behavior, and attitudes. The survey instrument was in English, and voluntary participants were ensured in terms of anonymity and data confidentiality. Items about study variables were asked before the personal information.

Drop-off and internet methods (email and WhatsApp) were used to reach out to diversified participants to complete a self-administered questionnaire. Both methods had shortcomings; for example, the former was costly and required compulsory internet access. Nevertheless, this combination of data collection techniques enhanced the response rate. The study intended to reach consumers aged 18 or above, employed or self-employed, and willing to participate with informed consent. A convenience sample method seemed an optimum fit for quick data collection because no sampling frame was available for the potential respondent (contacted through social media and in person), and two different data collection methods target a variety of respondents. Of the 400 distributed questionnaires, 341 were returned. After reviewing far unengaged respondents, systematic outliers, and missing values, 299 completed questionnaires were available for further analysis - the overall response rate was 74.8%.

Well-established scales are utilized in this study (see Appendix 1 for complete details). This study can confidently claim that similar findings are expected if other researchers repeat this design in the same context. Likewise, this research could quantify the measures it intended to take; thus, our data have a high validity value.

### *3.2 Measurements*

#### *3.2.1 Consumer Deceleration*

A comprehensive construct is yet to be developed for consumer deceleration; even the authors who coined this concept (were emailed) did not suggest any scale. Therefore, we reverse-coded the measure of social acceleration, which is conceptually opposite to consumer deceleration (Huseman & Eckhardt, 2019; Rosa, 2013). The consumer deceleration was measured using a total of 37 items, which consisted of three dimensions. The first dimension (i.e., embodied deceleration) was measured through 7 items from Lin et al. (2020) – a sample is, “I am flexible and independent in arranging my visiting schedule.” The second dimension (i.e., technological deceleration) was measured through 10 items extracted from Maria and Xuelian (2020) – a sample item includes “I tend to answer messages immediately.” These items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). The third dimension (i.e., episodic deceleration) was measured from 20 items (Zhou, 2019) – a sample item includes, “I do several things at a time.” A 7-point numeric scale (1=never to 7=always) was used for these items.

#### *3.2.2 Consumer Well-Being*

This study relied on Goldberg's 12-item widely used scale for consumer well-being (1972). This scale assesses positive and negative effects on consumer responses - sample items

include, have you recently “been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing” [positive] and “been thinking of yourself as a worthless person” [negative]. The six positive items were rated at a 4-point response scale (1=more so than usual, 2=more than usual, 3=less than usual, and 4=much less than for positive affect). In contrast, the six negative items were rated at a different 4-point response scale (1=not at all, 2=less than usual, 3=more than usual, and 4= much more than usual for negative affect). The negative items were reverse-coded.

### 3.2.3 Control Over Consumption

The 6-item scale developed by Oral and Thurner (2019) was used to measure control over consumption. These items capture the anti-consumption practices – a sample is before buying; I assess whether the product is necessary or not.” All items were rated on a 7-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree).

### 3.2.4 Spirituality

A six-item scale developed by Hodge (2003) measures spirituality - as one’s relationship to God or a higher deity for all the items. All items are measured using a 10-point bipolar numeric scale ranging from 0-10; each item has a unique anchor at both ends. For example, for the item, “In terms of the questions I have about life, my spirituality answers,” the scale anchors are “0 = no question” and 10 = absolutely all my questions.” Three out of 6 were reverse-coded.

### 3.3.5 Social Class and Control Variables

Our study participants were required to report on one of the five social classes commonly used in most studies, namely, 1=upper, 2=upper-middle, 3= middle, 4 =lower-middle, and 5 = lower). Individual-level demographic variables (age, gender, and marital status) were collected as control variables to rule out plausible alternate interpretations. The dummy codes were (0=male, 1=female, 1=single, 2=married=2), and there were five age categories: 18-27, 28-35, 36-42, 43-51, and above 51.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results

After data screening, of the 299 respondents, about 45% were male, and about 75.6% were single. An overwhelming majority (73.6%) of the respondents were aged 18-27, 14.7% were aged 28-35, 6.4% were aged 36-42, and the rest were 5.3%. The sample was concentrated on middle-class (48.8%) and lower-middle-class (34.8%) respondents; the remaining belonged to other classes. Table 1 shows the complete cross-tabulations of gender by age, marital status, and social class.

