

Evidencing the Relationship between Self-image Congruency and Consumers' Purchase Intentions: The Moderating Role of Product Conspicuousness

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the relationship between self-image congruity and consumer purchase intentions with a moderating role of product conspicuousness in the context of a developing country. The purpose was to explore an interactive typology using self-image congruity as its locus and then identify the usefulness of this typology in predicting consumer purchase intentions in the context of district Swat Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. Structural equation modelling was employed to investigate the connection between self-image congruity and variations in consumer purchase intention for two different types of products including highly conspicuous branded apparel and non-branded generic fabric with low conspicuousness. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between self-image congruity and consumer purchase intentions. Moreover, product consciousness moderates the relationship between self-image congruity and consumer purchase intentions. The study contributes to managerial practice as the results give useful insight on the relevance of symbolism and social approval traits in positioning the brand image that can guide in designing customized communications according to the self-image of their target market.

Keywords: *Self-image Congruity Theory, Product Conspicuousness, Quantitative Study, Structural Equation Modeling.*

Introduction

Conventionally, consumers are considered rational buyers; they acquire products based on maximum utility with minimum costs (Haralayya, 2021). The rationale bounded models do not take in to account the psychic choices associated with feelings and emotions. Thus, prior researchers proposed concepts emphasizing the imaginative and sensory set of consumer choices in purchase intentions (Scarpi, 2021). Hermanda, Sumarwan, and Tinaprillia (2019) revealed that symbolic and expressive evaluative yardsticks are the determinants of personality that stem from the core of gravity called the self-concept which is the sum of all the traits an individual exhibits in response to environmental stimulus. Self-concept is the synergy of human thoughts and emotions that reference themselves as an object (McNeill & Venter, 2019).

Literature in marketing reinforces the statement that consumers' self-concept dominates their purchase intentions (Wu, Ren, Pitafi, & Islam, 2020). As reported by Sung and Huddleston (2018) consumers prefer market offerings (brands) they have faith to possess symbolic imagery in harmony with their self-image. Brawny justifying evidence exhibits self-image congruity as a strong base that marketers employ for predicting the behavior of their target group of customers (Hosany & Martin, 2012; MEHRA, 2019; Ranjbarian & Ghaffari, 2018). Chauhan et al. (2021) proclaim that Self-concept relies on the perceptual thinking of an individual that forms their subjective based evaluative point of view about the environment in which they operate. In the preceding argument, it is evaluated that consumers not only acquire and consume market offerings for their gratification but, their consumption patterns are the outcomes of their inner desires and wishes.

A model of self-image congruence developed by Sirgy (1985) suggests that consumers prefer to opt for products that go in congruence with their self-image. Consumers buy products that serve as values expressive tools and help them in developing their favourable self-image (G. G. Dr. Neelam Akbar, Dr MT Yousafzai, Dr. Shabir Ahmad, 2023; Usakli, Kucukergin, Shi, & Okumus, 2022). Yang, Isa, Ramayah, Wen, and Goh (2021) assert that the purchase of a particular product depicts the values and cultural norms of a society that is marked by the self-image they want to portray. Understanding consumers behavior navigates the compatibility between consumers self-image knotted with their desired social image; a product marked as in congruence with self-image allow them to gratify their needs and wants. (Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Neelam Akbar, 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). In harmony with this perspective, the current study rationalizes the self-image congruence with consumer purchase intentions with the moderating role of product conspicuousness in the context of northern regions of Pakistan. The culture of Pakistan is dominated by a host of traditions inherited from Hindu and western cultures due to the historical British colonial rules and living within diverse religious sects for around seven to eight hundred years (Akbar, Ahmad, & Yousafzai, 2023; Ullah et al., 2022). Rehman (2019) described that the northern regions of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan are known for their strict compliance to "Pashtunwali" a kind of chivalry display and directives of the Islamic code of conduct. However, the literacy rate is very fairly high which augments their tendencies towards gratification and adoption of culture that are in direct congruence with their self-image tied with lavish spending on expensive luxurious branded clothing. Thus, helps them in associating themselves with the upper-class families of society.

