



# A Gift for Me is a Lift for Me: Self-gifting Motivations, Purchase Decision Involvement, and Customer Satisfaction

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Self-gifting, a growing type of consumption behaviour, is often urged for diverse reasons, as many buying habits of today have become more self-oriented. Although self-gifting is widely accepted from the lens of an impulsive decision, this study challenges this notion of spontaneousness, revealing the different underlying motives and varying levels of purchase decision involvement. Based on the Goal Setting Theory, this paper establishes the relationships among self-gifting motives, purchase decision involvement, and customer satisfaction.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Accordingly, a quantitative study was carried out following the positivist research paradigm and deductive approach. Using a self-administered questionnaire, 204 usable responses were gathered from Sri Lankan consumers above 18 years old who buy gifts for themselves occasionally or frequently.

**Findings:** Findings unfold that self-gifting behaviours are not always impulsive, where certain motives (i.e., reward, personal disappointment, positive mood reinforcement, and hedonic) entail different levels of purchase decision involvement. Notably, customer satisfaction cannot be assured with some self-gifting motives (i.e., hedonic, negative mood reduction, and celebratory). However, the mediation analysis underscores that the relationship between particular self-gifting motives (i.e., reward, personal disappointment, positive mood reinforcement, and hedonic) and customer satisfaction is mediated by purchase decision involvement, while it fully mediates the relationship between personal disappointment self-gifting and customer satisfaction.

**Originality:** This study challenges the prevailing notion that self-gifting is primarily impulsive and presents it instead as a goal-oriented behaviour with varying levels of decision-making and satisfaction. It uniquely applies Goal Setting Theory to the context of self-gifting.

**Implications:** These findings direct the understanding of self-gifting as a goal-oriented behaviour, emphasizing how different self-gifting motives (goals) carry varying levels of purchase decision involvement and satisfaction. Theoretical implications are discussed in line with self-gifting and Goal Setting Theory and practical implications are proposed for marketers who can leverage the findings in crafting strategies targeting self-gifters.

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## Introduction

The gift-giving phenomenon is two-fold as dyadic and monadic gift giving. Discussions on dyadic gifting have dominated over the recent years (Davies, Whelan, Foley, & Walsh, 2010). A dyadic form of gifting is where one person or a group gifts another person or a group. The second type of gifting occurs in monadic nature, where a person would buy a gift for oneself, known as 'self-gifting' (Mick & Faure, 1998).

The concept of "Self-Gift" has been defined as products, services, or experiences that can be differentiated from other personal acquisitions due to their situational and motivational contexts (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a). Common types of self-gifts include clothing and accessories, fast foods and restaurant meals, specialty grocery items, streaming service subscriptions (e.g., music or video platforms), personal care services (e.g., spa treatments or skincare products), leisure and recreation products (e.g., gaming equipment or hotel visits), and electronic devices (e.g., smartphones) (Mick & DeMoss, 1992; Heath, Tynan & Ennew, 2015). In addition to tangible products, some self-gifts are often in the form of experiential rewards, such as dining out and taking holidays or short breaks, which provide psychological benefits beyond material possession (Pereira, 2006; Zheng & Kendrick, 2021).

From a marketing perspective, self-gifting is deemed to bring important implications for marketers who promote self-gifting as a personal indulgence. A recent market survey conducted regarding Luna New Year found that self-gifting was supposed to be strong, with 28% of middle-income earners and 41% of higher-income earners willing to engage with self-gifting during the season (Vogue Business, 2024). In recognizing the tendency of consumers' self-gifting behaviours, certain leading fashion brands have leveraged self-gifting themes into their marketing, using taglines, such as "love yourself" or "you are worth it", which encourages customers to indulge in personal consumption (Heath, Tynan, & Ennew, 2011).

Self-gifting is planned and depends on situational and motivational contexts (Heath et al., 2011; Mick & DeMoss, 1990a), thus differs from other forms of shopping behaviours, such as utilitarian purchases (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994) and dysfunctional or compulsive buying (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). Although self-gifting is planned and context-dependent, several studies have attempted to investigate the impulsive nature of self-gifting. Mortimer, Bougoure, and Fazal-E-Hasan (2015) conducted two cross-sectional studies that investigated different shopping behaviours and their relationship with several self-gifting motivations and discovered that impulsive buying behaviour has a positive correlation with reward and celebratory motivations, whereas negative mood reduction and positive mood reinforcement motivations showed no relationship with impulsive buying behaviour. However, therapeutic, personal disappointment and hedonic motivations showed inconsistent results across their two studies. Furthermore, Kemp, Mai, and Konstantoulaki (2016), studying female self-gift buying behaviour, found no statistically significant difference between reward and therapeutic self-gift in its association with impulse buying behaviour. Therefore, the impulsivity of self-gifting

remains unclear in the contemporary literature. Moreover, while self-gifting is recognised as premeditated (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a), little attention has been given to how consumers make decisions when buying gifts for themselves.

Further, recent studies also show that self-gifts are pre-mediated and context driven (Victor et al., 2024), indicating the significance of studying self-gifting as a goal-driven behaviour rather than an unintentional consumer act. Moreover, studies on self-gifting confirm that even though mood and sales initiatives may trigger spontaneous purchases, consumers exert self-control mechanisms to avoid impulsive buying (Seo, 2020), reflecting that self-gifting is intentional and emotionally grounded rather than momentary impulses. However, as reviewed previously, most of the research on self-gifting has focused on investigating the impulsivity in purchasing self-gifts. However, due to the contradicting findings, whether self-gifting is always impulsive or not remains uncertain in the existing body of knowledge.

To address this gap, this study used Goal Setting Theory (GST) (Locke & Latham, 1990) as an alternative theoretical lens, which explains that individuals are motivated to achieve specific goals and, therefore, act accordingly. Drawing on this theory, this study argues that different self-gifting motivations (or contexts) may compel the buyer to be involved in one's purchase decision at varying levels, leading to satisfaction. Accordingly, this study proposes that purchase decision involvement as a possible mediator in the relationship between self-gifting motivations and consumer satisfaction. In doing so, it is intended to provide meaningful insights into the nuances of consumer purchase decision involvement in self-gifting contexts. Therefore, the objectives of the current study are as follows:

- To identify the impact of different self-gifting motivations on consumer satisfaction.
- To examine the impact of different self-gifting motivations on purchase decision involvement
- To investigate the mediating role of purchase decision involvement in the relationships between self-gifting motivations and consumer satisfaction

The importance of this study is threefold. First, it aims to examine the relationship among self-gifting contexts, purchase decision involvement, and satisfaction using GST. By doing so, this research contributes to expanding the current understanding of self-gifting behaviour, which has been primarily viewed as an impulse consumer behaviour. Second, using GST for self-gifting behaviour will expand the current understanding of GST in a distinctive shopping and consumption context. Third, this study draws the sample from Sri Lanka, representing a collectivist society. Focusing on the self is the dominant characteristic of self-gifting behaviour (Suzuki & Kanno, 2018). However, self-gifting behaviours in countries endowed with a group orientation (or collectivist cultures) are also questioned (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a). Despite self-gifting being a common behaviour in Western countries with individualistic cultures (Sherry, 1995), several studies have discovered self-gifting behaviour in certain Asian countries described as collectivist

cultures, such as Hong Kong (Joy, Hui, Chan, & Cui, 2006), Korea (Kang, 2012; Lee & Yi, 2013), and Japan (Suzuki & Kanno, 2018). To identify the nature of self-gifting as a global phenomenon, studies in Asian countries would provide better insights for retail managers worldwide (Mortimer et al., 2015). Further, Sri Lanka being a collectivist country, the understanding towards self-gifting practices will add a more nuanced understanding to the contextual differences of self-gifting behaviours. In this regard, this study contributes empirical evidence to the current contextual understanding of the presence of self-gifting behaviours in Asian countries and will respond towards the research agenda of investigating self-gifting behaviours in non-Western cultures.