The reliability analysis shows that all the alpha values are higher than the threshold of 0.70, which confirms that the measurement scales possessed good internal reliability and consistency. The reliability results in the diagonals and parenthesis in Table 2 depict that all scales were reliable because all Alpha are above 0.70. There is no issue of

multicollinearity validity because all correlations among the five study variables are not suspiciously large. These are well below the threshold value ranging from .010 to .401; this simple measure rules out the chances of multicollinearity (Montgomery et al., 2021). The general factor obtained by loading all measures (i.e., the Harman single-factor) into an exploratory factor analysis only accounted for 13.9% covariance among – far less than 50%. Therefore, there is no issue of common method variance in our data.

**Table 1: Respondent's Gender by Age, Marital Status, Social Class**

| Variable       | Category     | Gender |      |      |      | Total |      |
|----------------|--------------|--------|------|------|------|-------|------|
|                |              | Female |      | Male |      | Freq  | %    |
|                |              | Freq   | %    | Freq | %    |       |      |
| Age            | 18-27        | 126    | 76.8 | 94   | 69.6 | 220   | 73.6 |
|                | 28-35        | 22     | 13.4 | 22   | 16.3 | 44    | 14.7 |
|                | 36-42        | 6      | 3.7  | 13   | 9.6  | 19    | 6.4  |
|                | Above 43     | 10     | 6.0  | 6    | 5.5  | 16    | 5.3  |
| Marital Status | Single       | 127    | 77.4 | 99   | 73.3 | 226   | 75.6 |
|                | Married      | 37     | 22.6 | 36   | 26.7 | 73    | 24.4 |
| Social Class   | Upper        | 1      | 0.6  | 2    | 1.5  | 3     | 1.0  |
|                | Upper-middle | 3      | 1.8  | 11   | 8.1  | 14    | 4.7  |
|                | Middle       | 84     | 51.2 | 62   | 45.9 | 146   | 48.8 |
|                | Lower-middle | 64     | 39.0 | 40   | 29.6 | 104   | 34.8 |
|                | Lower        | 12     | 7.3  | 20   | 14.8 | 32    | 10.7 |
| Total          |              | 164    | 100  | 135  | 100  | 299   | 100  |

The bivariate correlation between consumer deceleration (independent variables) and control over consumption (mediator) is significant and positive ( $r=.40^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Similarly, the bivariate correlation between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being (dependent) is also positive and significant ( $r=.18^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Both these correlations are per the expected direction. The correlation of spirituality with consumer deceleration is significant ( $r=.176^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) but not with consumer well-being. The correlations yielded in the test align with the study hypotheses (i.e., H1 and H2).

SPSS version 28.0 was utilized to test the hypothesized relationship. Hypothesis 1 predicts a positive relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being. A significant and positive relationship was confirmed between consumer deceleration and well-being ( $b=0.146$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), controlling for gender, age, and marital status (Table 3).

The Durbin–Watson statistic is considered normal in the range of 1.5 to 2.5, and this value is 1.995 (almost 2) for this data; hence there is no autocorrelation issue. Likewise, a variance inflation factor (VIF) of 3 or below is not a cause for concern; all VIF values are below 1.905; hence, there is no multicollinearity between independent variables for this data. Overall, these results *support Hypothesis 1*.