In Asian developing countries consumers follow the desires of their hearts by acquiring those goods and services that reveal their achievements and individuality (M. s. Dr. Neelam Akbar, Muhammad Tariq Yousafzai, Dr. Shabir Ahmad, 2023; Nabi, O'Cass, & Siahtiri, 2019). They are moving from gratifying their core needs to gratify their higher-level imagery and cerebral wishes which depicts their belonging needs (Saporito & Grant, 2018). In the past decade, a niche segment of the market was covered with branded apparel and outfits in Pakistan. In the interim, a fair few 'textile giants' initiated clothing brands in the market that are in line with the self-image of their target customers (Akbar & Ahmad, 2022; Dev, Podoshen, & Shahzad, 2018). The textile and clothing manufacturing industry serves as the functions of backbone in the economy of Pakistan. In the gross domestic product, its contribution is 8.4% and it employs forty percent of the total labour force (Ali & Ahmed, 2016). Branded apparel is an expeditiously fattening sub-sector of the textile industry. As reported by the bureau of statistics survey (2016) the consumption of clothing and footwear in Pakistan is growing at a rapid pace. Rehman (2019) reports that it was elevated from 6.62% to 9.05% in one-year during 2015 to 2016. In most of the prior research in this context, the self-image is investigated with consumer purchase intentions (Akbar, Takreem, & Akbar, 2023; GUL, Yousafzai, & Neelam, 2023; McNeill & Venter, 2019; Naz & Lohdi, 2016; Roe & Bruwer, 2017). While numerous studies have investigated the association between self-image congruency and consumers' purchase intentions, there exists a notable gap concerning the moderating influence of product conspicuousness on this relationship. Existing literature predominantly focuses on the direct impact of self-image congruency on purchase intentions, overlooking how the visibility of products influences this relationship. Limited attention has been given to understanding how conspicuous products may amplify or attenuate the effect of self-image congruency on purchase intentions. Therefore, there is a need for

empirical research to explore the moderating role of product conspicuousness in elucidating the relationship between self-image congruency and consumers' purchase intentions.

However, rare emphasis is granted to the influence and moderator effects of self-image congruence and consumer purchase intentions in developing Asian countries like Pakistan. To fill this gap, the current research proposes that product conspicuousness as a potential moderator in the association between self-concept and consumer purchase intentions. The main aim of this study is to understand the impact of self-image congruency of consumers in the Northern regions of Pakistan with special reference to luxurious branded and non-branding generic clothing apparel on consumer purchase intentions.

Literature Review

Self-Image Congruity and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Self-image congruity, a concept rooted in self-concept theory, has garnered substantial attention in consumer behavior research due to its significant implications for understanding consumer preferences and purchase decisions. The fundamental premise underlying self-image congruity is that individuals seek to maintain consistency between their self-concept, or how they perceive themselves, and their consumption choices (Sirgy, 1982). This alignment between self-image and product attributes is posited to influence consumers' purchase intentions and behaviors.

Early research by Sirgy (1982) laid the groundwork for exploring the relationship between self-image congruity and consumer behavior. Sirgy proposed that individuals are motivated to select products or brands that reflect and reinforce their self-concept, leading to increased satisfaction and loyalty. Subsequent studies have provided empirical support for this proposition, demonstrating that consumers are more likely to favor products perceived as congruent with their self-image (Dittmar, 1992; Grubb & Hupp, 1968).

Moreover, self-image congruity theory posits that the strength of the relationship between self-image congruity and purchase intentions may vary across different product categories and consumer segments. For instance, Dittmar (1992) found that self-image congruity exerted a stronger influence on consumers' purchase intentions for symbolic products, such as luxury goods, compared to utilitarian products. This suggests that the perceived symbolic value of products plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' evaluation and purchase decisions.