Accordingly, the findings of this study intend to provide important insights for marketers who position products in the realm of self-indulgence.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Self-gifting and Self-gifts***

The concept of self-gifting has evolved since its emergence in the 1980s (Mick, 1986). Growing interest in the 1990s (Luomala, 1998) has led to a remarkable bloom over the recent decades (Heath et al., 2011). Self-gifting is a distinctive form of consumer behaviour, which can be defined as personal symbolic self-communication through special indulgences, that are usually planned and highly context-dependent (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a). Simply, self-gifting involves the practice of giving gifts to oneself instead of giving gifts to others (Clarke & Mortimer, 2013; Heath et al., 2011). Mick and DeMoss (1990a, p. 328) defined self-gifts as “(1) personally symbolic self-communication through (2) special indulgences that tend to be (3) premeditated and (4) highly context-bound”. Self-gifts are “products, services, or experiences that are partly differentiated from other personal acquisitions by their situational and motivational contexts” (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b, p. 6). According to Mortimer et al., (2015), self-gifting is a symbolic self-communication via premediated indulgences that link to a remarkable context. More recent studies have reframed the phenomenon as one’s tendency to reward quickly to relieve the stress and pressure experienced in daily life (Pizzetti et al., 2019). The motivational and situational dependency of self-gifts makes self-gifting unique and different from other consumption behaviours (Mortimer et al., 2015). However, self-gifting is considered as a sub-category of gift-giving, necessitating further exploration of its application (Seo & Hodges, 2020).

The definition of self-gifting and self-gifts allows us to understand an alternative perspective on the conventional dyadic gift-giving that usually occurs between individuals. According to Faure and Mick (1993), self-gifts are characterised by three main aspects: communication, exchange, and specialness. Similar to interpersonal giving, self-gifting communicates with the self by influencing one’s self-definition and self-esteem. In the context of deservingness, exchange is the contract a person enters into with oneself. Specialness reflects the uniqueness of self-gifts compared to mundane purchases, resulting in stronger emotions than those experienced in utilitarian purchases.

## ***Self-gifting Motivations and Contexts***

### *Reward, hedonic, therapeutic, celebratory*

Since self-gifting greatly depends on situational and motivational context, it is significantly different from compulsive purchasing and utilitarian behaviours (Heath et al., 2011; Mortimer et al., 2015). Motivation plays a crucial role in differentiating self-gifting from routine purchases. Accordingly, consumers' prior intentions determine whether a particular consumption experience is considered self-gifting or not (Rifkin, Wight, & Cutright, 2023). As explained by Rifkin et al. (2023), if a consumer consumes a certain product or service (for example, eating a slice of cake or visiting an amusement park) with the intention of elevating their emotional well-being, the particular experience can be recognised as self-gifting. Whereas, if the same is consumed without such intention (for example, eating a slice of cake simply because one's friend made it), it is not considered as a self-gift. Since most consumption experiences are embedded with multiple intentions, if the primary or most proximal intention of a consumption experience is to uplift one's emotional well-being, such experiences are considered as self-gifting (Rifkin et al., 2023). In line with this, prevailing literature identifies certain motivational contexts underlying self-gifting, which will be reviewed next.

Existing literature provides several contexts in which self-gifting occurs. The most common self-gifting contexts include: rewarding oneself for an accomplishment, cheering oneself up due to feeling down, when a holiday arrives, having some extra money to spend, being nice to oneself, relieving stress or providing an incentive to achieve a goal (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b). Among these different contexts, reward (gifts purchased for accomplishments) and therapeutic (gifts purchased for disappointment associated with a negative life situation) are considered the two underlying contexts for self-gifting (Heath et al., 2011; Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999; Mick & DeMoss, 1990a; Mick & Faure, 1998).

Self-gifting as a reward has been identified as one of the prime motives for customers to engage in self-gifting (Mortimer et al., 2015). According to Mick and DeMoss (1990a, p. 69), a reward can be identified as "internalise self-contracts where they purchase gifts for themselves as a reward for fulfilling personal goals or to fulfill a sense of deservingness". Accordingly, customers are more likely to engage in self-gift giving when they achieve success (Mick & Faure, 1998). Psychological studies suggest that achieving a reward can enhance a person's sense of self-worth, self-efficacy, and self-satisfaction, all of which may eventually result in increased levels of sustained performance (Dwayne Ball & Tasaki, 1992). In contrast, self-gifting under the therapeutic context helps short-term escape from negative emotions (Heath et al., 2011; Mick & DeMoss, 1990a), which may be caused by incidents such as a breakup, a dismissal, or an accident (Kemp et al., 2016). Consumers gift themselves in the event of a failure (Mick & Faure, 1998), in which the failure could be of a private or professional nature (Heath et al., 2011). Therapeutic self-gifting uplifts a person's spirit when someone is feeling down or needs to uplift one's self-esteem

(Sherry, 1995). Furthermore, therapeutic self-gifts serve as a means to deal with loneliness, abandonment, or loss (Heath et al., 2011; Sherry, 1995).

Hedonic self-gifts are given as an incentive for attaining a desired goal or simply to be nice to oneself (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1992). Although luxury goods are often perceived as hedonic self-gifts (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009), consumers may also use routine image-related products such as make-up, clothes, or shoes in this context (Heath et al., 2011). However, Mick and DeMoss (1992) noted that even though the self-gifting experience is hedonic by explanation, the self-gift does not necessarily need to be hedonic in nature. Celebratory self-gifting is another motivation, involving the consumption of products and services to celebrate personal accomplishments (for example, treating oneself with a new outfit after a promotion). Celebratory self-gifting is a form of indulgence and self-expression, motivated by individual milestones, celebrations, and positive life events (Hettiarachchi, 2021).

Apart from the four main motivational contexts of self-gifting, this study also intends to examine self-gifting motivations of positive mood reinforcement, negative mood reduction, and personal disappointment (Mortimer et al., 2015). Consumers may purchase self-gifts to maintain a positive mood, as happy consumers often look for products and services that help them to keep up their pleasant mood (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Mortimer et al., 2015). Consumption of certain products and services can also help in reducing negative moods such as stress, anxiety, and depression (Schaller & Cialdini, 1990). Consumers who experience a negative mood state may engage in purchasing self-gifts to reduce the cognitive discomfort they experience (Raghunathan & Pham, 1999). Furthermore, personal disappointment is an emotion delineated by a negative mood state (Mortimer et al., 2015). Studies have revealed that consumers who experience negative emotions may seek self-indulgence to ease off such mental suffering (Andrade, 2005; Baumeister, 2002; Thayer, Friedman, & Borkovec, 1996). Thus, self-gifting can help consumers distract themselves from negative mood situations and direct them to temporary positive emotions (Luomala, 2002).

### ***Goal Setting Theory (GST)***

This study employs the goal-setting theory (GST) proposed by Locke and Latham (1990, 2002, 2019) as the theoretical lens to explain the proposed relationships between self-gifting motivations, purchase decision involvement, and consumer satisfaction. GST is a motivation theory that explains the causes of people's performance in work-related tasks. This theory emphasises the importance of goals in shaping and directing one's behaviour, continuing with motivation, and enhancing performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). According to Locke and Latham (2002), task-related performance is enhanced via four mechanisms. First, goal setting directs individuals to focus their efforts on pursuing goals and ignore irrelevant activities. Second, goal setting energises individuals to invest effort in goal pursuit. Third, goals affect persistence, where more difficult goals require more effort. Finally, pursuing goals will facilitate the discovery and development of task-relevant activities. GST explains the relationship between one's conscious goals and task

performance (Locke & Latham, 2002). It has been applied in various fields, including organizational behaviour and management (Locke & Latham, 2002); education (Schunk, 1990); health (Shilts, Horowitz, & Townsend, 2004); psychology and personal development (Emmons, 1992); gamification (Tondello et al., 2016), and sports (Kingston & Wilson, 2008; Weinberg, Burton, Yukelson, & Weigand, 1993).

