



Mass prestige, brand happiness and brand evangelism among consumers

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ABSTRACT

Grounded on the Masstige theory, this study examines the direct and indirect impact of Mass Prestige of a Brand (MPB), Brand Perception (BP), and Propensity to Pay the Premium (PPP) on Brand Evangelism (BE) via Brand Happiness (BH) as a mediator. Moreover, the moderating role of Self-pleasing Experience (SPE) between Masstige and BH and the interactive effect of Product Beliefs (PB) with BH to check its impact on BE was assessed. Two independent studies using cross-sectional and time-lagged approaches were conducted among cosmetics and clothing brand consumers. Results supported all the hypothesized paths with minor differences in impact size for both studies reflecting MBP, BP, and PPP as important predictors of BE through the underlying mechanism of BH. Likewise, results reveal that SPE acts as a catalyst to enhance BH in consumers, and this happiness further interacts with PB to motivate consumers to evangelize others to buy/use prestigious brands.

1. Introduction

Brands influence consumers' lives worldwide in distinctive ways. Hence the importance of brand management has become multifold (Štreimikienė & Ahmed, 2021). In contrast, there exists a gap in branding theory and practice to embrace consumers' thinking patterns in the contemporary world (Von Wallpach et al., 2017). A massive middle class with a substantial market potential for brands has emerged due to continuous economic growth (Beinhocker, Farrell, & Zainulbhai, 2007; Kharas & Gertz, 2010). In the meantime, the concept of new luxury emerged, and various eccentric modes of marketing luxury products have been invented, promising consumers a superior experience, engagement, and status (Baber et al., 2020; Eckhardt, Belk, & Wilson, 2015; Kumar & Paul, 2018). This new luxury represents the availability, affordability, and marketing of the luxury brands in the mass market, focusing on the middle class. The main motive of this transformation is to create Mass Prestige (Masstige) (Kumar, Paul, & Unnithan, 2020) for the brand.

The "Masstige" was brought into the mainstream of research by Silverstein and Fiske (2003) and is a key strategy based on the phenomenal rise of middle-class consumers who desire luxury products. Moreover, Paul (2015) redefined Masstige as a market penetration strategy for medium and large enterprises. Paul (2018) developed the masstige theory in terms of the marketing mix, which can be further

presented as mass Prestige of a brand (product, promotion, place strategies), brand perception, and propensity to pay the premium (price). Kim et al. (2019) demonstrated the evolution of masstige brands as a rejoinder to the necessity of making luxury brands available to the mass market. Consequently, masstige marketing can be conceptualized as a phenomenon in which expensive or premium products are marketed to many consumers by engendering Mass Prestige (Baber et al., 2020). The process of building a prestigious brand from an ordinary brand can also be called masstige marketing. Moreover, considering the dearth of studies on Masstige (Kumar et al., 2020) and the potential to contribute towards masstige theory, context, and methods, Kumar, Paul, and Starčević (2021) called for research to explore the Masstige in various product categories and geographical regions. Hence, the current study attempts to examine the direct and indirect association of Masstige, i.e., mass Prestige of a brand (MPB), brand perceptions (BP), and propensity to pay the premium (PPP) with brand evangelism (BE) via an underlying mechanism of brand happiness (BH).

Most people invest time, energy, and money to live a happy life (Van Boven, 2005). Conversely, from an organizational perspective, happy customers evaluate the brand experience positively and spread that positivity among others (Peters et al., 2010). Therefore, marketers and psychologists are attracted to the construct of brand happiness (Kumar et al., 2021). Moreover, Kumar et al. (2021) explored happiness in the consumer-brand encounter context and suggested that brand happiness

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needs further investigation. Besides, the literature lacks evidence of how happiness created by the masstige brands results in positive outcomes like brand evangelism (BE). Brand evangelism is the act of spreading positive opinions about a brand and persuading and convincing others to engage with that brand (Matzler, Pichler, & Hemetsberger, 2007). Moreover, Schnebelen and Bruhn (2018) asserted that brand evangelism is an emotion-focused coping strategy that motivates a consumer to persuade others to become a brand user of his/her choice. To the best of the authors' knowledge, the current study is the first attempt to understand the relationship between Masstige (MPB, BP, and PPP) and brand happiness, resulting in brand evangelism on the grounds of the masstige theory (Kumar et al., 2021; Paul, 2018).