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Study Variable**

| Variables                   | 1     | 2      | 3      | 4    | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8      |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Gender                   | -     |        |        |      |        |        |        |        |
| 2. Age                      | .040  | -      |        |      |        |        |        |        |
| 3. Marital Status           | .048  | .679** | -      |      |        |        |        |        |
| 4. Social Class             | -.016 | .151** | .127*  | -    |        |        |        |        |
| 5. Spirituality             | -.067 | .193** | .148*  | .078 | (0.77) |        |        |        |
| 6. Consumer Deceleration    | .017  | .077   | -.066  | .097 | .176** | (0.87) |        |        |
| 7. Control over Consumption | .032  | -.023  | -.041  | .057 | .206** | .401** | (0.71) |        |
| 8. Consumer Well-being      | -.025 | -.118* | -.135* | .058 | .081   | .185** | .397** | (0.80) |

Note: \* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01

For testing the mediating role of control over consumption between consumer deceleration and well-being (Hypothesis 2), the study followed the bootstrapping technique with the help of the Hayes Process macro, which was run in SPSS, and Model 4 was applied. This method originates an indirect effect based on randomly drawn samples from the data set.

Table 4 shows each path's total, direct, and indirect effects. The total effect of consumer deceleration on consumer well-being was decreased through indirect effect (b =.02). The hierarchical regression analysis shows that the indirect effect of consumer deceleration on consumer well-being was 0.12 with a 95% confidence interval (lower limit =.07 and upper limit =.18) showing significant effect.

**Table 3: Regression Results for Consumer Well-being**

| Variables             | b     | SE   | T        | VIF   | R <sup>2</sup> | Durbin-Watson |
|-----------------------|-------|------|----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| Constant              | 2.22  | .221 | 10.043** |       | 0.23           | 1.995         |
| Consumer Deceleration | .146  | .045 | 3.269**  | 1.033 |                |               |
| Gender                | -.026 | .068 | -.385    | 1.003 |                |               |
| Age                   | -.056 | .048 | -1.168   | 1.907 |                |               |
| Marital Status        | -.083 | .109 | -.765    | 1.905 |                |               |

Note: \*\* p < 0.01

The direct effect of control over consumption on consumer deceleration is significant (b = .56, t = 7.56, p <.01). The direct effect of the mediator (i.e., control over consumption) on consumer well-being also shows a significant result (b=.21, t=6.59, p <0.01), which proves the effect of the mediator on the dependent variable. Furthermore, as the direct effect of consumer deceleration is non-significant when including a mediator in the relationship, the mediation may be termed full mediation. Thus, the result of the indirect path supported that control over consumption significantly and positively mediates the relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being, *supporting Hypothesis 2*.

**Table 4: Regression Results - Control over Consumption as Mediator**

| <b>Outcome = Control over Consumption</b>                              | <b>B</b> | <b>SE</b> | <b>t</b>    | <b>R<sup>2</sup></b> |
|--|----------|-----------|-------------|----------------------|
| Constant   | 2.674    | .368      | 7.246**     | 0.17                 |
| Consumer Deceleration  | .562     | .074      | 7.563**     |                      |
| Gender   | .057     | .114      | .505        |                      |
| Age  | -.091    | .080      | -1.138      |                      |
| Marital Status   | .103     | .182      | .569        |                      |
| <b>Outcome = Consumer Well-being</b>                                   |          |           |             |                      |
| Constant   | 1.646    | .224      | 7.330**     | 0.18                 |
| Consumer Deceleration (the Direct Effect)                              | .025     | .046      | .555        |                      |
| Control over Consumption   | .214     | .033      | 6.547**     |                      |
| Gender   | -.039    | .064      | -.604       |                      |
| Age  | -.036    | .045      | -.812       |                      |
| Marital Status   | -.105    | .102      | -1.034      |                      |
|  | <b>B</b> | <b>SE</b> | <b>LLCI</b> | <b>ULCI</b>          |
| <b>Indirect Effect</b> of Consumer Deceleration on Consumer Well-being | .120     | .027      | .074        | .181                 |
|  | Effect   | SE        | Z           |                      |
| Normal theory tests for indirect effect                                | 0.02     | 0.05      | 0.53        |                      |

