Linking Perceived Brand Authenticity, Consumption Values, and Social Media Marketing on Consumer Inspiration to Purchase Masstige Fashion Brands

Jacqueline Ismat[1,2], Norazah Mohd Suki[1,3,4*]

[1]Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia; Jacqueline.ismat80@gmail.com (J.I.), azahsuki@yahoo.com (N.M.S.).
[2]Business Studies Department, Bahria University, Karachi, Pakistan.
[3]Institute of Sustainable, Growth and Urban Development, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kg Baru, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
[4]Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract. The consumption of luxury is a trend in emerging economies, created mainly by the middle-income class searching for enhanced personal reputation through the consumption of 'new luxury' called 'masstige'. This study examines the impact of perceived brand authenticity, consumption values (i.e., functional values, symbolic values, and experiential values), and social media marketing on consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands in Pakistan. Data was gathered from 300 middle-income working women (fashion consumers) in Pakistan and was analysed using the partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that symbolic values are the strongest predictor of consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands, followed by social media marketing and experiential values. Masstige fashion consumers are inspired by its symbolic aspects, conveying messages about prestige, success, self-expression and social status. In addition, they are inspired by the social media marketing of these brands through the posts they publish, the sharing of brand information with others, and the showcasing of brand opinions. This platform keeps consumers updated with recent information. Further, the consumer experiential values are seen to be inspirational towards masstige fashion since consumers find their purchases pleasurable, having sensory appeal, being aesthetically superior and offering the desired experience. Masstige fashion retailers and brand managers should prioritise symbolic elements when devising strategies to inspire working women to purchase masstige fashion brands as such concentration will potentially lead to increased profits, satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Consumer inspiration, Consumption values, Masstige fashion brands, Perceived brand authenticity, Social media marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The consumption of luxury products is a trend in emerging economies, created mainly by the middle-income class searching for enhanced personal reputation through the consumption of 'new luxury' called 'masstige'. Masstige is a combination of two words - mass and prestige (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Comparatively recent innovations (Pizzetti et al., 2023; Shahid et al., 2024), masstige brands are marketed as a luxury but priced well below premium and designed to appeal to middle-income consumers - the masses (Kumar et al., 2021; Paul, 2015; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). These brands are 'affordable luxury' but, in fact, not in the traditional luxury category. Pakistan is an emerging economy with the fifth largest population in the world (Statista, 2024), and a rising middle-income class. 'New luxury' fashion is the second largest market segment in the country. Generating 14.11 million USD. The growth of this market is attributed to middle-income consumers, who drive demand for luxury goods leading to an increase in high-end retail stores and more luxury brands entering the market (Statista, 2024b). The luxury fashion market reached a value of USD 10.19 million in 2020. This increased by 3.92% in 2024 (Statista, 2024b). Further, the fashion clothing sector in Pakistan consists of both the branded and the unbranded/traditional market in the ratio of 20:80/30:70 (Adil, 2020), with the masstige fashion component representing the branded market. Most fashion purchases in Pakistan are non-luxury (Statista, 2023), confirming that the non-luxury market, which includes masstige fashion, is purchased more and hence contributes to the overall growth of fashion in Pakistan.

The masstige fashion brands have democratized fashion and created an aspirational market for non-affluent consumers. According to Statista (2023), since the year 2014, it has been the non-luxury fashion market that has dominated in Pakistan, and this is expected to continue until 2027. Furthermore, the women's non-luxury segment showed a growth in revenue from 14 million USD to 18 million USD between 2014 and 2018 (Statista, 2023). However, the year 2020 witnessed a decline in that revenue to 13 million USD, which, as noted by Adil (2020), was due to Pakistan's economic downturn and a high sales tax (Adil, 2020). Moreover, 2018-19 was difficult as the GDP fell to 3.2%, promoting a slowdown in the fashion retail sector from 6.57% in 2016-17 to a mere 3.11% in 2018-19 (Adil, 2020). The masstige fashion segment suffered the most as clothing that appeals to the masses is purchased more than that appealing to the elite section. Thus, any downturn in this market has a noticeable effect on profits (Adil, 2020), as is currently being witnessed. Therefore, marketers' biggest concern has been determining the behaviour of a target consumer segment for branded goods (Zeb et al., 2015). Additionally, Pakistan's branded masstige fashion industry has had to work harder to increase its profit share because consumer interest has shifted from traditional to branded clothing with high prices yet with similar attributes and quality (Zeb et al., 2015). Therefore, amidst the existing masstige fashion brands scenario it is pertinent to investigate what factors cause consumer inspiration for their purchase, as 30-35% of all brands that do not explore customer motivation are found to fail (Yasir et al., 2014).