The prevailing literature is well-informed in terms of various empirical applications of goal-setting theory, highlighting the effects, mechanisms, and moderators of goal setting, emphasizing the performance in work-related tasks (Fortes Tondello, Premasukh, & Nacke, 2018). However, surprisingly, this theory has not been widely used to understand consumer behaviour, despite that consumer behaviour often entails setting goals.

Most consumer behaviour is inherently goal-directed with specific outcomes (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999), and so is self-gifting. As reviewed earlier, consumers engage in self-gifting behaviours to pursue various intentions (for example, to overcome negative moods). Despite the relevance and prevalence of goals in self-gifting, little attention has been given to how these goals are pursued. Therefore, integrating purchase decision involvement and consumer satisfaction (as the outcome) is deemed to provide a better understanding of one's self-gifting behaviour. Furthermore, in self-gifting contexts, consumers set goals related to their self-gifting initiatives. This may induce their involvement in the purchase decision as they seek to pursue the goal(s) set, which in turn, may lead to higher consumer satisfaction. Accordingly, this paper argues that GST provides a useful theoretical underpinning to understand the links among self-gifting motivations, purchase decision involvement, and satisfaction, providing a better understanding of a person's self-gifting behaviour. These variables and proposed associations are to be reviewed next.

### ***Self-gifting Motivations, Purchase Decision Involvement, and Satisfaction***

#### ***Self-gifting Motivations and Satisfaction***

Self-gifting tends to fulfill personal desires, uplift mood, and provide various emotional rewards for a person, ultimately resulting in consumer satisfaction. This notion has been investigated in several studies. Mick and DeMoss (1990a), explored self-gifting and its associated emotional and psychological impacts and found that self-gifting often leads to positive emotions and satisfaction. Although self-gifting may sometimes result in feelings of guilt, in general, it results in satisfaction, particularly when the self-gift is perceived as something deserving or rewarding (Clarke & Mortimer, 2013). Similarly, Atalay and Meloy (2011), in their study on 'retail therapy', highlight how purchasing items for oneself can improve one's mood and overall satisfaction, which supports the notion that self-gifting leads to customer satisfaction.

In line with these, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H1: Reward self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction*

*H2: Personal disappointment self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction*

*H3: Celebratory self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction*

*H4: Therapeutic self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction*

*H5: Negative mood reduction self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction*

*H6: Positive mood reinforcement self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction*

*H7: Hedonic self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction*

### ***Self-gifting Motivations and Purchase Decision Involvement***

O'Cass (2000) viewed involvement as the interaction between a person and an object, and the relative strength of a person's cognitive structure related to the focal object. Consumer involvement takes different forms, including involvement in products, consumption, purchase decisions, and communications about products. The current study intends to specifically target purchase decision involvement, as the identified research gap mainly emphasises the need to investigate purchase decision involvement in the context of self-gifting behaviour. Purchasing involvement is an enduring construct of individual differences because it is defined as the self-relevance of purchasing activities to the individual (Karaatli, 2015). As stated by Karaatli (2015), consumers vary depending on the level and type of effort they exert into shopping. Mittal (1989, p.150) has defined purchase decision involvement as "the extent of interest and concern that a consumer brings to bear upon a purchase decision task".

Purchase involvement may depend upon several factors. For example, a person may be highly involved in a purchase decision to reduce risk and uncertainty and enhance satisfaction (Karaatli, 2015). Increased levels of economic and time concerns are often related to higher purchase involvement (Sanchez-Franco & Rondan-Cataluna, 2010). Regardless of the product or situation, individuals differ in their decision process, making some people more interested, concerned, or involved in their purchases (Kassarjian, 1981). Hence, purchasing involvement is conceptualised as a measure of the self-relevance of purchasing activities to a person, which is distinct from product and situational involvement (Veryzer & Karaatli, 2008). As identified by Prasad, Gupta and Totala (2017), purchase decision involvement reflects the mindset of consumers in the decision-making process.

While some research has focused on self-gifting motivations and contexts, little attention has been paid to how different self-gifting motivations impact purchase decision involvement. An argument to justify that different self-gifting motivations may impact purchase decision involvement can be formulated on the basis that the underlying psychological drivers behind self-gifting behaviours significantly shape how individuals approach their purchasing decisions. As noted above, Mick and DeMoss (1990a) categorised self-gifting motivations into different types: reward, therapy, celebration, or mood regulation. Each of these motivations may involve distinct emotional and cognitive



processes that impact the level of involvement in the purchase decision. For instance, when individuals engage in self-gifting as a reward, they are likely to invest more effort and time into the decision-making process to ensure that the purchase adequately reflects their accomplishment and provides maximum satisfaction. This high involvement is characterised by thorough information search, comparison of alternatives, and careful evaluation of options. Conversely, self-gifting motivated by therapy or mood regulation might involve more spontaneous and impulsive buying behaviours, as individuals seek immediate gratification to improve their emotional states. Thus, involvement in the purchase decision might be lower, with less emphasis on extensive information gathering and more on quick decision-making to achieve instant relief or happiness.

Thus, the motivation behind self-gifting acts as a determinant of the level of purchase decision involvement. Different self-gifting motivations drive varying degrees of cognitive and emotional investment in the purchasing process, thereby influencing the complexity and depth of decision-making activities. Therefore, this paper argues that self-gifting may not always be impulsive, rather, it may entail various degrees of involvement in decision-making depending on the underlying motivation of purchasing a gift for oneself. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are developed for the present study:

*H8: Reward self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement*

*H9: Personal disappointment self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement*

*H10: Celebratory self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement*

*H11: Therapeutic self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement*

*H12: Negative mood reduction self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement*

*H13: Positive mood reinforcement self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement*

*H14: Hedonic self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement*

### ***Purchase Decision Involvement and Satisfaction***

Consumer involvement leads to various consumer responses, including attitudes and behaviours in terms of variety seeking, information searching, extensive brand evaluation, price interest, and attribute evaluation (Zaichkowsky, 1986). For example, low-involved consumers may display less interest in product or brand alternatives and may be satisfied even with a minimum level of performance (Calvo-Porràl, Ruiz-Vega and Levy-Mangin, 2021). This study intends to measure consumer satisfaction as a consumer response towards purchase decision involvement. According to Oliver (1996), consumer satisfaction is defined as a consumer's judgment of the product features or the product itself, that provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. Literature supports that the level of consumer involvement and satisfaction are interrelated mainly for two reasons. First, highly involved consumers usually spend more time making more

thoughtful purchase decisions, which in turn, helps them make satisfaction judgments (Richins & Bloch, 1991). Second, highly involved consumers possess greater knowledge and more reliable expectations about a product, leading them to make better decisions about more satisfying options (Richins & Bloch, 1991).

Empirical studies show that high-involved consumers display greater satisfaction compared to low-involved consumers. For example, Richins and Bloch (1991) found that car owners who were highly involved showed greater satisfaction with their cars than low-involved consumers over the term of ownership. In another study by Jung and Yoon (2012), customers with high levels of involvement in purchase decision-making relating to restaurants signified a stronger impact on satisfaction than those with low levels of involvement. Mittal (1989), who pioneered the development of a measurement scale for purchase decision involvement, suggested that greater involvement in the decision-making process enhances consumer satisfaction as a result of time and effort invested into the purchase. Similarly, Laurent and Kapferer (1985) established that consumers who are more involved in the purchase process are more confident and assured about their choices and, therefore, more satisfied than those who are less involved. Consumers who extensively search for information and are involved in the evaluation process before making a purchase are likely to be more satisfied with their decisions (Beatty & Smith, 1987). Furthermore, consumers who have invested more cognitive and emotional resources in their purchase decisions are likely to feel more satisfied (Zaichkowsky, 1986). Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann (1983), discussing the role of involvement and its subsequent effect, suggested that higher involvement leads to better information processing, thereby resulting in higher satisfaction. Accordingly, this study argues that the level of purchase involvement related to a self-gift impacts consumer satisfaction with the self-gift purchase. Thus, the study proposes:

*H15: Purchase decision involvement of self-gifts has an impact on consumer satisfaction*

### ***Purchase Decision Involvement as a Mediator***

The above review proposes the possible relationship between self-gifting motivations and satisfaction, self-gifting motivations and purchase decision involvement, and purchase decision involvement and satisfaction. Further, this study intends to introduce purchase decision involvement as a mediating variable in the relationship between self-gifting motivations and satisfaction by arguing that the extent to which consumers involved in purchasing self-gifts impact the relationship between their self-gifting motivations (i.e., reward, hedonic, therapeutic, celebratory, positive mood reinforcement, negative mood reduction, and personal disappointment) and resulting satisfaction. For example, if a consumer is engaged in reward self-gifting, high involvement with a particular self-gift purchase will ensure that the customer carefully selects a product which, enhances their eventual satisfaction. In contrast, without such involvement, the consumer may select (or purchase) a less suitable product, resulting in lower satisfaction. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H16: Purchase Decision involvement mediates the relationship between reward self-gifting and consumer satisfaction*

*H17: Purchase Decision involvement mediates the relationship between personal disappointment self-gifting and consumer satisfaction*

*H18: Purchase Decision involvement mediates the relationship between celebratory self-gifting and consumer satisfaction*

*H19: Purchase Decision involvement mediates the relationship between therapeutic self-gifting and consumer satisfaction*

*H20: Purchase Decision involvement mediates the relationship between negative mood reduction self-gifting and consumer satisfaction*

*H21: Purchase Decision involvement mediates the relationship between positive mood reinforcement self-gifting and consumer satisfaction*

*H22: Purchase Decision involvement mediates the relationship between hedonic self-gifting and consumer satisfaction*

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model of the study.

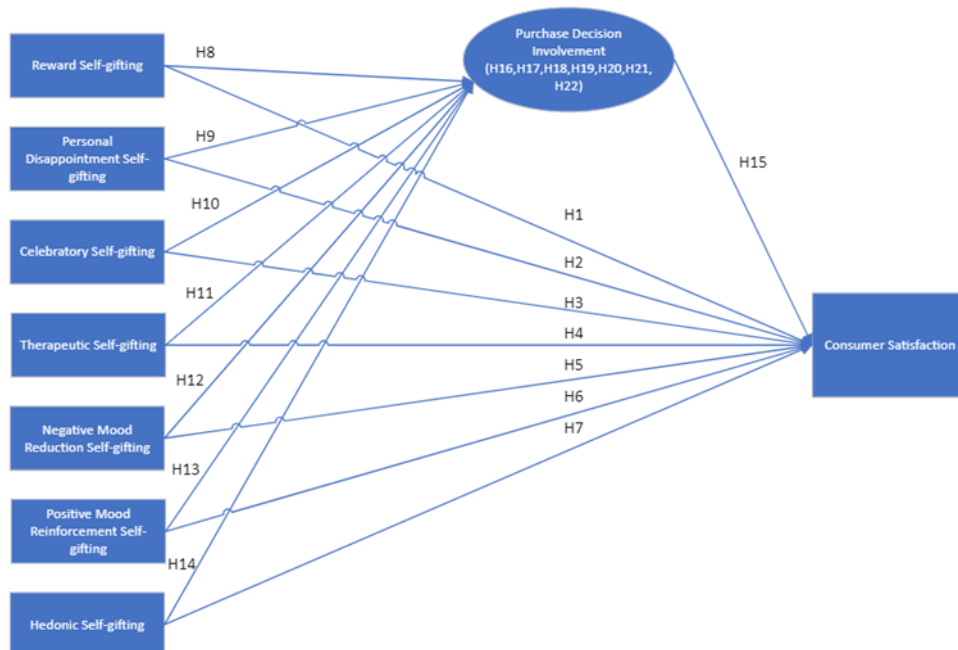


Figure 1. Conceptual model  
Source: Author Constructed

## **Methodology**

This study comprised twenty-two hypotheses derived from the foundation of goal theory, aiming to examine the pertaining of self-gifting behaviour, purchase decision involvement, and satisfaction. The research is viewed through the lens of positivism and conceptualised under the deductive approach. A cross-sectional, quantitative survey study was undertaken to capture the perceptions of customers from the sample (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009; Malhotra & Dash, 2010).

Individual consumers were the unit of analysis, and the population of the study comprised Sri Lankan consumers above 18 years old who frequently or occasionally purchased things as gifts for themselves. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used as the survey instrument, which consisted of one filtering question to screen out the self-gifters. Thus, this study employed the purposive sampling technique to reach the population element. A pilot test was conducted based on 35 responses to validate the face validity and internal consistency before the final data collection (Galahitiyawe & Jayakody, 2019). In order to further strengthen the reliability and validity of the study, questionnaires were distributed among 500 consumers representing the concerned population to obtain a sample size of 384.

## **Measures**

Self-gifting behaviour was conceptualised using a multi-dimensional scale, adapted from Mortimer et al. (2015). Clarke and Mortimer (2013) presented the foundation for this self-gifting behaviour scale, which initially included four dimensions: reward, hedonic, therapeutic and celebratory. Later, in 2015, personal disappointment, negative mood reduction and positive mood reinforcement were added to the scale, bringing it up to a seven-dimensional measure. Purchase involvement was assessed using an eight-item scale adapted from O'Cass (2000), while customer satisfaction was measured using the scale developed by Calvo-Porrall et al. (2021), which was initially developed by Oliver (1980) and later adapted by Tsiros, Mittal and Ross (2004). All variables were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Please refer Appendix I for details on the measurements.

## **Data Analysis and Results**

The data analysis of the study commenced with entering the obtained data into SPSS software. Following the removal of the self-gifting non-practices, 206 responses were forwarded to the data analysis. The original data sheet was further treated to remove outliers and missing values, followed by reverse-coding specific indicators (Galahitiyawe & Jayakody, 2019). The dataset was free from missing values, and two common outliers were eliminated, resulting in a sample of 204 responses. Subsequently, multivariate assumption tests (normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity) were performed as prerequisites for applying Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Harman's

Single Factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) and One-Way ANOVA test were performed to ensure that the dataset was not affected by common-method variance and non-response biases.

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in the current study.

*Table 1*  
*Demographic profile of the sample*

| <b>Demographics</b>               |                                  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                     | Male                             | 68               | 33.3           |
|                                   | Female                           | 136              | 66.7           |
| <b>Age (years)</b>                | 18-24                            | 57               | 27.9           |
|                                   | 25-30                            | 113              | 55.4           |
|                                   | 31-40                            | 26               | 12.7           |
|                                   | 41-50                            | 3                | 1.5            |
|                                   | Above 51                         | 5                | 2.5            |
|                                   | Up to A/L                        | 26               | 12.7           |
| <b>Education</b>                  | Graduate                         | 115              | 56.4           |
|                                   | Postgraduate                     | 50               | 24.5           |
|                                   | Other Professional Qualification | 13               | 6.4            |
|                                   |                                  |                  |                |
| <b>Income (Sri Lankan Rupees)</b> | Less than 30000                  | 48               | 23.5           |
|                                   | 30001-50000                      | 43               | 21.1           |
|                                   | 50001-70000                      | 33               | 16.2           |
|                                   | 70001-90000                      | 20               | 9.8            |
|                                   | Above 90000                      | 60               | 29.4           |

### ***Measurement Model***

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was performed using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) 20.0 statistical analysis software, following the step-wise refinement process. Three indicators were removed during the refinement process, and afterwards, 'goodness of fit' (GOF) indices were assessed to ensure the model's overall fit (Table 2).