*Note:* n=299, Bootstrap sample size = 5000, ^ p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01, LL=lower limit; CI=confidence interval; UL=upper limit

In testing Hypothesis 4, spirituality moderates the relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being, the Hayes Process macro model number 1 was used. The interaction between consumer deceleration and spirituality accounted for a significant variance in consumer well-being with a 95% confidence interval and 5000 bootstraps of samples. Table 5 shows the detailed moderation results.

The results revealed a positive moderating role of spirituality on the relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being (b=.07, p<.01). These findings showed that a high level of spirituality would make the impact of consumer deceleration on consumer well-being stronger. The different levels of spirituality showed that the effect of the interaction term is higher (b=.326, p<.001) when the value of spirituality is high, and the interaction is low and insignificant when the spirituality is low. Table 6 shows the levels and their effect on the interaction. Thus, the data overall *supports Hypothesis 3*.

The relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being is strong when consumer spirituality is high. Consumers will not be nourishing their well-being when consumer deceleration and spirituality are low. However, at high consumer deceleration, the rate of change (slope) is steeper for consumers with high spirituality than those with low spirituality. This shows that high spirituality can moderate consumer deceleration and well-being or motivate the consumer to adopt such practices that promote well-being.

**Table 5: Moderation Results of Spirituality**

| Outcome Variable=Consumer Well-being | b     | SE   | T        | R <sup>2</sup> |
|--------------------------------------|-------|------|----------|----------------|
| Constant                             | 3.743 | .529 | 7.081**  | 0.10           |
| Consumer Deceleration                | -.325 | .142 | -2.287** |                |
| Spirituality                         | -.241 | .079 | -3.054** |                |
| Consumer Deceleration x Spirituality | .072  | .021 | 3.409**  |                |
| Gender                               | -.019 | .067 | -.276    |                |
| Age                                  | -.088 | .048 | -1.833   |                |
| Marital Status                       | -.036 | .108 | -.336    |                |

*Note:* \*\* p < 0.01

The graph in Figure 2 shows a steeper gradient for high spirituality, while for low spirituality, the graph dotted lines are less steep than for high spirituality. This means that the effect of consumer deceleration on consumer well-being is much more substantial at high spirituality. The findings show that when spirituality is high, the increase in consumer deceleration leads to a significant change in consumer well-being, which proves that higher spirituality strengthens the impact of consumer deceleration on consumer well-being.

To test the moderated mediation of social class, the Hayes Process macro model number 7 was used. The interaction results (Table 7) showed no interaction effect of social class and consumer deceleration on control over consumption. The test of highest-order unconditional interaction revealed that the R-square change approaches zero (.001) and is non-significant. Social class does not influence the indirect effect between consumer deceleration and well-being via control over consumption. The mediation does exit per the results of Hypothesis 2. However, for the index of moderated mediation, zero falls within the class limits. Thus, *Hypothesis 4 is not supported.*

**Table 6: Simple Slope Test of Spirituality as a Moderator**

| Spirituality | B    | SE   | T       | LLCI  | ULCI |
|--------------|------|------|---------|-------|------|
| 4.50         | .000 | .059 | .006    | -.117 | .117 |
| 6.30         | .133 | .044 | 2.994** | .046  | .220 |
| 9.00         | .326 | .071 | 4.566** | .185  | .466 |