Consumer inspiration is a cognitive and motivational state evoked by marketing stimuli (Bottger et al., 2017),

and is seen as a transmission process which connects the stimulus and inspiration-related activities (Zhou et al., 2023). Marketers have found that consumer inspiration is a better metric than satisfaction, as it has the ability to introduce customers to new ideas and provide marketers with new perspectives (Bottger et al., 2017). This is what the masstige fashion market in Pakistan needs currently as masstige marketers are unable to determine how to effectively persuade consumers to buy their products, given that most masstige brands have similar attributes. Consumers are not sufficiently motivated to decide which masstige fashion brands to buy; hence, the question arises of how to instill within them a new outlook on these brands when they exist in a market with a plethora of competitors. Inspiring consumers in this particular scenario is posing a problem, yet as observed by Bottger et al. (2017), consumer inspiration is an important phenomenon as it can be used as a strategy to build demand, generate brand exploration behaviour, and bolster customer loyalty, which ultimately results in purchases and profits. In the masstige fashion context of Pakistan, consideration of consumer inspiration as a strategy to introduce new ideas in the context of masstige generally to consumers is a lesser-known approach; hence, little research evidence exists. Considering the very specific context of the masstige fashion market, consumer inspiration as a marketing strategy would seem to be much needed since there are only a few brands like "KHAADI" (the biggest brand in the category) that dominate the high street fashion stores (Rehman, 2021), and enjoy good profit margins and customer loyalty. These few brands alone cannot bring the entire sector's profit to a soaring high.

Marketers should be cognizant of the antecedents of consumer imagination that broadens mental horizons and thus allows for the stimulation of inspiration for brands (Bottger et al., 2017). In the scholarly works of Das et al. (2022), consumption values were found to stimulate consumer inspiration for masstige purchase intention. They also argued perceived brand authenticity to moderate the effect between consumer inspiration and masstige purchase intention. They suggested the need for future investigation of their study with different antecedents in other emerging economies. Likewise, Sharma et al. (2021) investigated the effect of social media marketing activities on purchase intention mediated by consumer inspiration on UAE consumers and highlighted the need for other constructs that affect consumer behaviour in other countries. Thus, the declining profit share of the masstige fashion sector demands that further research be conducted to assess how consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands in Pakistan relates to the growth of this particular fashion sector. This requires an examination of how perceived brand authenticity, functional values, symbolic values, experiential values, and social media marketing influence consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands. The following research question is formulated in this connection:

RQ1: *Do perceived brand authenticity, consumption values (i.e., functional values, symbolic values, and experiential values), and social media marketing impact consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands in Pakistan?*

The study makes major contributions to the literature for testing perceived brand authenticity, functional values, symbolic values, experiential values, social media marketing, and consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands in Pakistan simultaneously in a single framework via the partial least squares-structural equation modelling approach. The findings produce critical input for marketers trying to formulate marketing strategies, thereby being useful in masstige retailing and in brand management decision-making. A review of the associated literature appears in Section 2, and the methodology applied in the study is introduced in Section 3. This is followed by Section 4, which presents the study results, and Section 5, which discusses the findings. Finally, in Section 5 some directions for future research are offered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. Perceived Brand Authenticity

Authenticity describes an entity's promising trait of being true, real, or genuine and recognized by its observers. People pursue the consumption of authenticity (e.g., by tracking authentic brands) in expectation of identity benefits (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). It is used by brands to annul mistrust, increase brand power and brand image (Hyun et al., 2024). In the context of luxury brands, authenticity is a critical ingredient in consumers' willingness to pay extraordinary prices (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012; Newman & Bloom, 2012; Prado et al., 2019; Sjostrom et al., 2016). However, little research has examined perceived brand authenticity in the context of consumers' inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands in emerging economies. Of the few studies that have been conducted by Rodrigues et al. (2024) argues that authentic positive word of mouth for masstige brands highlights their quality and attributes. Likewise, Paul's (2019) study on the masstige model and brand management found consumers' perception of authenticity to be an important aspect of brand equity performance and impact on consumer intentions. In addition, the association between brand authenticity and consumer inspiration was examined by Andonopoulos et al. (2023) who found that social media influencers' personal authenticity and consumer inspiration were related. Thus, these results construe that perceived brand authenticity and masstige are related, as also are perceived brand authenticity and consumer inspiration. Given those findings, this study suggests that perceived brand authenticity may promote consumer inspiration for masstige fashion and proposes the following hypothesis:

H₁: Perceived brand authenticity has a positive impact on consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands in Pakistan.