Consumers patronize their choices not only with respect to basic ideological functions but also acquire products for pleasing the value expressive symbols that are in congruence with their personalities (Santoso & Guspul, 2022; Yousafzai, 2019). Self-image congruence matches the consumer's personality with brands that symbolize their traits. According to Klabi and Binzafrah (2022) Self-image refers to the consumers' cognitive and perceptual fit between the value-expressive characteristics of a brand and their self-image. Self-image has close ties with the products that are considered a mark of identity in a specific society while luxurious branded clothing apparel is the source of brand endorsement that fosters a grandiose image in a sociocultural setup (Pujadas-Hostench, Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll, & Matute, 2019). Self-image congruity expresses the social desires associated with the use of a brand that aims to please the consumers' inner wishes in the form of societal approval and self-esteem needs (Frías-Jamilena, Castañeda-García, & Del Barrio-García, 2019; Gang Zhu, Mena, & Johnson, 2020). Gang Zhu et al. (2020) contend that Self-theory helps consumers in selecting brands as they choose their friends. Consumers acquire brands that are in line with their personality traits, and self-image that they idealized (Hassan, Rahman, & Paul, 2022). The theory of self-image congruity of Sirgy (1985) explains that consumers' purchase patterns are the outcome of the ways they perceive or wish to be perceived. Self-congruity is the notion that consumers consciously make comparisons between their perceptions of a specific brand with their personality traits (S. Li, Wei, Qu, & Qiu, 2020; Sung & Huddleston, 2018).

The self-congruity theory describes the impact of self-image on the final purchase decisions; a high level of self-congruity stimulates consumers to acquire those products that satisfy their inner wishes (Tavera-Mesias, van Klyton, & Zuñiga Collazos, 2022). As stated by Kim and Ryu (2021) Actual-self works close with the ideal self; these two concepts go parallel in generating the desired response in consumers regarding their self-esteem and social desirability needs. Products that are just in line with their self-image with no emphasis on the ideal self can cause cognitive dissonance in the consumer's mind that creates inconsistencies (a silent war in the brain), a conflicting scenario in purchase decisions (Bajac, Palacios, & Minton, 2018). As described by Sirgy, Johar, Samli, and Claiborne (1991) The congruity theory stipulates that consumers' evaluation of brands rests upon the level of congruity they sense are matching with their values and norm system. Consumers select and purchase in their choice set the brands that are reflective of their values; they are more likely to manifest greater tendencies toward products that they rank on the top of their congruence continuum (Rodrigo, Khan, & Ekinici, 2019). Consumers' purchase congruence reveals that tangible products contribute to the psychological meaning of a self-image (Gorbaniuk, Wilczewski, Kolańska, & Krasa, 2021). Sung and Huddleston (2018) revealed that the symbolic meaning of products is disseminated via brand personality and integrated marketing communications. Therefore, congruity between consumers' and brand personalities leads to the construction of self-image that helps in creating a strategic fit between the brand and consumers' self-concept.

Rehfeldt, Tyndall, and Belisle (2021) believe that consumers may perceive a specific brand as sophisticated and imaginative. They may think of themselves as sophisticated and imaginative by using upmarket brands. There is a close fit between consumers' psychological state of mind with the attributes of the brand consumers patronize. Self-image congruity theory postulates that self-image and brand imagery partially influence consumer purchase intentions (Sandhu, Usman, Ahmad, & Rizwan, 2018). As reported by Sirgy, Lee, Johar, and Tidwell (2008) Self-congruity is the composite of actual self-concept, ideal self-concept, social self, and ideal social congruity. Actual congruity describes the cognitive fit between consumers' actual selves and how they perceive a specific brand (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2019). Likewise, ideal congruity denotes the match between the hallmarks of the specific brand and how consumers would like to be perceived (Wang, Yuan, Liu, & Luo, 2022). Social congruity describes the strategic fit between the features of the specific brand and society's perception, while the ideal social congruity creates sound comparisons between the attributes of the specific brand and how they want to be perceived in a specific societal setup (Sirgy, 1985).

In consonance with the study of Sirgy (2018) brands that greatly satisfy the consumer's self-image are placed on the continuum of high self-congruity, while low congruity is associated with mismatch between attributes of the brand and consumers self-imagery. In the context of marketing literature, pieces of evidence abound for the impact of self-image congruence on the choices and preferences of brands (Arslan & Sututemiz, 2019; Sung & Huddleston, 2018; Wu et al., 2020). Previous studies conducted by Goh, Jiang, and Tee (2016) indicated that self-image congruence is significantly and positively linked with consumer purchase intentions. Chen et al. (2021) carried out research on apparel brand image impact on consumer purchase intentions with the role of self-congruity as mediator. Their findings revealed that apparel brand image has a positive impact on consumer purchase intentions with mediating effects of self-congruity with reference to apparel brand spirit. However, meaningful evidence is lacking in developing Asian countries with the role of an influencer or a moderator between self-image congruence and consumer purchase intentions. In line with previous studies on the significant positive impact of self-image congruence on consumer purchase intention, we hypothesize that

H1: self-image congruence has a significant and positive impact on consumer purchase intentions.