*Note:* \*\* p < 0.01

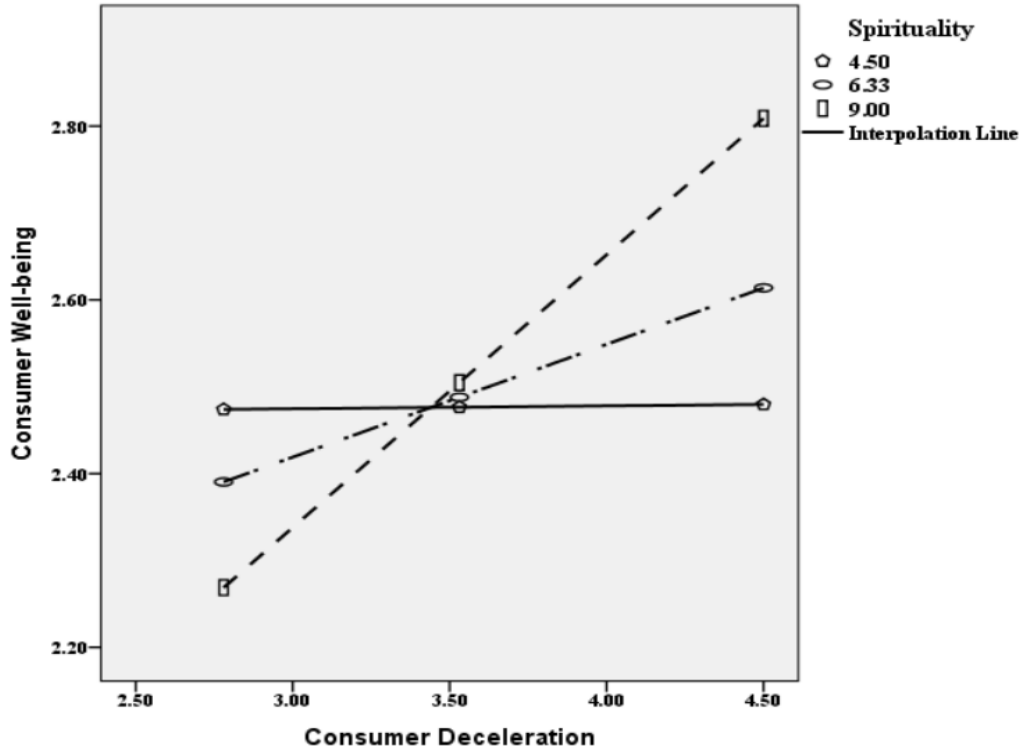


Figure 2: Moderation of Spirituality on the Relationship between Consumer Deceleration and Consumer Well-being

Table 7: Moderation Results of Social Class

| Outcome=Control Over Consumption                                      |                     | B        | SE        | T           | R <sup>2</sup> |
|---|---------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|----------------|
| Constant  |                     | 3.341    | 1.263     | 2.644**     | 0.17           |
| Consumer Deceleration   |                     | .340     | .346      | .985        |                |
| Social Class  |                     | -.178    | .337      | -.528       |                |
| Consumer Deceleration x Social Class                                  |                     | .060     | .092      | .646        |                |
| Gender  |                     | .059     | .114      | .515        |                |
| Age   |                     | -.105    | .082      | -1.280      |                |
| Marital Status  |                     | .117     | .184      | .633        |                |
| <b>Indirect Effect</b>  | <b>Social Class</b> | <b>b</b> | <b>SE</b> | <b>LLCI</b> | <b>ULCI</b>    |
| Consumer Deceleration → Control Over Consumption → Consumer Wellbeing | 3.000               | .111     | .030      | .060        | .179           |
|   | 3.000               | .111     | .030      | .060        | .179           |
|   | 4.000               | .124     | .030      | .073        | .189           |
| Index of moderated mediation = .013                                   |                     |          | .025      | -.035       | .065           |

Notes: \*\* p < 0.01

## 5. Discussion

This research examined the relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being and the interplay of three conditions: control over consumption, spirituality, and social class. Previous literature analyzed consumer deceleration qualitatively. This is one of the rare studies that attempt to comprehensively quantify consumer deceleration per the recently coined conceptualization by Huseman and Eckhardt (2019). The study tested the hypothesis deduced from the theory of social acceleration in an Eastern context. Thus, this study uniquely advances our understanding of consumer deceleration.