*Table 2*  
*CFA Model Fit Indices*

| <b>Absolute indices</b> | <b>Incremental indices</b> | <b>Parsimoniou<br/>s index</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|

|                                             | CMIN/<br>DF     | RMSEA                 | GFI                  | AGFI      | CFI                | IFI       | TLI                     | PRATIO |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|-------------------------|--------|
| Study Model<br>(First Order)                | 1.912           | 0.067                 | 0.760                | 0.719     | 0.881              | 0.883     | 0.868                   | 0.899  |
| SEM<br>(Direct and<br>Mediation<br>Effects) | 2.779           | 0.094                 | 0.633                | 0.584     | 0.761              | 0.763     | 0.742                   | 0.927  |
| Recommended<br>Value                        | 1 – 3           | >0.05                 | Closer 01            | Closer 01 | Closer 01          | Closer 01 | Closer 01               | >0.9   |
|                                             | Kline<br>(2005) | Wanninayake<br>(2013) | Hooper et al. (2008) |           | Hair et al. (2010) |           | Hooper et al.<br>(2008) |        |

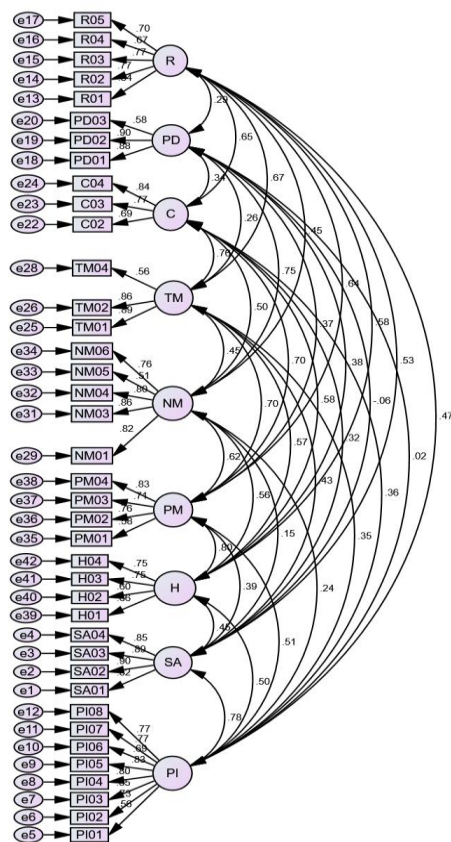


Figure 2. Measurement model

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), ensuring the reliability and validity of the research instrument is pivotal for quantitative studies. Content validity was established by constructing the instrument based on a standardised scale, with minor refinements to improve the face validity. Construct validity was established through CFA for each latent variable, while convergent validity was assured through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR), which were above threshold levels of 0.5 and 0.7, respectively (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998). In order to further confirm the convergent validity of the items, factor loadings greater than 0.45 were filtered out during the structural equation modelling procedure (Galahitiyawe & Jayakody, 2019). Discriminant validity was confirmed by comparing the AVE of each latent variable with the inter-construct squared correlations of the other variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, a satisfactory level of discriminant validity was ensured. Cronbach's alpha values for each variable exceeded 0.6, indicating internal consistency reliability (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). A summary of the validity and reliability data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3  
Reliability and validity measures

| Reliability and validity measures |                          |                                        |       |       |                  | Discriminant validity |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Variable                          | Number of Items Remained | Standardised Factor Loadings (Min-Max) | AVE   | CR    | Cronbach's Alpha | R                     | PD     | C     | TM    | NM    | PM    | H     | PI    | SA    |
| R                                 | 5                        | 0.671 - 0.837                          | 0.650 | 0.786 | 0.864            | 0.650                 |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| PD                                | 3                        | 0.575 - 0.902                          | 0.739 | 0.788 | 0.820            | 0.081                 | 0.739  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| C                                 | 3                        | 0.693 - 0.841                          | 0.729 | 0.774 | 0.814            | 0.425                 | 0.116  | 0.729 |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| TM                                | 3                        | 0.558 - 0.890                          | 0.717 | 0.767 | 0.802            | 0.444                 | 0.068  | 0.576 | 0.717 |       |       |       |       |       |
| NM                                | 5                        | 0.795 - 0.855                          | 0.652 | 0.792 | 0.864            | 0.203                 | 0.567  | 0.246 | 0.207 | 0.652 |       |       |       |       |
| PM                                | 4                        | 0.584 - 0.834                          | 0.634 | 0.733 | 0.799            | 0.412                 | 0.134  | 0.489 | 0.489 | 0.378 | 0.733 |       |       |       |
| H                                 | 4                        | 0.602 - 0.754                          | 0.610 | 0.706 | 0.785            | 0.334                 | 0.147  | 0.340 | 0.329 | 0.309 | 0.643 | 0.706 |       |       |
| PI                                | 8                        | 0.556 - 0.850                          | 0.619 | 0.735 | 0.909            | 0.220                 | 0.0131 | 0.131 | 0.125 | 0.057 | 0.261 | 0.249 | 0.619 |       |
| SA                                | 4                        | 0.816 - 0.896                          | 0.808 | 0.883 | 0.919            | 0.278                 | 0.003  | 0.105 | 0.188 | 0.123 | 0.156 | 0.200 | 0.613 | 0.808 |

### **Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing**

#### **Direct Relationships**

Hypothesis testing was conducted following the assessment of the GOF indices for direct path relationships (Table 2). As illustrated in Table 4, H1-H7 hypothesized the impact of self-gifting motivations on consumer satisfaction, whereas H8-H14 hypothesized the

impact of self-gifting dimensions on purchase decision involvement. Reward self-gifting demonstrated a significant positive impact on consumer satisfaction at the 95% confidence level ( $P=0.000$ ,  $\beta=0.208$ ), leading to the acceptance of H1. H2 was accepted as it confirmed the impact of personal disappointment self-gifting on consumer satisfaction ( $P=0.037$ ,  $\beta=-0.114$ ). However, it exhibited a negative effect.

The impact of celebratory self-gifting on consumer satisfaction was insignificant ( $P=0.309$ ,  $\beta=-0.054$ ); thus, H3 was rejected. Further, H4 has been articulated to identify the impact of therapeutic self-gifting on consumer satisfaction, which was statistically significant; thus, H4 was accepted with a positive impact ( $P=0.000$ ,  $\beta=0.209$ ). H5 was rejected ( $P=0.471$ ,  $\beta=-0.037$ ), establishing that self-gifting aimed at negative mood reduction had no significant impact on consumer satisfaction. H6 was accepted ( $P=0.004$ ,  $\beta=-0.167$ ), and accordingly, the impact of positive mood reinforcement self-gifting on consumer satisfaction was proven, albeit a detrimental impact. Moreover, H7, which posited the impact of hedonic self-gifting on consumer satisfaction, was statistically insignificant and thus rejected ( $P=0.090$ ,  $\beta=0.096$ ).

The impact of reward self-gifting on purchase decision involvement was significant ( $P=0.000$ ,  $\beta=0.286$ ), supporting H8, reporting a positive impact. H9 was also accepted ( $P=0.000$ ,  $\beta=-0.280$ ), confirming the impact of personal disappointment self-gifting on purchase decision involvement, although it delineated an adverse impact. Hypotheses H10, H11 and H12 were proposed to examine the impact of celebratory self-gifting on purchase decision involvement, therapeutic self-gifting on purchase decision involvement, and negative mood reduction on purchase decision involvement, respectively. These three hypotheses were rejected, indicating insignificant impacts ( $P=0.552$ ,  $\beta=0.041$ ;  $P=0.364$ ,  $\beta=-0.062$ ;  $P=0.201$ ,  $\beta=0.087$ ). H13 and H14 were accepted, demonstrating the favorable impact of positive mood reinforcement self-gifting ( $P=0.000$ ,  $\beta=0.269$ ) and hedonic self-gifting ( $P=0.000$ ,  $\beta=0.266$ ) on purchase decision involvement.

Hypothesis 15 aimed to examine whether purchase decision involvement impacts consumer satisfaction. The findings exhibited statistical significance, leading to the acceptance of H15, which was deemed to have a positive impact ( $P=0.000$ ,  $\beta=0.681$ ).