Self-Image Congruity, Consumer Purchase Intentions, and Product Conspicuousness

Product conspicuousness denotes the degree of emotional attachments that consumers attach to the specific brand ranging from high to low in terms of its worth (Lo & Tseng, 2021). Benli and Ferman (2019)

explained that consumers acquire highly conspicuous products to express their wealth, affluence and prosperity in society through the use of luxurious branded apparel. Highly conspicuous products invoke a sense of recognition, and esteem in a societal circle (Bronner & de Hoog, 2019). In accord with the studies of Guowei Zhu, Zhang, Xing, and Han (2022) products that are characterized as high in conspicuousness help consumers achieve the psychological pleasure of high dominancy in society. Consumer buying behaviour is determined by several factors ranging from the prices, product attributes, packaging, and labelling information which are external elements, while the internal cognitive process also has a considerable impact on consumption patterns (Anderson, Meloni, & Swinnen, 2018). Understanding the inner deep-rooted psychological factors in consumers mind open up avenues in harmonizing the relationship between their self-image congruence, product conspicuousness and consumers' purchase intentions. Comparing the usage of the product in private has fewer concerns about the self-image if consumers are happy with the ease and conveniences associated with patronizing that specific brand (J. Li, Guo, Zhang, & Sun, 2019).

Product conspicuousness has two parts; publicly used brands and privately used brands (Mandal, 2020). Publicly used brands refers to those brands that others can see in consumption process while privately used brands are not notices by others in consumption process. Products are categorized based upon their conspicuousness and visibility to others (Zheng, Baskin, & Peng, 2018). Klabi (2020) revealed that highly conspicuous products (branded clothes) in comparison with low conspicuous generic products have premier image value that helps in shaping the self-concept of the target group of customers. Burnasheva and Suh (2020) identified the linearly positive connection between the usage of social media, self-image congruity, and conspicuous online consumer purchase intentions in the context of Korean Millennials. Similarly, Topçu (2018) established positive ties between self-image congruity and conspicuous consumption. Marketers are knowledgeable about the perceptual thoughts of their target market to articulate the facts that product conspicuousness has a close connection with consumer's self-image that helps in shaping their purchase intentions (Akbar, Rafiq, Takrim, Tauqeer, & Sajjad, 2023; Lo & Tseng, 2021; Tavera-Mesias et al., 2022). Consumers' employ such knowledge in persuasive branding approaches to create ideal choice that is in congruence and in line with their level of satisfaction, materialistic possessions, socially approved norms, and values that are marked as ideal by the members of society (Charoennan & Huang, 2018).

Self-image congruity and conspicuousness are interrelated that generate brand value-expressive traits; these traits are supported by the societal norms consumers must observe to affiliate themselves with the specific reference group (Charoennan & Huang, 2018; Santoso & Guspul, 2022). Being associated with a desired social class via conspicuousness changes consumers' perceptual thoughts and emotions. Consumers employ conspicuousness submerged with self-image congruence in creating, sustaining, and reinforcing an existential identity along with communicating a specific image about their personality attributes (Hu, Yang, Jing, & Nguyen, 2018). In accord with Goenka and Thomas (2020) Conspicuousness in products is reflective of the success and wealth that consumers try to express through their use; it contributes to the consumers' empowerment and citizenship values. In the context of Bangladesh Nabi et al. (2019) found a positive significant association between status consumption and interpersonal susceptibility; the interrelationship of these constructs was mediated by conspicuousness. Han, Kim, Lee, and Kim (2018) identified conspicuousness as a significant moderator between self-image congruity and customer satisfaction. The interplay between self-image congruity, consumer purchase intentions, and product conspicuousness constitutes a crucial area of inquiry within consumer behavior research. Self-image congruity theory posits that individuals are inclined to select products or brands that align with their self-concept, contributing to heightened satisfaction and loyalty. This relationship has been extensively explored in the literature, with studies demonstrating that consumers are more likely to favor products perceived as congruent with their self-image. However, a notable gap exists regarding the moderating influence of product conspicuousness on this association. While research has predominantly focused on the direct effects of self-image congruity on purchase intentions, scant attention has been paid to how the visibility of products may amplify or attenuate this relationship. Thus, investigating the role of product conspicuousness as a moderator in the context of self-image congruity and purchase intentions presents an

avenue for advancing our understanding of consumer behavior dynamics and has practical implications for marketers aiming to tailor their strategies to varying product contexts. In line with previous studies on the significant positive impact of product conspicuousness on the level of self-image congruity and consumer purchase intention, we hypothesize that

H2: Product conspicuousness moderates the relationship between self-image congruence and consumer purchase intentions.