### *5.1 Theoretical Implications*

Our survey data supported the notion that consumer deceleration is a way to increase consumer well-being. Time is felt as an abundant resource they are decelerating, which can be beneficial for them in the sense that it can give them a sense of relief, and they will be less stressed, which will, in turn, increase their well-being. These findings align with Woermann and Rokka (2015), who suggested that experiencing a change in temporality can positively affect consumer well-being. Likewise, Paloutzian (2005) also finds that a decelerating consumer goes through a transformation which has a significant positive impact on the psychological well-being of the consumer.

Secondly, the study enlightens the role of high control over consumption in increasing consumer well-being when a consumer is decelerating. It shows that consumer well-being is driven by high control over consumption when a consumer is trying to slow down. The findings underline that high control over consumption is the condition through which deceleration can promote consumer well-being. Consumers who control their consumption and consider themselves anti-consumers are more likely to engage in deceleration to decrease the number of activities and to keep their consumption levels checked. The study's findings are consistent with the previous literature, where the consumers try to control their consumption while decelerating, giving them a sense of well-being and serenity (Hemetsberger et al., 2019). Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) support that deceleration will help consumers control their consumption and overcome their materialistic lifestyle, increasing their well-being as the consumer rejects a materialistic lifestyle (Oral & Thurner, 2019). Transforming oneself results in asceticism (Gould, 2006), which reduces consumption due to that transforming experience that gives a sense of well-being- calmness, serenity, and wholeness (Sussan et al., 2012).

Thirdly, the study suggests that spirituality significantly moderates the relationship between consumer deceleration and well-being. By identifying such boundary conditions, this research helps understand the role of spirituality in consumer life. Highly spiritual consumers want to increase their well-being, but those with low spiritual life do not tend to improve their well-being. These findings are in line with previous research. For example, Huseman and Eckhardt (2019) believe that consumers choose spirituality to discover the



benefits of deceleration that contribute to their overall well-being. Rosa's theory of social acceleration (2013) elaborates that consumer deceleration allows consumers to connect with their inner soul, which can benefit their well-being. Therefore, spirituality is critical in consumer behavior while studying consumer lives.

Finally, inconsistent with the previous literature where Huseman and Eckhardt (2019) find that people below the middle class are discouraged from consuming expensive products or services useful for deceleration, only the people who can afford them are conducive to deceleration and control their consumption to achieve consumer well-being. Rosa (2013) explains that deceleration is an ideology for the upper class to break from modernization and the ever-increasing pace of life. The lower-class consumer's ability to decelerate is minimal. Our data did not support this notion because our data was dominated by lower-middle-class people. Only 17 participants reported that they belong to the upper middle or above class; therefore, these findings may be different if we had more representation from the upper classes.

### *5.2 Contributions and Managerial Implications*

To our knowledge, this study is the first to measure consumer deceleration quantitatively per the new conceptualization that captures the three forms of deceleration. Second, it examined the relationship between consumer deceleration and consumer well-being in a field study. Previously, the consumer could decelerate in the oases of deceleration where they felt the time was passing slowly. However, our study gives empirical findings that deceleration can be experienced in daily life with different consumption practices, which would give rise to deceleration and benefit consumer well-being.

The study successfully incorporated the social theory of acceleration (Rosa, 2013) to study the consumer deceleration-well-being relationship. The present study also contributes by studying consumer deceleration with variables missing in previous literature, i.e., control over consumption and spirituality. Underpinning Rosa's theory, the study suggests that, under consumer deceleration, the intervening role of control over consumption makes consumer well-being possible in the marketplace and considers them happy. Therefore, consumer control is enhanced under the perception when they are decelerating. These findings extend prior research on control over consumption (Hemetsberger et al., 2019; Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017; Oral & Thurner, 2019; Gould, 2006; Sussan et al., 2012) by extending it into the marketplace.