Table 4  
Direct path hypotheses testing (H1 – H15)

| Path    | Hypothesis                                                                                 | Std. Coefficient | P     | Decision<br>( $P<0.05$ ) |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| R > SA  | H <sub>1</sub> Reward self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction                  | 0.208            | 0.000 | Supported                |
| PD > SA | H <sub>2</sub> Personal disappointment self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction | -0.114           | 0.037 | Supported                |
| C > SA  | H <sub>3</sub> Celebratory self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction             | -0.054           | 0.309 | Not Supported            |



|         |                 |                                                                                         |        |       |               |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| TM > SA | H <sub>4</sub>  | Therapeutic self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction                         | 0.209  | 0.000 | Supported     |
| NM > SA | H <sub>5</sub>  | Negative mood reduction self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction             | -0.037 | 0.471 | Not Supported |
| PM > SA | H <sub>6</sub>  | Positive mood reinforcement self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction         | -0.167 | 0.004 | Supported     |
| H > SA  | H <sub>7</sub>  | Hedonic self-gifting has an impact on consumer satisfaction                             | 0.096  | 0.090 | Not Supported |
| R > PI  | H <sub>8</sub>  | Reward self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement                      | 0.286  | 0.000 | Supported     |
| PD > PI | H <sub>9</sub>  | Personal disappointment self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement     | -0.280 | 0.000 | Supported     |
| C > PI  | H <sub>10</sub> | Celebratory self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement                 | 0.041  | 0.552 | Not Supported |
| TM > PI | H <sub>11</sub> | Therapeutic self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement                 | -0.062 | 0.364 | Not Supported |
| NM > PI | H <sub>12</sub> | Negative mood reduction self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement     | 0.087  | 0.201 | Not Supported |
| PM > PI | H <sub>13</sub> | Positive mood reinforcement self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement | 0.269  | 0.000 | Supported     |
| H > PI  | H <sub>14</sub> | Hedonic self-gifting has an impact on purchase decision involvement                     | 0.266  | 0.000 | Supported     |
| PI > SA | H <sub>15</sub> | Purchase decision involvement of self-gifts has an impact on consumer satisfaction      | 0.681  | 0.000 | Supported     |

### ***Mediating Effects***

Mediated paths through purchase decision involvement were drawn to measure the indirect effect of self-gifting motives (i.e., reward, personal disappointment, celebratory, therapeutic, negative mood reduction, positive mood reinforcement and hedonic) on consumer satisfaction. Consequently, hypotheses H16 to H22 were postulated. Table 5 summarises the results of the mediating effects. H16 demonstrated both a direct effect ( $P=0.018$ ,  $\beta=0.208$ ) and an indirect effect ( $P=0.005$ ,  $\beta=0.195$ ) that were established under a 90% confidence level. Accordingly, since both paths are statistically supported, a partial mediation was identified with a total effect of 0.403. Thus, H16 was accepted. H17 has been advanced to assess whether purchase decision involvement mediates the

relationship between personal disappointment self-gifting and consumer satisfaction. The direct path ( $P=0.113$ ,  $\beta=-0.114$ ) was insignificant, whereas the indirect ( $P=0.010$ ,  $\beta=-0.191$ ) path was significant; thus, H17 was accepted. A full mediation was identified, with a total effect of -0.305.

H18 was rejected because both the direct ( $P=0.480$ ,  $\beta=-0.054$ ) and indirect ( $P=0.662$ ,  $\beta=0.028$ ) paths were not significant. In H19, although the indirect path was insignificant ( $P=0.537$ ,  $\beta=-0.042$ ), the direct path was significant ( $P=0.028$ ,  $\beta=0.209$ ), rejecting H19. H20 was also rejected since both direct ( $P=0.652$ ,  $\beta=-0.037$ ) and indirect ( $P=0.357$ ,  $\beta=0.059$ ) paths were insignificant. H21 and H22 were accepted with partial and full mediation, respectively. H21 showed significant direct ( $P=0.076$ ,  $\beta=-0.167$ ) and indirect path ( $P=0.034$ ,  $\beta=0.183$ ), reporting a total effect of 0.016. In H22, the direct path was insignificant ( $P=0.178$ ,  $\beta=-0.096$ ), whereas the indirect path was significant ( $P=0.010$ ,  $\beta=0.181$ ), with a total effect of 0.277.

Table 5  
Mediation analysis (H16 – H22)

| Path               |                 | Hypothesis                                                                                                            |          | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Total Effect | Decision (P<0.1)     |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|
| R > PI<br>> SA     | H <sub>16</sub> | Purchase involvement mediates the relationship between reward self-gifting and consumer satisfaction                  | Decision | 0.208**       | 0.195**         | 0.403***     | <b>Supported</b>     |
| PD > PI<br>PI > SA | H <sub>17</sub> | Purchase involvement mediates the relationship between personal disappointment self-gifting and consumer satisfaction | Decision | -0.114        | -0.191**        | -0.305**     | <b>Supported</b>     |
| C > PI<br>> SA     | H <sub>18</sub> | Purchase involvement mediates the relationship between celebratory self-gifting and consumer satisfaction             | Decision | -0.054        | 0.028           | -0.025       | <b>Not Supported</b> |
| TM > PI<br>PI > SA | H <sub>19</sub> | Purchase involvement mediates the relationship between therapeutic self-gifting and consumer satisfaction             | Decision | 0.209**       | -0.042          | 0.167*       | <b>Not Supported</b> |
| NM > PI<br>PI > SA | H <sub>20</sub> | Purchase involvement mediates the relationship between negative mood reduction self-gifting and consumer satisfaction | Decision | -0.037        | 0.059           | 0.022        | <b>Not Supported</b> |
| PM > PI<br>PI > SA | H <sub>21</sub> | Purchase involvement mediates the relationship between positive mood reinforcement self-                              | Decision | -0.167*       | 0.183**         | 0.016        | <b>Supported</b>     |

|                |                 | gifting and consumer satisfaction                                                             |          |       |         |          |                  |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------|---------|----------|------------------|
| H > PI<br>> SA | H <sub>22</sub> | Purchase involvement mediates the relationship between self-gifting and consumer satisfaction | Decision | 0.096 | 0.181** | 0.277*** | <b>Supported</b> |

Note(s): Paths indicated with \* have been found significant at 1% of significance, i.e. \*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.05 and \*p < 0.1 using Bias corrected Percentile Method using bootstrap at 2000

## Discussion

This study delves into the deep motives of self-gifting behaviour, examining its relationship with customer satisfaction and purchase decision involvement. The findings of this study confirm the pertinence of purchase decision involvement in self-gifting as it relates to consumer satisfaction. Findings align with the well-established notion that patrons who are more involved in the purchasing process tend to exhibit a greater level of satisfaction (Richins & Bloch, 1991; Jung & Yoon, 2012). This is likely because highly involved consumers usually invest more time and effort in making thoughtful purchase decisions, which in turn, will help them make satisfactory judgments (Sanchez-Franco & Rondan-Cataluna, 2010). Furthermore, people may deeply engage in purchase decisions to mitigate risk and uncertainty, leading to enhanced satisfaction (Karaatli, 2015). Thus, these findings underscore the critical role of purchase decision involvement in shaping consumer satisfaction, particularly in the context of self-gifting.

Reward self-gifting significantly impacts purchase decision involvement and consumer satisfaction. The satisfaction derived from the fulfillment of customers' desires to reward themselves is further strengthened by the mediation of purchase decision involvement. People are more inclined to buy gifts when they achieve personal success (Mortimer, 2015; Khan, Ishaq, Iqbal, & Raza, 2024; Vassilikopoulou, 2023). In line with self-regulation theory, Mouakhar-Klouz et al. (2016) argued that promotion-oriented individuals in the European context have a higher intention to self-gift when they experience success. Since the motive behind a purchase is often rooted in rewarding accomplishments, individuals are more likely to engage thoughtfully with their purchase decisions, ending up with better satisfaction. Some scholars argue that reward self-gifting reflects a parental practice, where childhood behaviours encompass the life (D' Astous & Mouakhar-Klouz, 2021), shaping adult indulgence (Vassilikopoulou, 2023). Furthermore, in everyday situations (ordinary predecessor events), such as minor achievements or regular task completion, people strive to reward themselves with regular purchases, whereas in significant milestones (landmark predecessor events), such as graduation, getting a promotion, or completing a challenging project, they strive to indulge in more lavish purchases (Victor, Gerhard, Penaloza, Mota & Freitas, 2024), which could result in delights. This could be because consumers perceive their self-gifting as justified, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and positive emotional outcomes. Consequently, when individuals are involved in self-gifting as a reward, they are likely to invest considerable effort and time into the decision-making process to ensure that the purchase adequately

reflects their accomplishments and provides maximum satisfaction. This high level of involvement can be characterised by thorough information search, comparison of alternatives, and careful evaluation of options, resulting in a precise selection of products that enhance eventual satisfaction.