2.2. Functional Value

Functional value is defined as "the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacity for functional, utilitarian or physical performance" (Sheth et al., 1991). Traditionally, Sheth et al. (1991) argued functional value to have an integral role in driving consumer choices towards decision-making, signalling the strength of a product and its purpose (Chatterjee et al., 2023). In addition, reliability, durability and price have been argued as the best

attributes of functional characteristics (Phau et al., 2014). In their research, Chatterjee et al. (2023) postulated that consumers buy functional masstige goods to exhibit social status and to seek prestige. This concept echoes Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899), according to which, if consumers find the purchase of masstige products to have many functions, they conspicuously show those products to boost their pride and social prestige; essentially, the purchase embodies more than its masstige identity, reflecting also the product's multiple functionalities. The masstige product features refer to certain functions that consumers find useful and translate into value. Shukla et al. (2015) Their research on three prominent Asian markets, namely, China, India, and Indonesia, found that functional value perception influences luxury value perceptions. Further, past research shows a relationship between functional values and consumer inspiration. For instance, Das, Jebarajakirthy et al. (2022) their study on masstige fashion mentioned functional values in the context of women in India finding the utility significance of the purchase, and in an earlier study, Jebarajakirthy et al. (2021) found that consumers derive a rational assessment of a brand's quality through its functional values. They found functional values and consumer inspiration to have a positive relationship. Thus, based on these results, the current study suggests that functional values may link consumer inspiration for masstige fashion and proposes the following hypothesis:

H₂: Functional values have a positive impact on consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands in Pakistan

2.3. Symbolic Value

Symbolic value is "a perceived utility acquired from an alternative association with one or more specific social groups such as demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural" (Sheth et al. 1991, p.160). It is reflected in a product's meaning and image. This value is generated when an individual or group of persons share the meaning of a product (Sheth et al., 1991). The symbolic value is found to appeal to many consumers. For instance, many young people want to improve their status, which they believe can be done through purchasing products embodying such value (Kim & Jang, 2014; O'Cass & Siahtiri, 2013). Likewise, O'Cass and Frost (2002) earlier observed that consumers generally seek enhanced reputation and recognition through their buying behaviour. In the process of selecting products to increase personal prestige, consumers may well be swayed by social recognition, which is a symbolic attribute (Sari, 2020). In past studies, symbolic values and consumer inspiration have been found to correlate. For instance, masstige jewellery is highly valued around the world for the symbolic values it delivers to consumers (Austria et al., 2022). Similarly, jewellery purchases are argued to be not an indication of financial gain but rather an emotional investment (Jaggi & Nim, 2020). Previously, jewellery was purchased for occasions like weddings, but these days, the purchase of luxury translates into self-expression and is a tool to elevate one's style (Jaggi & Nim, 2020). Consequently, given these various outcomes showing relationships between symbolic values and consumer inspiration, the current study posits the following hypothesis:

H₃: Symbolic values have a positive impact on consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands in Pakistan.

2.4. Experiential Value

Experience is a type of feeling that individuals sense after engaging with some phenomenon (Joy & Sherry 2003), in this case, the brand. Experiential/hedonic value relates to the extent to which a product provides appropriate experiences, feelings, and emotions for the customer (Smith & Colgate, 2007). Consumers derive experiential value based on their perceptions of the goods and services received (Chen & Hu, 2010; Lewis & Chambers, 2000). Holbrook (1999) categorized experiential value as embodying both reactive value (driven by customers' comprehension, assessment, or reaction to goods and services), and active value (driven by consumers' physical or mental interaction with goods and services) (Mathwick et al., 2001). In past studies, experiential value has been found to relate to consumer inspiration. For instance, Aljukhadar et al. (2020) observed a relationship between consumption value and inspiration in the context of social media imagery consumption, finding that the consumers' aesthetic values act as drivers of social media use. This aesthetic value felt within consumer experience was argued to generate inspiration, infinity sensation and habitual entertainment. Similarly, in the study by Das, Jebarajakirthy et al. (2022) experiential value was seen to have a positive relation with consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands. Thus, based on these findings, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H₄: Experiential values have a positive impact on consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands in Pakistan.

2.5. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is advertising in an online social networking context. Branding is characterized by user and social interactivity aimed at getting a brand's actual and potential consumers to engage (Chi, 2011). This technology is used by marketers to influence consumer buying behaviour, thereby making the business (brand) more competitive (Daga et al., 2024). According to Tuten (2020), social media marketing augments traditional and digital marketing tools. It facilitates and monitors customer interaction, collaboration, and communication with the company and its brands, as well as inspires consumer engagement. Social media marketing also promotes consumers' favourable perceptions about firms (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). In particular, fashion brands use social media marketing to access consumers (Zhang et al., 2024) and promote masstige offers (Bilro et al., 2022a). These brands adopt this platform to sustain positive attitudes toward their brands, communicate their offers, and execute campaigns to keep informed about consumer sentiments (Bilro et al., 2022a). Singh and Dagur (2022b) studied social media marketing in a masstige fashion context in Indian females, finding a positive link between brand equity and purchase intention. And other researchers have discussed the relationship between social media marketing and consumer inspiration. For instance, social media inspirational content and cultural orientation were found to be

antecedents of consumer inspiration by Izogo and Mpinganjira (2020). Likewise, the effect of social media marketing activities on consumer inspiration was examined by Sharma et al. (2022), who also found social media marketing activities to inspire consumers' behavioural outcomes; they further observed that entertainment, trendiness and interaction have a positive relationship with consumer inspiration. Thus, based on these results, it is hypothesized that a positive impact exists between social media marketing and consumer inspiration, as follows:

H_5: *Social media marketing has a positive impact on consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands in Pakistan.*

Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual framework of this study that assessed the impact of perceived brand authenticity, consumption values (i.e., functional values, symbolic values, and experiential values), and social media marketing on consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands.
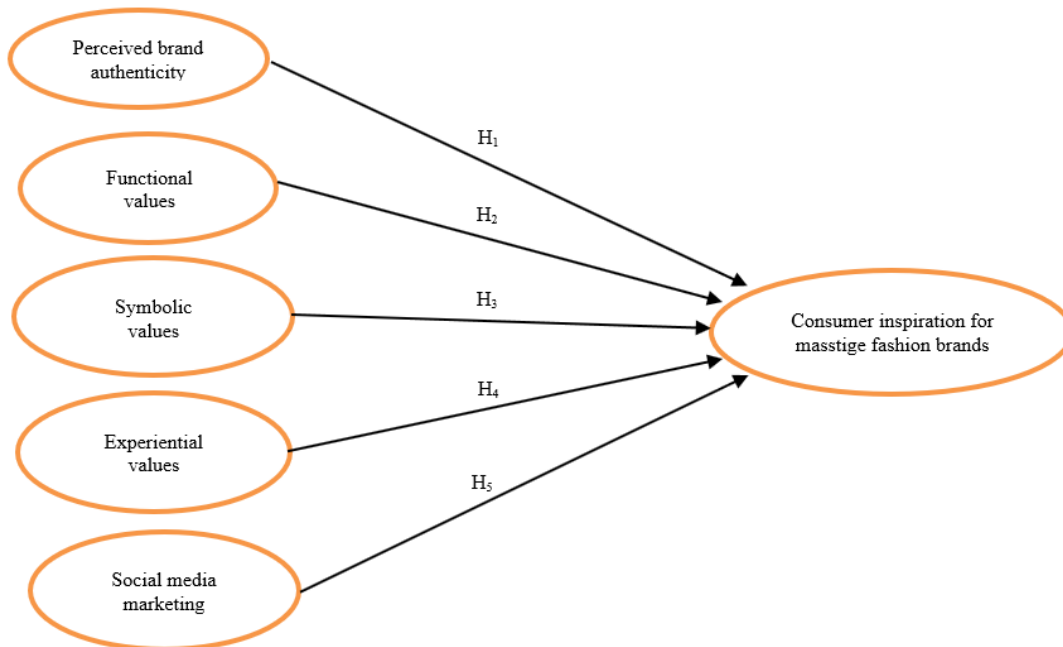

Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

3.1. Data Collection

The study used non-probability, purposive sampling to target middle-income working women who purchase masstige fashion. Non-probability sampling was chosen because no sample frame comprising the complete list of all individuals in this category exists; and because other similar studies on masstige (see Baber et al., 2020; Das, Saha, & Balaji, 2022) have successfully adopted the same technique. Snowball sampling was also used to reach participants; hence, the working women were approached by the researchers' contacts. Further, Karachi and Lahore were purposefully selected as the sample locations since it was necessary to include participants from the urban cities where most middle-income working women live and purchase masstige fashion. Data collection was via an online Google survey, which was distributed using quota sampling. Quota sampling was considered to maximize the representation of the total population from each city selected (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Sarstedt et al., 2020).

The sample size for the study was 300, which was distributed to middle-income working women in Karachi and Lahore. The sample was considered using the rule of thumb 'of times'. According to Hair et al. (2017) the sample size can be determined using five times the number of questions on the survey. This survey has 30 items, therefore the sample size should be 150. However, the sample size determined for this study was 300, in recognition of the known huge variation in response rate in Pakistan, ranging from 40-70% (Akbar & Akhter, 2011). At the same time, the response rate for social sciences research varies between 5-35% (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016a) and also is supported by other researchers (Al Koliby et al., 2022; Mokbel Al Koliby et al., 2024). Consequently, the sample size was increased from 150 to 300. In a similar study on masstige, a sample of 321 was considered for investigation (Uluturk & Asan, 2024). In this study, 257 surveys were obtained, from which 26 were rejected because of invalid responses and the presence of outliers, leaving 231 valid and usable surveys representing a response rate of 77%. Further, since the survey was designed on a Google form, where it was mandatory to answer all questions, there were no missing values.