Consumers' control over consumption is a strong predictor of consumer deceleration. Marketers should think about different ways to encourage and promote consumer well-being within consumer markets. It is found that consumer deceleration can contribute to consumer well-being by assuring them and creating a market where the deceleration is promoted through different consumer offers on different products and services.

Marketers cannot ignore consumer deceleration for long. If things remain accelerated, the consumer will keep on losing their well-being. There is a need to introduce ways to

decelerate in the marketplace to cope with acceleration; otherwise, in the long run, businesses will lose, and consumers will not be healthy anymore. The marketers' primary purpose is to satisfy their customers, which is one of the end goals of all marketing efforts. This study contributes to consumer behavior by empirically showing the importance of consumer deceleration. The brands could merge the aspects in their products to give consumers a sense of slowness in this fast world. They should experience this escape; deceleration is not a temporary state. It can be felt in daily life and gives them happiness. They should promote products that provide them with a sense of slowness and be sustainable. In cities, places should be made that promote deceleration by offering spaces to the consumer where they can re-discover themselves and refuel for their hectic daily life.

### *5.3 Limitations and Future Direction*

Like all good studies, this one also has some limitations that can open avenues for future research. We reverse-coded the social acceleration items; there might be better measures for this construct in the future. The need for proper measures for consumer deceleration allows researchers to develop proper measurements for further empirical testing. As the concept was recently introduced, a considerable margin of research is possible by using various boundary conditions, such as individual differences/personality, orientation towards happiness (Sheeraz et al., 2020), cultural values, offensiveness (Khalid et al., 2023), digital marketplace - so-called Metaverse (Aharon et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022), and materialism-driven trends, like loneliness, unhappiness (Khalid & Qadeer, 2021).

The deceleration of life in religious tourism and its consequences for psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, etc., can also be an exciting area of research. Future research can also test the mediation of other variables, strengthening this relationship, i.e., mindfulness. The effect of control over consumption can also be studied in different sectors and how it can change for the consumers who do it willingly or unwillingly. The condition of spirituality could be further tested by using different samples, adding religious people to the sample, and testing how the results will come out for both groups.

Our data collection pace could have been better; this might have caused the historical effect, or other societal events might have influenced our results. We recommend further quick and efficient data collection through other modes in the future, like Google Forms, etc. Upper middle and above classes were not represented in our data; maybe that is why testing social class as a boundary condition was impossible – and we cannot claim confidently that the upper class is not likely to decelerate for their well-being. Future research can test this condition by getting the data from the upper class.

The lens of social acceleration theory has yet to be utilized in the Pakistani context in understanding consumer behaviors. Researchers tend to rely upon other lenses, for example, social exchange theory (Sarmad & Ali, 2023) and self-related theories, such as self-expansion, self-enhancement, self-verification, and self-congruity (Sameeni &

Qadeer, 2015; Sameeni et al., 2023; Sheeraz et al., 2018; 2020). We strongly recommend utilizing the social acceleration theory in similar contexts, too. The consumer well-being achieved through deceleration gives vast scope for future research questions. Does deceleration always lead to consumer well-being? How can consumer deceleration be related to the willingness and unwillingness of consumers? How can the marketplace enhance consumer well-being through deceleration?

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#### Appendix 1. Constructs and Scale Items

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##### **Consumer Deceleration** (Alpha = 0.87)

*Embodied deceleration* (Lin et al., 2020) - rated on a 7-point Lickert scale.

- 1) I am flexible and independent in arranging my visiting schedule.
  - 2) I never consider rushing when traveling.
  - 3) If possible, I take trains or use any other type of public transit system to connect between tourism spots in a slower manner.
  - 4) I prefer to travel by freely wandering around tourist attractions.
  - 5) I make deeper observations and gain a greater appreciation of the local natural landscape.
  - 6) I spend more time and slow down in travel to further explore the local culture
  - 7) I share time, communicate with, and learn from local people
-

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Technological deceleration (Maria & Xuelian, 2020) - rated on a 7-point Likert scale.

