

# Broadening Our Horizons: How Pursuing Meaning in Life Encourages Exploratory Consumption

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## **Abstract:**

This research investigates how motivational orientations—pursuing meaning vs. pleasure—affect consumer behavior. We propose that a meaning-focused orientation fosters mental broadening, a process encompassing openness to learning and an expanded scope of deliberation. This in turn drives exploratory consumption, defined as engaging with new or unfamiliar options. In lab and field experiments, we show that meaning-oriented consumers are more likely to engage in novel or unfamiliar choices. Study 1 confirms the effect of meaning orientation on exploratory preferences. Study 2 identifies openness to learning and broadened deliberation as key mediators. Study 3 demonstrates these effects in a real-world setting, using eye-tracking to validate the underlying mechanisms. The findings advance understanding of how meaning fosters exploration and offer actionable insights for marketers to encourage consumer openness to novel products through purpose-driven strategies.

*Keywords: motivational orientation, mental broadening, exploratory consumption*