Among the respondents in terms of age, 31.60% fell between the ages of 24 and 29 years, 36.36% between 30 and 35 years, 14.71% between the ages of 36 and 40 years, 8.22 % between the ages 41 and 45 years, and 9.09% above 45 years. In terms of the respondents' education, 0.86% had matriculate, 0.43% an intermediate, 25.54% a bachelor's degree, 61.47% a master's degree, 9.95% a PhD degree, and others were accounted for by the remaining 1.73%. Additionally, only respondents whose household income was between 80,000PKR and 300,000PKR were included for data analysis. Those earning between 80,000PKR and 135,000PKR amounted to 46.69%, those between 135,001PKR and 190,000PKR accounted for 22.17%, and those between 190,001PKR and 245,000PKR

comprised 13.22%. Only a small percentage of 7.78% earned between 245,001PKR and 300,000PKR. Those earning above and below the income range accounted for 10.11% and were not part of the analysis. From a total 231 respondents, 141 respondents were from Karachi and 90 from Lahore. Further, Khaadi (28.6%), followed by Sapphire (12.1%), were found to be the most prestigious masstige fashion brands in consumer opinion; Khaadi (37.7%) and Sapphire (13.0%) also had the most social media marketing and were, therefore, investigated as masstige fashion brands. Additionally, Facebook (52.81%), followed by Instagram (41.69%) were the social media marketing platforms most used by masstige fashion brands. The participants' purchase frequency for the last six months showed that 19.8 % purchased less than twice, 45% purchased between three and five times, and the remaining 35.2% purchased more than five times five times.

3.2. Instruments

The survey used in this study comprised four sections. Section A was a screening question to establish whether respondents were eligible to participate in the study. A monthly household income of 80,000PKR-300,000PKR was stipulated as the benchmark to ensure that only middle-income working women participated in the survey. Section B recorded the measurement items for the study's independent and dependent variables. Perceived brand authenticity, was assessed using six items adopted from Schallehn et al. (2014). Five measurement items for functional values were adopted from Han and Kim (2020); six item scales for symbolic values were adopted from Han and Kim (2020); four items for experiential values were adopted from Han and Kim (2020), five items for social media marketing were adopted from Kim and Ko (2012), and four items for consumer inspiration were taken from Das, Saha, et al. (2022). Section C of the questionnaire investigated the demographic information, and Section D included respondents' experiences with social media marketing by masstige fashion brands. With respect to scale design, a dichotomous scale was used for Sections A and D. Section B consisted of one open-ended question asking respondents to name the 'most prestigious' masstige brand in their opinion; and other questions about the constructs, including the independent (perceived brand authenticity, functional values, symbolic values, experiential value, and social media marketing) and dependent variables (consumer inspiration) measured with multiple items on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated 'strongly disagree' and 5 'strongly agree'. Section C included one open-ended question asking respondents to indicate the name of the organization where they worked.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling

The study used the partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach to investigate the research model by assessing the measurement, and structural models (Chin et al., 2003). PLS-SEM has been acknowledged as a good analytical tool for small samples, where fewer normality assumptions exist (Ali et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2014).

4.2. Measurement Model

A reflective model was used to assess the measurement model's internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Hair et al. (2019) found that internal consistency was adequate when factor item loadings were more than 0.70, and that convergent validity was established when values of factor item loadings exceeded 0.70, composite validity (CR) surpassed 0.70, and the average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 1 shows that most constructs exceeded the acceptable limit, except SYMBV4 (0.663), which was slightly below the threshold but still permissible as with relation to AVE and CR, the values meet the threshold criteria. Hence, the model had adequate internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity.

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity.

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Consumer inspiration	CI1	0.876	0.947	0.816
	CI2	0.920		
	CI3	0.904		
	CI4	0.913		
Experiential values	EXPV1	0.806	0.908	0.713
	EXPV2	0.876		
	EXPV3	0.841		
	EXPV4	0.853		
Functional values	FV1	0.801	0.885	0.606
	FV2	0.783		
	FV3	0.789		
	FV4	0.779		
	FV5	0.738		
Social media marketing	SMM2	0.774	0.871	0.628
	SMM3	0.788		
	SMM4	0.831		
	SMM5	0.776		
Symbolic values	SYMBV1	0.820	0.885	0.661
	SYMBV2	0.884		

	SYMBV3	0.868		
	SYMBV4	0.663		
	SYMBV5	0.820		
Perceived brand authenticity	PBA1	0.799	0.917	0.648
	PBA2	0.833		
	PBA3	0.769		
	PBA4	0.831		
	PBA5	0.779		
	PBA6	0.815		

The heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio was used to check for the discriminant validity of the constructs. Discriminant validity was established when the values were less than 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). The results presented in Table 2 show that the values fall below the threshold range, thus confirming the adequacy of the discriminant validity.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity (HTMT).