- 1) I tend to answer messages immediately.
- 2) Most of the time, I leave several browser windows/apps open
- 3) While I am online, I carry out other activities (e.g., eating, calling, watching TV)
- 4) I often go to certain apps/websites in short intervals to check if there is anything new.
- 5) I often switch between different browser windows/tabs/apps
- 6) I save interesting articles, e.g., as bookmarks or I print them, or I take screenshots
- 7) After I am done with my plans and duties on the internet, I continue looking for other interesting information/things
- 8) On weekdays, I am always online during the same time of the day
- 9) When I am online, I look for information systematically and do not click randomly
- 10) When I visit familiar websites, I follow a strict order to check the content, e.g., reading sports news at first at news sites.

Episodic deceleration (Zhou, 2019) – rated on a 7-point scale 1=never to 7=always

- 1) I do several things at a time
- 2) I perform more than one activity
- 3) I do multi-tasking
- 4) I handle several tasks simultaneously
- 5) I decide to do time-saving rather than time-consuming activities
- 6) I replace time-intensive tasks, in order to save time
- 7) I try to replace time-consuming activities with activities that save time
- 8) I chose activities that do not last long rather than time-consuming act
- 9) I do things very quickly
- 10) I perform activities most speedy
- 11) I bring things to an end as quickly as possible
- 12) I get things done as fast as possible
- 13) I use waiting times for other activities
- 14) I use down times and breaks for additional activities
- 15) I try to fill breaks with as productive occupations as possible
- 16) I make use of transfer times to get things done
- 17) I feel the time is more and more scarce
- 18) I feel the life rhythm is too fast
- 19) I do not have much spare time
- 20) I often feel rushed and pressed for time

Consumer Well-Being (Goldberg, 1972; Alpha = 0.81)

*positive affect – rated on 4-point scale 1=more so than usual to 4=much less than usual*

- 1) able to concentrate on whatever you are doing
  - 2) felt you were playing a useful part in things
  - 3) felt capable of making decisions about things
  - 4) able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities
-

- 
- 5) able to face up to problems
  - 6) feeling reasonably happy, all things considered

*negative affect – rated on 4-point scale 1=not at all to 4=much more than usual*

- 7) lost much sleep over worry
- 8) felt constantly under strain
- 9) felt you could not overcome your difficulties
- 10) feeling unhappy or depressed
- 11) losing confidence in yourself
- 12) thinking of yourself as a worthless person

**Control Over Consumption** (Oral & Thurner, 2019; Alpha = 0.71)- rated on a 7-point Lickert scale

- 1) Before buying, I assess whether the product is essential or not
- 2) I try to keep my consumption level minimum despite having money
- 3) My Life is determined by my own consumption actions
- 4) I avoid stress by voluntarily reducing my level of consumption
- 5) The less I buy, the better I feel
- 6) If I can reduce my level of stress by living a less materialistic lifestyle, I would do

**Spirituality** (Hodge, 2003; Alpha = 0.77) – A ten-point bi-polar scale.

- 1) In terms of the questions I have about life, my spirituality answers. (no questions ----- absolutely all my questions)
  - 2) Growing spiritually is (more important than anything else in my life -----  
-- of no importance to me)
  - 3) When I am faced with an important decision, my spirituality (plays absolutely  
no role ----- is always the overriding consideration)
  - 4) Spirituality is (the master motive of my life, directing every other aspect of my  
life ----- not part of my life)
  - 5) When I think of the things that help me to grow and mature as a person, my  
spirituality (does not affect my personal growth ----- is the most  
important factor in my personal growth)
  - 6) My spiritual beliefs affect (absolutely every aspect of my life ----- no  
aspect of my life)
-