



## Does Tattooing Lead to Alternative Hedonism?

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Rationale: Alternative hedonism (Soper, 2008) is an unconventional form of consumerism that offers a middle-ground consumption practice between *sustainability*, which is considered as a solution to ecological crisis but difficult to be achieved, and *hedonism*, which is driven by the endless pursuit of consumerist lifestyle and thus contributes to ecological crisis. Soper argues that alternative hedonism is not only driven by altruistic concern for ecological and social consequences of a consumerist material culture, but also motivated by self-interested gratification of consuming differently. Reviewing the literature on alternative hedonism reveals several underlying themes: (1) seeking pleasures from practices that are generally undermined by the general public, (2) aligning individual desires with more civic and ethical options (3) practicing voluntary simplicity (Schor, 1998) where the “good life” means imagining a society with less consumption, and (4) redirecting personal desires from accumulating material goods to consuming non-material goods (Jenkins & Molesworth, 2017; Schor, 1998; Soper, 2008). The tattooed subculture, a self-selecting group of people who have permanently modified their body through tattooing, has been associated with counter-culture, altruistic compassion, and engaging in local communities (Barclay, 2015; Binkley, 2009). This alludes that tattooed individuals may exhibit more involvement in this new mode of alternative hedonism compared to non-tattooed individuals.

Community type also has been associated with alternative hedonism. Rural communities often hold generations living within the same area, which can foster strong community ties and values that align with communal contribution, creating a balance of self-interest with an obligation to the common good (Center for Rural Affairs, 2016; Karlsson, Pfuderer, & Salvioni, 2005), which produces a natural orientation toward alternative hedonism.

Objectives: The objectives are to determine (1) whether a main effect tattoo levels (light or heavy) exists on alternative hedonism, (2) whether a main effect of community type (urban, suburban, or rural) exists on alternative hedonism, and (3) whether an interaction effect of tattoo level and community type exists on alternative hedonism.

Methods: An online consumer panel survey was used to distribute to individuals residing in the United States via Mturk. The sample consisted of 168 lightly tattooed (1-10% of the body), 213 heavily tattooed (more than 10% of the body) and 185 non-tattooed individuals. Based on a thorough understanding of alternative hedonism, researchers developed measures of the construct. It has four factors and all items start with “I enjoy...” to reflect hedonism: Community Engagement (e.g., taking an active role in my community), Green Consumption (e.g., finding new products that are environmentally friendly), Shopping Small (e.g., supporting local businesses because they have an impact on our community), and Holistic Wellness (e.g., spending time in nature). All measures were rated on 6-point Likert-type scales (1=Strongly Disagree, 6=Strongly Agree). Construct reliabilities of all constructs were satisfactory (>.70).

Page 1 of 3

**Analyses:** The objectives were tested with two-way ANOVA (Table 1). Main effects of tattoo level existed on Green Consumption ( $F=3.32, p<.05$ ), Shopping Small ( $F=2.95, p<.01$ ), and Holistic Wellness ( $F=4.70, p<.01$ ). A main effect of community type existed on Shopping Small ( $F=3.09, p<.05$ ). Finally, interaction effects existed on Community Engagement ( $F=2.80, p<.05$ ) and Green Consumption ( $F=3.25, p<.01$ ).

Table 1. Means: Alternative Hedonism

	No Tattoo (n = 185)				Light Tattoo (n = 168)				Heavy Tattoo (n = 213)				Community Type Total		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total	Urban (n=165)	Suburban (n=290)	Rural (n=111)
Community Engagement	4.05	4.24	4.64	<b>4.31</b>	4.35	4.05	4.36	<b>4.26</b>	4.21	4.22	3.92	<b>4.12</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>4.30</b>
Green Consumption	4.31	4.25	4.93	<b>4.50</b>	4.70	4.20	4.59	<b>4.50</b>	4.29	4.32	4.07	<b>4.23</b>	<b>4.43<sup>a,b</sup></b>	<b>4.26<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>4.53<sup>b</sup></b>
Shopping Small	4.67	4.87	5.19	<b>4.91<sup>a,b</sup></b>	4.96	4.94	5.13	<b>5.01<sup>a</sup></b>	4.63	4.80	4.74	<b>4.73<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>4.75<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>4.87<sup>a,b</sup></b>	<b>5.02<sup>b</sup></b>
Holistic Wellness	4.67	4.80	5.09	<b>4.85<sup>a</sup></b>	5.07	4.92	4.94	<b>4.98<sup>b</sup></b>	4.66	4.76	4.78	<b>4.73<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>4.80</b>	<b>4.83</b>	<b>4.94</b>

<sup>a,b,c</sup> Different characters mean the groups where means scores are significantly different

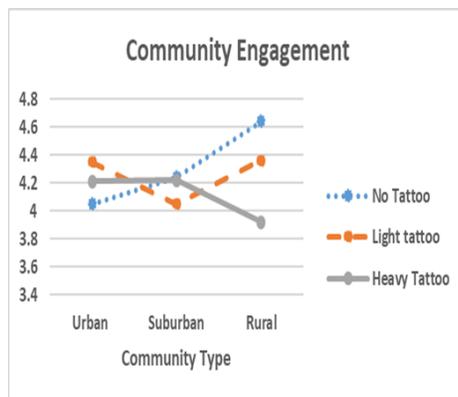


Figure 1. Interaction Effect on Community Engagement

Interaction effect was most apparent for Community Engagement (Figure 1). No tattooed individuals living in the rural area had the highest score in Community Engagement. Also, light tattoo had the higher scores among urban and rural individuals than suburban individuals. On the other hand, heavy tattoo individuals had the lowest score among rural individuals, while the scores were higher for urban and suburban individuals. Green consumption was stronger for no and light tattoo individuals. Regarding shopping small, light tattoo individuals in rural area had the highest score. Holistic wellness was strongest for light tattoo individuals, followed by no tattoo individuals. In sum, the alternative hedonism scores were lowest among heavy tattooed individuals and highest among rural dwellers.

**Discussion/Implications:** Overall, light tattooed individuals showed positive results in alternative hedonism, especially in Shopping Small and Holistic Wellness. Therefore, small businesses and local wellness facilities (e.g., yoga studio) may seek to attract this population. Particularly, these businesses may hold special events to foster a sense of community. Surprisingly, the heavily tattooed individuals produced the lowest scores on all alternative hedonism measures. It is possible that marginalized subcultures (e.g., tattooed individuals) tend to develop their own internally focused economy (e.g., built on trade and service) and may reject alternative hedonism. Additionally, rural community members produced the most alternative hedonistic characteristics, supporting previous findings (Center for Rural Affairs, 2016; Karlsson et al., 2005). Small start-up green businesses may first target rural communities. Future research should develop a scale of alternative hedonism through both qualitative and quantitative methods.

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