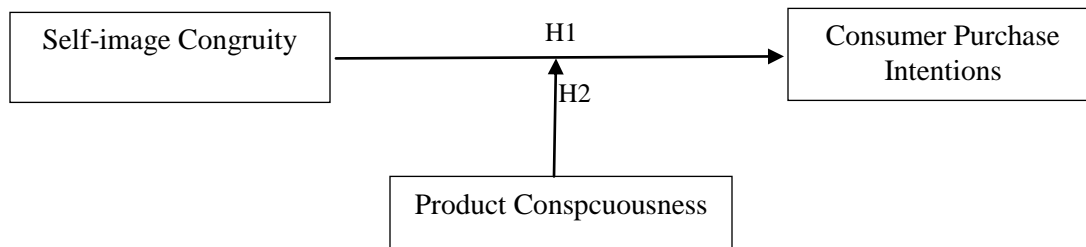


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Methodology

This research embraces a positivistic view to check the assumptions by analysing the causal relationship between the constructs developed in the theoretical framework. The current research employs quantitative methodology with a survey technique for collecting data. The sample size was determined vis Cohen (1992) criteria. In consonance with this, the sample size identified was 300 respondents. The survey was administered in Mingora, the downtown area of District Swat with four small accumulated geographical territories (Qambar, Saidu-Sharif, Rahim-Abad, and Barikot) based upon the availability of branded apparel shopping malls with a finer level of affluence, stipulating elevated preferences for potential formal and semi-formal branded clothing-attire purchasers and sellers in these territories. All the consumers regardless of their age and gender were considered the target group for the research with a convenient sampling technique. Measures of self-image congruity and consumer purchase intentions were adapted from the study of Sirgy et al. (1991). Measures of product conspicuousness were adapted from the study of Lee and Shrum (2012). Structural equation modelling with the maximum likelihood method with AMOS software was employed for assessing the connection between the three constructs of the study. Validity was checked with the goodness of model fit criteria indexes, an χ^2 (chi-square) test, RMSEA, NFI, TLI, and CFI.

Results

The demographic composition of the respondents based on gender (as indicated in table 1) was as follows: 49 percent of respondents comprised male while 51 percent were female. Distribution based upon age brackets were as follows: under 21 years of age depicted (30.7 percent), 21-25 (32.7 percent), 25-35 (27 percent) 35-45 (5 percent), and 45 and above (4.7 percent). Conformity factor analysis was employed to judge the overall model fit. As reported in table 1 the standard loadings of the items covering self-image congruity were 0.75, 0.84, 0.90, 0.88, 0.85, and 0.79 for SIC1, SIC2, SIC3, SIC4, SIC5, and SIC6 respectively. The standard loadings covering consumer purchase intentions were 0.81, 0.83, 0.82, 0.84, and 0.83 for CPI1, CPI2, CPI3, CPI4, and CPI5 respectively. The standard loadings of the items covering product conspicuousness were 0.76, 0.83, 0.83, 0.80, and 0.69 for PC1, PC2, PC3, PC4, and PC5 respectively. The findings revealed that the measurement model had a good fit (CMIN =323.258, df = 114, $p < 0.001$, CMIN/df = 2.836, NFI = 0.928, TLI = 0.943, CFI = 0.952, RFI= .914, IFI = 0.952, RMSEA = 0.078) (see table 1). To measure the internal consistency of the scale Brown (2002) recommended that the value of Cronbach alpha must be greater than 0.7. The values of Cronbach alpha (as shown in table 1) for

the constructs were as follows: Self-image congruity = .93, Consumer purchase intentions = .84 and Product conspicuousness = .91. Thus, meeting the standard of internal consistency which indicates good reliability.

Table 1: Reliability statistics; Sample distribution based on Gender and Age; standard loadings of the item.