Moreover, scholars demonstrated the significance of self-pleasing experience (SPE) for buying and consuming luxury brands (Jain & Mishra, 2020; Tsai, 2005). Durgee and Colarelli O'Connor (1995) asserted that consumers' pleasure in using the products leads to positive outcomes. Considering the importance of SPE in consumers' choice of a product, Khan and Rahman (2016) depicted a continuous need to improve firms' offerings to remain consumers' prime choice. Simultaneously, this study advances the body of literature by examining the interactive effect of SPE with MPB, BP, and PPP to augment the BH among consumers. Furthermore, regardless of the immense importance of the consumers' evaluative judgments about a brand's products (Mainolfi, 2020), research lacks evidence of how product beliefs (PB) impact brand evangelism. Consumers' cognitive beliefs about reliability, design, quality, and craftsmanship are known as product beliefs (Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003). Hence, to bridge the literature gap, the coupled effect of PB with BH to boost BE has been assessed in the current study.

The objectives of the current study are multifold as it aims to; (i) empirically examine the impact of Masstige (MPB, BP, and PPP) on BH and BE, (ii) examine the impact of BH on BE, (iii) examine the mediatory role of BH in between the Masstige (MPB, BP, and PPP) and BE, (iv) investigate the interactive effect of self-pleasing experience with Masstige (MPB, BP, and PPP) to enhance BH among the consumers, and (v) investigate the moderating role of PB in between BH and BE.

2. Literature review, theoretical foundation, and framework

The theoretical framework of the current study is established in the masstige theory proposed by Paul (2015; 2018). This theory highlighted the concept that luxury brands' market share can be increased by targeting the middle-income group without compromising the quality while keeping the price constant (Paul, 2018). Generally, masstige brands are considered quality packed with affordability and available to a wide range of price-conscious consumers (Das, Saha, & Balaji, 2021). Past research significantly contributed to determining the human psychology and role of cognitive development in motivating the consumer to purchase luxury brands (Bembenuddy, Schunk, & Dibenedetto, 2021). In contrast, the current study focused on the role of Masstige in creating and enhancing brand happiness among consumers to make them evangelizers of that brand. Moreover, the hypothesized paths are discussed in detail as follows.

2.1. Masstige (MPB, BP, and PPP), brand evangelism and brand happiness

The mass prestige of a brand with consumers' perception of high quality and trading up for a reasonable premium is characterized as Masstige (Kumar et al., 2020; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Kumar et al. (2020) elaborated that product innovation, supportive placement, diligent promotional strategies, and premium price establish Masstige. The main aim of the Masstige strategy is to reach the middle class who are able and willing to pay premium prices for prestigious brands (Paul, 2015). Paul (2015) introduced a 'Masstige mean score scale' (MMSS) for measuring the MPB, BP, and PPP for prestigious brands. The main motive of the MMSS was to facilitate marketers to evaluate the

usefulness of their marketing mix strategies in diverse geographical locations and economic backgrounds (Baber et al., 2020). Moreover, Paul (2018) developed the masstige theory based on the 4 Ps, categorized the Masstige as MPB, BP, and PPP, and called for focusing on the Masstige strategy to explore its positive outcomes. Therefore, the current study investigates brand evangelism as a positive outcome of Masstige (MPB, BP, and PPP). Matzler et al. (2007, p. 27) defined brand evangelism as "a more active and committed way of spreading positive opinions and trying fervently to convince or persuade others to get engaged with the same brand." Moreover, Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2013) asserted that spontaneous liking of a brand drives consumers to go beyond just sharing good words about it among friends and family. The literature further reveals that consumers passionate about a brand are more likely to engage in brand evangelism (Matzler et al., 2007; Swimberghe, Astakhova, & Wooldridge, 2014). Whereas the current study proposes that positive feelings associated with the use of masstige brands engage consumers in brand evangelism. Hence it is hypothesized that;

H1: *Masstige, i.e., a) mass prestige of a brand, b) brand perception, and c) propensity to pay the premium positively drive consumers' brand evangelism.*