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Consumer Inspiration						
(2) Experiential Values	0.596					
(3) Functional Values	0.451	0.828				
(4) Perceived Brand Authenticity	0.434	0.673	0.722			
(5) Social Media Marketing	0.55	0.661	0.566	0.474		
(6) Symbolic Values	0.607	0.811	0.815	0.662	0.543	

4.3. Structural Model

The structural model was assessed to verify the proposed hypotheses via bootstrapping analysis (5,000 subsamples) to estimate the path and their significance. The results presented in Table 3 and Figure 2 show the association between the independent and dependent variables. Precisely, H1 stated that perceived brand authenticity has a positive impact on consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands. The results of the study show an insignificant ($\beta = 0.063$, $t = 0.786$, $p = 0.432$) relationship between perceived brand authenticity and consumer inspiration. Therefore, H1 was not supported. Likewise, H2 stated that functional values have a positive impact on consumer inspiration. The results show an insignificant relationship ($\beta = -0.125$, $t = 1.400$, $p = 0.162$) between functional values and consumer inspiration. Hence, H2 was not supported. On the other hand, H3 stated that symbolic values positively impact consumer inspiration and showed a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.300$, $t = 3.660$, $p = 0.000$) between symbolic values and consumer inspiration. Thus, H3 was supported. Similarly, H4 stated that experiential values positively impact consumer inspiration and showed a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.246$, $t = 2.535$, $p = 0.011$) between social media marketing and consumer inspiration. Thus, supporting H4. Further, H5 stated that social media marketing positively impacts consumer inspiration and showed a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.252$, $t = 3.755$, $p = 0.000$) between social media marketing and consumer inspiration. Hence, H5 was supported.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing.

Relationships	Standardized Beta	t-values	p-values	LL	UL	f^2	VIF
H1 Perceived brand authenticity ---> Consumer inspiration	0.063	0.786	0.432	−0.092	0.217	0.004	1.825
H2 Functional values ---> Consumer inspiration	−0.125	1.400	0.162	−0.316	0.034	0.01	2.532
H3 Symbolic values ---> Consumer inspiration	0.300	3.660	0.000	0.148	0.470	0.064	2.288
H4 Experiential values ---> Consumer inspiration	0.246	2.535	0.011	0.061	0.450	0.036	2.703
H5 Social media marketing ---> Consumer inspiration	0.252	3.755	0.000	0.112	0.377	0.071	1.445

Note: *p<0.05; Std β=Standardized Beta; LL=Lower Limit; UL=Upper Limit; f^2=Effect Size; VIF=Variance Inflation Factor,
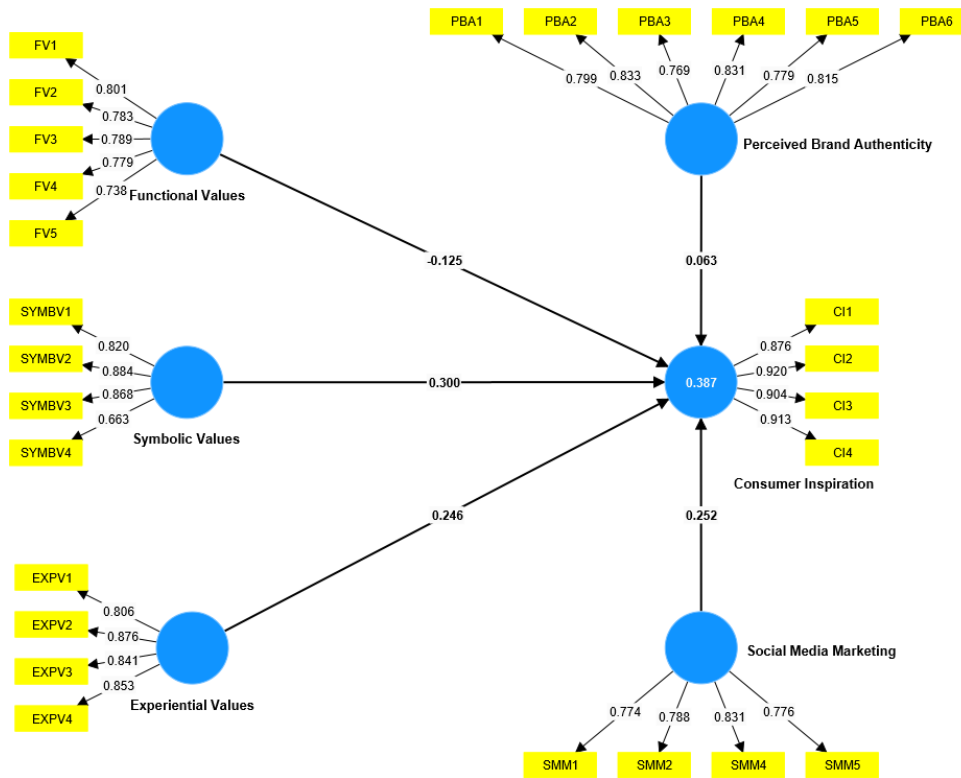
Figure 2: Structural model.