Constructs	Items	Cronbach alpha	Standard loadings of items
Self-image congruity	6	0.934	SIC1=0.75 SIC2=0.84 SIC3=0.90 SIC4=0.88 SIC5=0.85 SIC6=0.79
Consumer Purchase intentions	5	0.840	CPI1=0.81 CPI2=0.83 CPI3=0.82 CPI4=0.84 CPI5=0.83
Product conspicuousness	5	0.910	PC1=0.76 PC2=0.83 PC3=0.83 PC4=0.80 PC5=0.69
Demographic characteristics		Age of the respondents	
Gender		Under 21	30.7%
Male	49%	21-25	32.7%
Female	51%	25-35	27.0%
		35-45	5.0%
		45 and above	4.6%

Hypotheses Testing

The value of the beta coefficient as indicated in table 2 ($\beta=0.33$ with p-value 0.000 and the critical ration 4.807) was found significant as its p-value was less than 0.05, i.e., 0.000 accepts the first hypothesis of the study showing the significant positive connection between self-image congruence and consumer purchase intentions. All the statistical tests divulged acceptable results, allowing for testing the role of product conspicuousness as moderating variable between self-image concept and consumer purchase intentions. Findings of the first step revealed ($\beta=0.33$ with p- value 0.000 and critical ratio 4.807) indicate the significant association between self-image congruence and consumer purchase intentions which accepts the first hypothesis of the study. In the second step, the results revealed ($\beta =0.38$, Critical ration= 4.288, p - value 0.000) indicating a significantly positive connection between the moderator (product consciousness) and the dependent variable (consumer purchase intentions) of the study. The third step describes the interaction between product conspicuousness and self-image congruity with the composite of the third variable as an interaction term. The second hypothesis of the study is accepted as the interaction terms p-value is 0.000 is highly significant ($\beta = -.28$, critical ratio= -3.692). The standardized regression weight -.28 indicates that XxM (SICxPC) explains 28 percent variation in consumer purchase intentions. Product conspicuousness moderates the connection between self-image congruity and consumer purchase intentions. The negative figure -.28 indicates sound logic that self-image congruity increases consumer purchase intentions when product conspicuousness is high. In other words, self-image congruity decreases consumer purchase intentions when product conspicuousness is low.

Table 2: Hypotheses testing; Model fit indices

Predictor	Standardized Estimates	β	SE	CR	P-Value	Relationship
X (Self-image congruence)	.332	0.325	.068	4.807	0.000	Significant
M (Product conspicuousness)	.376	0.599	.140	4.288	0.000	Significant
XxM (SICxPC)	-.277	0.095	.026	-3.692	0.000	Significant
Goodness of the fit index		Structural model			Cut-off value	
		$\chi^2=323.258(df = 114)$			N/A	
		Normed Chi-square = 2.836			1.0 TO 5.0	
		NFI=0.928			>0.90	
		TLI=0.943			>.90	
		CFI=0.952			>.90	
		IFI=0.952			>.90	
		RFI=0.915			>.90	
		RMSEA=0.078			<0.08: Good fit	

Discussions

The current study addresses that consumers' self-image congruity (the perception regarding one's self) imparts a significant and positive impact on consumer purchase intentions. Similarly, Product conspicuousness moderates the relationship between self-image congruity and consumer purchase intentions. Findings revealed that consumer prefers to acquire those brands that go in harmony with their self-image. This research followed the quantitative, deductive approach through a structurally adapted survey instrument that was processed with AMOS and SPSS 23 version. Structural equation modeling was used for assessing the hypothetical connection between the variables of the study. Moreover, conformity factor analysis was carried out for assessing the overall model fit. Both hypotheses (H1 and H2) of the study were accepted as the values were in a significant range. The finding was in congruence with previous research conducted by Jeong and Jang (2018) in the restaurant industry, where self-image congruity manifested a significant impact on judging the evaluative set of the functional attributes of the restaurants. However, fine dining restaurants were highly preferred by consumers who possessed high self-image congruity. Similarly, Nabi et al. (2019) examined a positive correlation between status consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence; product conspicuousness mediated the relationship between these constructs. Likewise, The finding of the study supports the results of the previous study conducted by Han et al. (2018) where the conspicuousness of the product was revealed as a significant moderator in the relationship between image congruity and customer satisfaction in the context of the luxury restaurant industry. In the context of Pakistan, consumers have strong affiliations with brands they perceive to be truly reflective of their personalities (Sarwary & Chaudhry, 2015).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The theoretical implications of the manuscript titled "Evidencing the Relationship between Self-Image Congruency and Consumer Purchase Intentions: The Moderating Role of Product Conspicuousness" extend our understanding of consumer behavior dynamics within the framework of self-image congruity theory. By exploring the moderating role of product conspicuousness, this research offers insights into how the visibility of products influences the strength of the association between self-image congruity and purchase