Happiness is an emotional state comprised of satisfaction, joy, fulfillment, and contentment (Diener, 2000). Schnebelen and Bruhn (2018, p. 102) conceptualized brand happiness as "a consumer's greatest emotional fulfillment, a moment-based experience of pleasant high and low arousal emotions, induced at different brand contact points (e.g., via purchase, consumption, advertisements)." Moreover, the impact of various demographic, social, circumstantial, and self-related variables on happiness has been explored previously (Agrawal et al., 2011; Bettingen & Luedicke, 2009; Breslin et al., 2013; Robertson, 2016; Rodríguez-Pose & Von Berlepsch, 2014). However, despite considerable evidence regarding predictors of happiness, few scholars examined brand-induced happiness (Bettingen & Luedicke, 2009; Bruhn & Schnebelen, 2017; Kumar et al., 2021; Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018). Whereas Kumar et al. (2021) extended the brand happiness research, taking the Masstige as an essential predictor of brand happiness. The masstige strategy enables masses to attain prestige via downward extension by appropriately mixing perception, product, price, promotion, and place factors (Paul, 2018). Hence, making Masstige available for the masses compared to luxury, which facilitates few (Kumar & Paul, 2018). Thus, happiness is not confined to those who can afford the luxury; instead, the affordability and consumption of masstige brands can also lead to happiness in consumers (Kumar et al., 2021). Moreover, although research indicates the consumption of prestigious products, i. e., cruises (Hwang & Han, 2014), motorbikes (Kruger, 2018), and mobile phones (Kumar et al., 2021), leads to brand happiness among the consumers; however, still it needs to be explored further (Kumar et al., 2021). Thus, extending the prior knowledge of brand-induced happiness and masstige theory, we proposed that;

H2: *Masstige, i.e., a) mass prestige of a brand, b) brand perception and c) propensity to pay the premium positively influence consumers' brand happiness.*

Brand evangelism is an emotion-focused proselytizing behavior based on which consumers try to convince others to use their favorite brands (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018). Based on its persuasive missionary component, brand evangelism is an extreme form of word of mouth as it goes beyond just talking about one's favorite brand (Becerra & Badri-narayanan, 2013; Matzler et al., 2007). The pleasure associated with brand happiness motivates consumers to share the brand information with others (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018). Hence, consumers recommend the brand to others while embellishing and expressing the brand's pleasurable experience (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Gabbott, Tsarenko, & Mok, 2011). Likewise, Zhong and Moon (2020) asserted

that brand-induced moments of happiness encourage consumers to convince others to get involved with the brand to enjoy those happy moments. Alexandrov, Lilly, and Babakus (2013) further explained that such proselytizing behaviors enable consumers to defend their “self” and decide to purchase/use the brand. This can further be elaborated based on the exchange theory (Adams, 1965), which postulates that consumers promote the brand to return something to the brand in exchange for emotional benefits they received (Gelbrich, 2011). In this study, the emotional benefit is the brand happiness that consumers want to re-experience by establishing subsequent contact with the brand. Hence, based on the understanding that happy people tend to be more communicative and depict pro-social behaviors (Oerlemans & Bakker, 2014), it is hypothesized that;

H3: Brand happiness is positively associated with brand evangelism.

2.2. Brand happiness as a mediator

Happiness has been conceptualized as an individual’s emotional state arising from the situation-based experience of varying intensity; hence, it is induced by purchases, consumption, and events (Schuchert-Guler, Eisend, & Lutters, 2001). Fu and Wang (2020) demonstrated that experiential value induces brand happiness and leads to behavioral intentions among individuals. Besides, Zhong and Moon (2020) reported that brand happiness functions as a mediator between satisfaction and loyalty. Likewise, Eckhaus (2018) demonstrated the underlying mechanism of brand happiness between the association of fashion involvement and purchase intentions. At the same time, the current study advances the body of literature in the area of masstige marketing. It proposes that brand happiness serves as a mediator between Masstige (MBP, BP, and PPP) and brand evangelism. Literature shows that mass prestige and perception of a brand make consumers happy (Hwang & Han, 2014; Kruger, 2018; Kumar et al., 2021; Loureiro & da Cunha, 2017). Besides, financial sacrifice makes consumers re-experience or prolong the brand happiness (Anselmsson, Bondesson, & Johansson, 2014) and tend to pay premium prices for preferred brands (Evan-schitzky et al., 2012). Hence, it can be related to the prestigious brands that consumers are willing to pay premium prices for the excitement and happiness of using masstige brands. Research also shows that brand-induced happiness leads consumers to advocate the brand to others (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018); therefore, they try to convince others to buy/use it (Matzler et al., 2007). Thus, based on the masstige theory that advocates the Masstige as a source of happiness for middle-class consumers, it is proposed that;

H4: Brand happiness mediates the association of Masstige, i.e., a) mass prestige of a brand, b) brand perception and c) propensity to pay the premium with brand evangelism.