Conversely, personal disappointment self-gifting has a significant but negative impact on consumer satisfaction and also adversely impacts on purchase decision involvement. However, surprisingly, purchase decision involvement fully mediates the relationship between personal disappointment and consumer satisfaction. Engaging in self-gifting can distract consumers from negative mood situations, promoting them to seek self-indulgence as a coping mechanism for immediate, unexpected personal losses or disappointments, which can lead to temporary positive emotions (Baumeister, 2002; Luomala, 2002; Thayer, 1996). In these situations, consumers may become deeply involved in their purchase decisions as they seek immediate gratification. People strive to forgive themselves with quick rewards to escape the pressure and stress they endure in their daily lives (Mak, Wong, & Chang, 2009; Rippe, Smith, & Weisfeld-Spolter, 2019). Although the resulting negative impacts contradict the focal arguments of the literature, when people experience negative life events or suffering, may not lead to happiness or recovery. Such gifts may serve as reminders of the past awful situation each time it appears, resulting in frustration. Thus, the results suggest that while self-gifting can have positive effects in certain contexts, it can also have negative consequences when driven by personal disappointment.

Celebratory self-gifting does not demarcate any effect on either consumer satisfaction or purchase decision involvement. The mediation effect of purchase decision involvement in the same relationship is also rejected. Although it has been argued that customers engage in self-indulgent shopping because of celebratory motivations, such as individual milestones, celebrations, and positive life events (Mortimer et al., 2015; Hettiarachchi, 2021), study findings are contrary to that notion. However, D'Astous & Mouakhar-Klouz (2021) argued that self-gifting can positively or negatively affect consumer satisfaction with life, depending on the particular psychological mechanisms intervening and further, because self-gifting tends to increase materialism, resulting in impaired overall satisfaction. Purchasing involvement is a consistent and inherent characteristic that varies among individuals depending on the personal significance of purchasing activities in different situations (Karaatli, 2015). On the other hand, gender would also be a matter of low level of satisfaction, where females are hardly gratified with their purchase decisions, and culture also plays a significant role in this dynamics (Simeon & Kanno, 2021). Eventually, if a consumer is less involved in the purchasing process, he or she may be more susceptible to making impulsive or superficial decisions, leading to lower satisfaction. This is because their decision-making processes may be less informed and poorly aligned with their true needs and preferences.

Therapeutic self-gifting has the most substantial impact on consumer satisfaction. However, it does not impact purchase decision involvement. Therapeutic self-gifting is

where people gift themselves as a short-term escape from negative emotions caused by events of failure, such as a breakup or an accident (Heath et al., 2015), or on the other hand, drive individuals to work harder and achieve more (Mortimer et al., 2015). Since this gifting habit is often associated with negative life situations, customers typically exhibit lower physical and psychological involvement in their purchases, with less emphasis on extensive information gathering and more on quick decision-making to achieve instant relief or happiness. Despite this poor level of purchasing involvement, ultimately, self-gifting can inspire a person's spirit when they feel down or need to uplift their self-esteem (Sherry, 1995), potentially leading to post-purchase pleasure. Besides, according to the argument of Mortimer et al. (2015), when actions are taken towards achieving a specific goal, it boosts commitment to those goals, inspiring further pursuit and subsequently leading to satisfaction (e.g., purchasing new sportswear before joining a gym). Accordingly, self-gifting motivated by therapy or mood regulation may involve more spontaneous and impulsive buying behaviours, as individuals seek immediate gratification to improve their emotional states. External factors, such as sales discounts or coupons, can intensify impulse self-gifting. However, Khan et al. (2024) identified that Pakistan consumers with therapeutic motivation are led to masstige purchase of products such as smartphones. Furthermore, customers tend to make ordinary gift purchases, in which their interaction with the purchase is also contextual, resulting in low involvement (Victor et al., 2024). Moreover, as per Calvo-Porrall (2021), low-involved consumers may display less interest in product or brand alternatives and may be satisfied even with a minimum level of performance. Thus, it can be concluded that buyers' involvement in purchasing reflects the self-relevance of purchasing activities for a person, distinguishing it from product and situational involvement (Veryzer and Karaatli, 2008).

The literature argues that consumers experiencing negative mood states may engage in purchasing self-gifts to alleviate cognitive discomfort stemming from dissatisfaction with their current situations and as a means to cheer themselves up from negative affective states of anxiety, depression, or loneliness (e.g., Pandemic) (Seo Hodges, & Su, 2022). However, the findings indicate that negative mood reduction self-gifting does not demonstrate any impact on either consumer satisfaction or purchase decision involvement. Mediation of purchase decision involvement in the same relationship was also not established. These findings contradict with the literature arguing that people shop themselves for compensatory reasons and for mood-alleviating (e.g., Koles, Wells, & Tadjewski, 2018; Rosenbaum, 2006; Tauber, 1972; Whelan, Johnson, Marshall, & Thomson, 2016). Instead, the present study's findings signal the possibility that self-gifting motivated by negative mood alleviation drives purchase guilt (Nguyen, 2023) rather than satisfaction.

Since negative mood reduction gifting habit is often associated with unpleasant life events, customers' physical and psychological involvement in purchasing may be lower, emphasizing quick decisions over extensive information gathering. Thus, certain purchases may be impulsive or unplanned, aimed at achieving instant relief or happiness. For example, if customers order something online, their involvement may be minimal.

However, they may feel excitement while waiting for the gift to arrive; if the product is not as surprising as expected, they will not be happy, resulting in worse disappointment (Gupta, Eilert, & Gentry, 2020). Thus, this is in line with the argument of Nguyen (2023) that mood-alleviative self-gifting can lead to post-purchase regret. Accordingly, self-gifting can be used as a coping mechanism for negative emotions and loneliness, leading to impulsive or unplanned purchases to achieve instant relief, in which the purchasing involvement for the same would be lower.

Findings depicted that positive mood reinforcement self-gifting positively impacts decision involvement but adversely impacts consumer satisfaction. Further, purchase decision involvement partially mediated the relationship between positive mood reinforcement self-gifting and consumer satisfaction. These findings support the literature establishing that self-gifts are often purchased to maintain a positive mood, and happy consumers are more involved with their purchases and actively seeking products and services that help them maintain a pleasant mood (Mortimer, 2015; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). However, this could also lead to post-purchase regret, if customers only purchase by driving with emotions, which tends to increase materialism, causing impaired overall satisfaction. Nevertheless, the significant indirect impact emphasises that, if individuals engage deeply in the purchasing decision-making process, they are more likely to end up with satisfaction or more over. In conclusion, the act of self-gifting aimed at boosting one's mood may increase engagement in the purchase decision, but it does not necessarily lead to higher levels of satisfaction with the final product or service.

Hedonic self-gifting does not impact consumer satisfaction but positively impacts their purchase decision involvement. Supporting the postulation, the relationship between hedonic self-gifting and consumer satisfaction is fully mediated by purchase decision involvement. It demarcates that hedonic self-gifting, which involves self-indulgent shopping for pleasure, does not lead to increased satisfaction. Instead, it positively impacts purchase decision involvement, which in turn affects consumer satisfaction. Therefore, even though customers do not experience direct satisfaction from their purchases, their significant involvement in the buying decision process can lead to happiness as an incentive to attain the desired goal (Jung & Yoon, 2012).