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of perceived brand authenticity, consumption values (i.e., functional, symbolic, and experiential values), and social media marketing on consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands in Pakistan. The first hypothesis, H1, that perceived brand authenticity positively impacts consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands in Pakistan was not supported. The insignificant association indicates that middle-income working women are not inspired to buy masstige fashion. Consumers are stimulated by the masstige purchase's meaning, specifically whether it uplifts their self-esteem and social reputation. Accordingly, perceived brand authenticity is found unimportant in inspiring consumers. These findings correspond with those of Kumar et al. (2021) researching Indian and Canadian consumers of masstige fashion, who cited extrinsic motivation as their reason to purchase masstige; on that, perceived brand authenticity is an internally-held consumer motivation and perception for the masstige fashion brands' genuineness and, hence, is not a strong factor to evoke masstige purchase.

Likewise, functional values were found to have an insignificant relation with consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands in Pakistan. Thus, not supporting H2 as predicted. These findings are not congruent with the preceding research (Das et al., 2022; Das, Jebarajakirthy, et al., 2022; Mohd Suki et al., 2022). For instance, Das, Jebarajakirthy et al. (2022) used SOR theory and focused on consumption values as a stimulus for consumer inspiration on masstige fashion conducted with middle-income women in India. They found functional values, in addition to other consumption values, to evoke consumer inspiration. In another study, Das et al. (2022) used Expectancy Value Theory (Vroom, 1964) finding perceived values, including functional values, as drivers of masstige inspiration among middle-income car buyers in India. They collected data from consumers of masstige cars, observing that functional values guide consumers towards a rational assessment based on the quality and price of the offer. However, the current study is conducted on masstige fashion, and the differences between that and masstige car purchase are important since the product's physical life and functional performance are gauged by consumers and in the context of masstige car purchase, the vehicle's life, maintenance, and social status may have a different priority in consumer inspiration. Additionally, in contrast with clothing, cars are big ticket items which not only cost more to purchase but are bought on the premise of durability and reliability whilst also being high involvement goods. Thus, functional values have significance and can evoke inspiration depending on the masstige category. Therefore, the results of this study are not in line with existing studies, and hence, functional values are not found to inspire consumers for masstige purchase intention.

Interestingly, the results showed symbolic values are significantly associated with consumer inspiration for masstige fashion. Henceforth, H3 was supported. The findings agree with previous research, such as Das, Jebarajakirthy et al. (2022) found that in addition to other consumption values, symbolic values positively correlate with consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands. Likewise, Mansoor et al. (2024e) argued symbolic motivations to be a stimulus for inspiration towards masstige, using masstige theory, and found it to influence the purchase intention of masstige cars and clothing in Pakistan. Further, symbolic values have proven to be a precursor to consumer inspiration for masstige fashion, as according to Kumar et al. (2022), consumption of masstige symbolizes social status, self-expression and conspicuousness. This implies masstige consumers buy

masstige fashion as it is symbolic of their hopes to convey quality and indicate their possession of certain desired values (Mansoor et al. 2024). Moreover, masstige consumption is symbolic of lavish experiences for the consumer (Jiang et al., 2016).

Moroever, experiential value was also found to have a significant association with consumer inspiration for masstige fashion. Thus, sustaining H4 as postulated. These outcomes agree with the findings of previous studies (Andonopoulos et al., 2023; Das, Jebarajakirthy, et al., 2022; Khoi et al., 2020; Kwon & Boger, 2021). Specifically, Das, Jebarajakirthy et al. (2022) investigated experiential value in addition to other consumption values finding them to have a positive relation with consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands. They tested the SOR theory and found an association between experiential value and consumer inspiration. Additionally, Han and Kim (2020b) studied consumption values, including experiential value, in the context of luxury goods, and found these values to structure the purchase intention of these brands and to possess the ability to inspire. Thus, the finding that experiential value is found to inspire consumers for masstige fashion is in line with existing studies.

In the same vein, social media marketing has a significant association with consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands. Therefore, supporting H5 is as expected. These findings echo those of previous research, Sharma et al. (2022) for instance, social media marketing activities inspire and arouse consumer inspiration and consumer-based brand equity, causing behavioural consequences. On the other hand, Sheng et al. (2020a) studied social, informational and personal perspectives of social media marketing, determining that it is a precursor to consumer inspiration. Their research focused on social media marketing to facilitate the interaction between marketers and customers and media richness, thereby widening the likelihood of new possibilities that evoke consumer inspiration. This implies that the social media marketing platform is gaining in its ability to influence the perception of consumers and their consumption behaviour (Mason et al., 2021). In addition, social media offers rich content which elicits new ideas from users, and provides a versatile environment (e.g. pictures, video, chat box, and live streaming) that facilitates consumer inspiration (Sheng et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2023).