2.3. Self-pleasing experience as a moderator

Self-pleasing experience represents the enjoyment and entertainment of using a brand (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Most consumers confer additional significance to the pleasurable experience of consumption (Mansoor & Paul, 2022; Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010). Past literature reveals a significant association between self-pleasing experience and loyalty (Loureiro & da Cunha, 2017; Pantano & Priporas, 2016). Whereas, Khan and Rahman (2016) depicted that a repetition of pleasing experience with online services enhances e-trust among users. Scholars also highlighted the desire for a self-pleasing experience behind luxury consumption (Jain & Mishra, 2020). Besides, Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) demonstrated that consumers prefer non-ownership models for excitement and pleasure for using a product rather than just having it. In addition, the pleasant feelings that develop in consumers after using a brand portray the emotional fulfillment and

happiness that brands provide to consumers in the form of a pleasing experience (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018). Moreover, Kumar et al. (2021) found a positive association between Masstige and brand happiness. This association can be further explained in light of self-pleasing experiences; therefore, hypothesis 5 is derived as follows;

H5: Self-pleasing experience moderates the association of Masstige, i.e., a) mass prestige of a brand, b) brand perception and c) propensity to pay the premium with brand happiness such that the associations are stronger in case of the higher level of self-pleasing experience.

2.4. Product beliefs as a moderator

Product beliefs express consumers’ cognitive beliefs about a product’s characteristics, such as quality, reliability, craftsmanship, and design (Orbaiz & Papadopoulos, 2003). Various informational sources like advertisements, product exposure, use of the product, social media, word of mouth, etc., shape the consumers’ product beliefs (Carter & Maher, 2014). Literature shows that consumers’ buying choices are positively influenced by the qualities and features associated with the products (Aiello et al., 2009; Salazar-Ordóñez et al., 2018). Moreover, Aiello et al. (2009) demonstrated that high product quality beliefs compel consumers to buy luxury goods. Likewise, Mainolfi (2020) also reported the positive outcomes of consumers’ positive beliefs about products. Besides, research indicates that brand happiness results in positive outcomes like positive word of mouth and brand evangelism (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018). Based on the positive outcomes of PB, this study advances the existing body of literature and proposes that;

H6: Product beliefs moderates the relationship of brand happiness with brand evangelism such that the relationship is stronger in the case of the positive product beliefs.

Fig. 1 represents the theoretical framework of the study based on the theory and detailed literature review.

3. Research methodology

This research has investigated the impact of Masstige (MBP, BP, and PPP) on BE via BH as a mediator. Also, the moderating role of SPE in between the association of Masstige (MBP, BP, and PPP) and BH was assessed. Moreover, the interactive effect of PB to enhance the BE among the consumers was investigated. To achieve the research objectives, the researchers conducted two independent studies. Study 1 was conducted among the consumers of cosmetics brands, following a cross-sectional, snowball sampling technique, whereas Study 2 was conducted among the consumers of clothing brands. In Study 2, a time-lagged research design with a mall intercepts survey technique was used.

3.1. Measures

A structured questionnaire consisting of 33 items was designed (See Appendix A) to measure the constructs of the study. Masstige (MPB, BP, and PPP) was measured with the scale developed by Paul (2015, 2019) with 5-items, 2-items, and 3-items for MPB, BP, and PPP, respectively. Brand happiness was measured with a 12-items scale adapted from Schnebelen and Bruhn (2018). Brand evangelism was measured using a 4-items scale adapted from Matzler et al. (2007). The self-pleasing experience was measured with a 4-items scale adapted from Jain and Mishra (2020). Finally, to measure product beliefs, a 4-items scale was adapted from Mainolfi (2020). The scoring instruction provided by the original authors was followed to measure all the scale items.