intentions. The findings of this study have the potential to enrich existing theoretical models by elucidating the nuanced interplay between individual self-concepts, product attributes, and consumer decision-making processes. Furthermore, by uncovering the conditions under which self-image congruity exerts a greater or lesser impact on purchase intentions, this research contributes to the development of more nuanced and contextually sensitive theoretical frameworks in consumer behavior research.

The practical implications of the manuscript titled "Evidencing the Relationship between Self-Image Congruency and Consumer Purchase Intentions: The Moderating Role of Product Conspicuousness" are significant for marketers and businesses seeking to enhance their understanding of consumer behavior and optimize marketing strategies. By recognizing the moderating influence of product conspicuousness, marketers can tailor their product positioning, advertising, and branding efforts to align with consumers' self-images effectively. For instance, in situations where products are highly conspicuous, emphasizing the alignment between the product and consumers' self-image could be particularly impactful in driving purchase intentions. Conversely, in contexts where products are less conspicuous, focusing on other product attributes or marketing messages may be more effective. Overall, this research empowers marketers to devise more targeted and nuanced strategies that resonate with consumers' self-concepts, thereby enhancing brand engagement, loyalty, and ultimately, sales.

Conclusion

The prime concern of this research was to examine the impact of self-image congruity and consumer purchase intentions with the role of product conspicuousness as a moderator. The findings empirically proved that self-image congruity demonstrated a strong connection with consumer purchase intentions in the Swat region of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. It is evident from the current research that consumers in Swat preferred to patronize that clothing attire (brands that were marked as high in conspicuousness with strong symbolic brand image) that were consistent with their perceived self-image. From a marketing lens, it is recommended that marketing managers should strategically plan the marketing, branding, and advertising strategies that go in congruence with local consumer self-image. Therefore, grasping the consumers' black box (mind) in understanding the self-image with respect to the nature of the product. Strategic planning of brands should provoke the belief that brand advertisements' main theme should rationalize the status needs to be tied to the self-image of their target market. Marketers should design and integrate the communication mix in such a way that convinces consumers to be loyal to the brand that links their personality traits with the functional and symbolic attributes of the brand. Customized communication strategies need to be practiced by marketers in positioning the highly conscious product that are in accordance to the societal needs of the consumers. Mass marketing strategies need to be adopted by marketers in positioning products that are perceived as low in conspicuousness. Consumers feel a strong affiliation with the firm when they sense a good fit between themselves and a firm offering that generates a sensation of, we or us.

The current research contributes to the consumer behavior and marketing literature by understating the role of self-image congruity and consumer purchase intentions with product conspicuousness as a moderator between these two variables. This research practically contributes to the textile industry in managing their overall strategic operations from the consumer behavior perspective: they are in dire need to position and market their fabrics that are in line with the personality traits and self-image congruity of their target group of customers instead of capitalizing on the generic features of their brands. Limitations connected to the research that can guide the future research are as follows; self-image congruity and purchase intentions are studied with reference to product conspicuousness in clothing apparel in the context of specific regions of Swat, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. However, the findings may deviate for the ray of different types of luxurious brands. Potential research may widen the scope of the theoretical model with more fascinating and captivating brands. Furthermore, cultural disparity takes social and status consumption towards individualism rather than collectivism in the coming days (Moustabshirah, Singh, & Wern, 2022). Potential research may assess the individualist believer's status consumption patterns; the ways they perceive the

self-image congruence in the purchase decisions with special focus on the importance they impart in relation to conspicuousness of products. In addition, replicating this research in other areas of Pakistan may generate a platform of discussion on status consumption that can help in comparisons between inert-region similarities and disparities in the cultural context of the same country.

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