6. CONCLUSION

The present study makes several important contributions to theory. It examined five hypothesized relationships via the PLS-SEM approach, in the context of masstige fashion brands in Pakistan. The proposed model has a robust predictive capability, accounting for 38.7% of the variation in consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands in Pakistan, thus inferring that this aspect is worthy of further investigation. In addition, the study has advanced the existing understanding of the application of marketing constructs incorporating the aspects of perceived brand authenticity, functional values, symbolic values, experiential values and social media marketing in a unified framework to predict consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands in Pakistan. It has provided answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: Do perceived brand authenticity, consumption values (i.e., functional values, symbolic values, and experiential values), and social media marketing impact consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands in Pakistan?

The research confirmed that symbolic values are the strongest predictor of consumer inspiration towards masstige fashion brands through adopting a PLS-SEM approach. This is followed by two other predictors: social media marketing and experiential values. Contrary to what was expected, the empirical research found that perceived brand authenticity and functional values had an insignificant impact on consumer inspiration for masstige fashion brands. Of the three factors with significant impact, symbolic values were the predominant predictor of consumer inspiration for masstige fashion. This study has addressed the suggestions of Das et al. (2022) and Sharma et al. (2021) to evaluate the influence of perceived brand authenticity, functional values, symbolic values, experiential values and social media marketing on improving the robustness of the findings. Notably, as per the illustrated proposed model in Figure 2, these discoveries allow for the advancement of extant literature in consumer behaviour towards masstige fashion brands.

The quantitative research findings offer several noteworthy contributions to masstige fashion retailing and marketing management decisions. Understanding the impact of the three supported factors with more emphasis on symbolic values for consumer inspiration of masstige fashion can aid marketers in tailoring their strategies more effectively. In addition, the masstige clothing industry is a key sector in the development of fashion and economic growth in the country. Therefore, the findings are of immense use to policymakers within the fashion sector. Additionally, they are critical for masstige practitioners regarding the use of symbolic values, experiential values and social media marketing to increase profit by focusing on consumer inspiration instead of run-of-the-mill marketing strategies for increasing brand promotion using traditional modes. It is expected that masstige fashion will promote strong inspiration among consumers, especially the growing middle-income market that wants affordable prestige goods but is also constrained by rising inflation and overall economic slowdown, thereby placing traditional, unaffordable luxury out of reach. In the effort for effective marketing, the two consumption values of symbolic values and experiential values are the ones which will provide the greatest assistance in masstige brand management decisions.

Additionally, based on the consumer preference for symbolic and experiential values, consumer profiling, segmentation and brand positioning on social and/or emotional sensory appeal should be made. Further, the positive experience consumers derive from their masstige fashion purchases should be used to build brand differentiation, interaction, and a relationship between the brand and the consumer. The same relationship may lead to brand attitude, trust likelihood of actual purchase and brand loyalty. Furthermore, using social media marketing as a strategy for masstige fashion should appeal to middle-income working women since they are slowly

learning to be well versed with this platform. The social media marketing strategy should enhance avenues of co-creativity and engagement with the brand since from the outset, women consider this platform a neutral source of advertising. Marketers should capitalize upon this trust and make the most of their online presence to target middle-income women. It is expected that with a deluge of masstige fashion brands in the market, consumers will likely interact and bond with a brand that communicates and promotes itself effectively in its social media marketing campaigns. This requires marketers to address the intrinsic and extrinsic meaning that consumers associate with masstige fashion and to encourage the boost to the self-image, autonomy and achievement consumers sense when they decide to spend their own money on this fashion purchase which mirrors their being and independence. In the context of Pakistan, this socioeconomic independence is not commonly found as the society is patriarchal, and men make most decisions both inside and outside the house. Hence, social media marketing campaigns aimed at middle-income women may result in increased consumer interaction, stronger engagement and brand attitude leading to more likelihood of purchase and profits. Consequently, symbolic values, experiential values and social media marketing strategies should be used to foster consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands.

The study is not free from limitations, and further research is suggested to test and validate the findings in a broader context. Additionally, as the variables considered in this study were perceived brand authenticity, functional values, symbolic values, experiential values and social media marketing, it is recommended that additional factors for consumer inspiration to purchase masstige fashion brands be included in future studies. Moreover, future research should also investigate whether consumer psychographics and demographic information such as gender, level of education, and monthly income have any moderating effect on the relationship between these factors to gain broader insights.

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