In summary, the findings signify that self-gifting serves as a reflection of one's inner state, functioning as a subtle yet genuine form of communication (Rippe et al., 2019; Lawry, 2022). This powerful mechanism allows individuals to convey their emotions and thoughts in a more authentic and intimate manner. Furthermore, this shows that self-gifting buying habits differ substantially from other shopping behaviours, such as compulsive or utilitarian purchasing, as self-gifting is greatly influenced by situational and motivational factors (Heath et al., 2011; Mortimer et al., 2015). Thus, individuals often use self-gifting as a coping mechanism. Supporting the argument of the study, self-gifting may not always be impulsive; instead, it may entail various degrees of involvement in decision-making depending on the underlying motivation of purchasing a gift for

oneself. The tendency to use self-gifts as a behavioural response to different life events gives rise to positive vibes.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

This study uncovers a nuanced interpretation of self-concept, which is common in practice, but a dearth of focus within the consumer behaviour literature (Gonzalez-Jimenez, 2017; Rippe et al., 2019), notably on self-gifting. Having noted the paucity of literature on self-gifting, a growing scholarly interest aimed at better understanding this behavioural phenomenon. However, though it is deemed important, attempts to measure self-gifting have been fragmented. To address this gap, this study adopted a recent multi-dimensional measure of self-gifting motivations while strengthening the conceptual understanding and rigor of the self-gift-giving concept, enriching the findings of Mortimer et al. (2015) by empirically validating the application in a developing country context.

This study provides several theoretical insights, introducing a new perspective that significantly alters the existing understanding of self-gifting and rearranging its causes and effects. First, this study attempts to establish the relationships among self-gifting motivations, purchase decision involvement, and customer satisfaction using Goal Setting Theory (GST) (Locke & Latham, 1990). Conventionally, GST has been used in studying organizational behaviour and psychology, emphasizing the role of goal specification and one's commitment in engagement to achieving goals. By extending this theory to the understanding of self-gifting practices, this study demonstrates its broader applicability and relevance. Further, this theoretical integration enables us to understand self-gifting as a goal-oriented behaviour by highlighting how individuals are involved in purchase decisions depending on various self-gifting motives. Moreover, GST enhances the understanding of customer satisfaction by linking it to the attainment of consumption goals. Accordingly, this suggests that when self-gifting aligns with consumer motives, consumers become actively involved in their purchase decisions, leading to satisfaction.

Second, this investigation sheds light on understanding how self-gifting motivations, such as reward, therapeutic, celebratory personal disappointment, negative mood reduction, positive mood reinforcement and hedonic have been adopted in the Asian, developing country context of Sri Lanka, as suggested by Mortimer et al. (2015), where situational elements would at play and advocates to replicate the application across cultures.

Third, this study adds novelty to the literature by incorporating purchase decision involvement as a mediator, hypothesizing that this inclusion could have a significant presence on each motivational dimension with noticeable effects, where consumers are more likely to engage in their purchases and experience varying level of satisfaction based on the effort they invest. This approach provides an alternative explanation for self-gifting that does not limit the understanding of the behaviour to impulsivity.

Finally, given that the self-gifting literature has only been contributed by a handful of scholars (E.g., Heath et al., 2015; Rippe, 2019; Nguyen, 2023; Gupta et al., 2020; Mortimer

et al., 2015), this study broadens the contribution to the subject literature. Though the conceptual model is centered on psychological mechanisms, it differs from others that were limited in nature, following either compensatory consumption or mood-regulatory perspectives (Luomala, 2002). This deeper explanation of adherence broadens the understanding of these constructs and their potential impacts.

### ***Practical Implications***

The findings of this study highlight the importance of focusing on self-gifting motivations and purchase decision involvement related to self-gifting, which ultimately leads to customer satisfaction, providing invaluable recommendations for marketing practitioners. Marketers have a greater untapped opportunity to attract “self-gifters” through creative advertising and promotions with the notion of treating oneself. As consumers’ buying habits have become more self-oriented today, brands can effectively incorporate self-gifting language in their in-store advertisements or even for paid commercials such as “love yourself” or “you are worth it”.

However, though many existing self-gifting promotions typically center narrowly on themes emphasizing deservingness, exemplified by campaigns like McDonald’s ‘You deserve a break today’ or L’Oréal’s ‘I’m worth it’ (Rippe et al., 2019), they fail to recognise the several other motivations and situations that drive for self-gift giving (e.g., reward, personal disappointment, therapeutic, positive mood reinforcement). Notably, the study found that therapeutic self-gifting has the most significant impact on consumer satisfaction, as individuals often gift themselves for a short-term escape from negative emotions stemming from failures or to motivate themselves to work harder and achieve more, which should be a special focus. Therefore, marketing communications should embrace the notion of accepting one’s imperfections and promote self-indulgence as a means of self-comfort after a disappointment.

Therefore, tag lines such as “Why rely on others when YOU have the power to turn a SAD day into a HAPPY one?” can effectively resonate with them. Moreover, consider the importance of rewarding yourself for your achievements and recognizing that you can celebrate your successes without depending on others. “Who better to celebrate your success than YOU? Treat yourself!” or “You are the BOSS of your world. Let’s celebrate your victory” would serve as powerful reminders.

The current study signifies the importance of understanding consumers’ purchase decision involvement in self-gifting. Accordingly, marketers can enhance consumer satisfaction by fostering greater involvement in purchase decisions. This can be achieved through designing personalised and engaging shopping experiences. Thus, mechanisms should be implemented to offer customised product recommendations and detailed product information, facilitating greater consumer involvement in the purchase process. Eventually, this can lead to increased satisfaction as consumers feel more confident and invested in their choices.



Recognizing that higher purchase decision involvement signals the need for assurance and support during the purchase journey, marketers should invest in training and support systems that guide consumers through their shopping journey. By promoting mindful shopping practices, businesses can help consumers make more thoughtful decisions, thereby reducing the likelihood of post-purchase dissatisfaction and regret.

By tapping into the emotional drivers behind self-gifting, brands can tailor their promotions to align with consumers' desires for self-gifting and emotional uplift. For example, marketing strategies could highlight the benefits of self-gifting during significant life milestones or as a means of coping with stress, focusing on how self-gifting can enhance mood and well-being, particularly during challenging times. This approach can help consumers view self-gifting as a favorable practice rather than merely impulsive or materialistic behaviour.

Interestingly, this study also revealed that certain self-gift purchases aimed at negative mood reduction, hedonic, and celebratory do not result in customer satisfaction. This suggests that acquiring possessions may not always result in customer satisfaction. Consequently, marketers who promote minimalism and responsible consumption can leverage these findings to encourage customers to be mindful before purchasing self-gifts under such motives.

Furthermore, mental health professionals can utilise the insights from this study to promote self-gifting as a healthy coping mechanism for managing stress and negative emotions. Initiatives such as workshops that encourage individuals to engage in self-gifting as a form of self-care can significantly enhance overall well-being. By fostering a deeper understanding of self-gifting motivations and their implications, both marketers and mental health advocates can contribute to a more positive consumer experience and improved mental health outcomes.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Since the study's main focus was on self-gifting motivations, the types of gifts were not considered. Future research may delve into particular types of gifts purchased under different motives. For example, self-gifting in areas such as tourism and technology remains under-researched. This will strengthen the current findings by highlighting the role self-gifts play in determining purchase decision involvement and satisfaction.

This study did not consider the possible demographic differences that may explain the self-gifting motives, purchase involvement, and satisfaction. However, gender, age, and income could be useful factors to consider in order to investigate the possible differences that may exist in the relationships established.

Existing literature acknowledges the differences in self-gifting practices between individualistic and collectivist cultures. In line with this, the proposed framework could be examined in other collectivist and individualistic countries to identify how consumers

from various cultural backgrounds differ (or not) in their purchase decision involvement and satisfaction associated with self-gifting behaviours.

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