4. Study 1

Study 1 was conducted among the consumers of cosmetics brands,

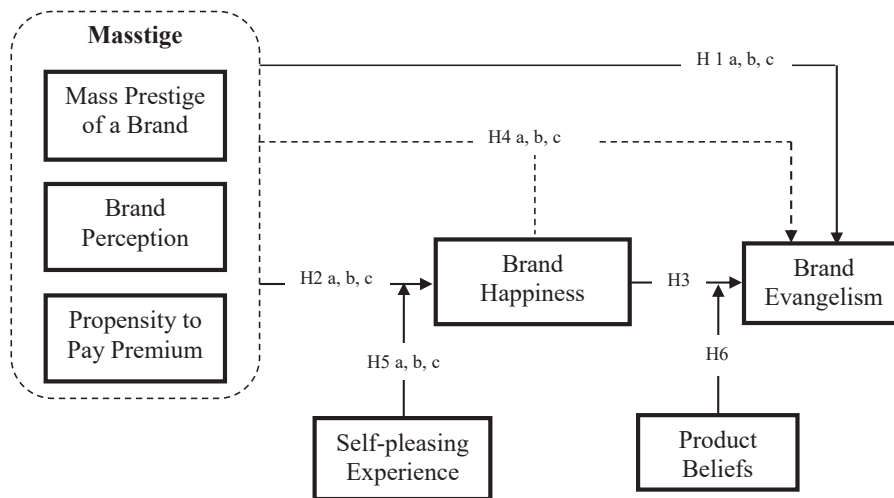


Fig. 1. Theoretical Framework of the Study.

following a cross-sectional.

4.1. Participants and procedures

In Study 1, a self-administered Google survey was disseminated among South Asian real-time consumers of cosmetics brands. Various digital media channels, including WhatsApp, Facebook, email, Twitter, Instagram, etc., were used to disperse the survey questionnaire among the consumers. Many scholars have previously used this technique to assess consumer behaviors while collecting data utilizing various digital channels (Gunawan & Huarng, 2015; Krishen et al., 2016; Shahid & Paul, 2021). The survey questionnaire comprised three parts. Part 1 consists of a note explaining the purpose of the survey, seeking the respondents' consent, and ensuring the anonymity of their responses. Part 2 consists of questions about the respondents' demographic information and a request to think about the brand/brands of cosmetics they have bought/used. Finally, Part 3 consists of 33 items related to the study constructs. The authors further requested that the participants forward the survey to their contacts, thus generating a snowball effect. This data collection process started on December 15, 2020, and till March 15, 2021, the authors received 910 responses. They were further scrutinized for outliers and unengaged responses, and subsequently, 34 responses were excluded from the further analysis resulting in a final data set of 876 responses.

4.2. Respondents profile

The respondents' demographic characteristics depict that 37.8% of respondents were male, and 62.2% were female. 43.5 percent of the respondents were 18–30 years old, 31.2% were 31–40 years old, 17.5% were 40–50 years old, and 7.8% were above 50. 27.7 percent of respondents were graduates, 44.6% were undergraduate, and 27.7% were postgraduates and highly qualified. In addition, 43.8% of the respondents were married, whereas 56.2% were unmarried. 27.4% of the respondents were students, 26.7% were employed, 33.6% were self-employed, 12.3% were others. The income level of the respondents was as follows, 31.5% (PKR 10 K-30), 39.1% (PKR 31 K-50 K), 14.4% (PKR 51 K –75 K), 10.3% (PKR 76 K-100 K), and 4.7% (PKR 101 K and above).

4.3. Data analysis and results

4.3.1. Measurement model

SmartPLS was used for analysis purposes, applying measurement and structural models. The initial screening of the variables and model

testing revealed the positive impact of respondents' gender and education on the dependent variable; therefore, both demographic variables were controlled during further analysis. First, to assess the reliability of the measures, "Cronbach's α (CA)" and "composite reliability (CR)" were calculated by applying the measurement model (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). The results revealed that CA and CR for all the study constructs were above 0.7, meeting the minimum reliability criteria (Sarstedt, Ringle, & Hair, 2017). Then, to establish the convergent validity of the constructs, factor loadings of the measure and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were calculated (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Results showed that all the factor loading of the study constructs was above the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Fig. 2), and AVE was above 0.50 (Henseler et al., 2015; Mansoor & Paul, 2021). A detailed summary of validity and reliability measures is given in Table 1. Furthermore, to establish the discriminant validity of the measures, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio were checked. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that the square root of the AVEs of each construct should be greater than the construct's highest correlation with any other construct in the studied model. Table 1 shows the square root of AVEs and correlations of all constructs, greater than the diagonal correlation values, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. In addition, according to the guidelines provided by Henseler et al. (2015), the HTMT ratio of the constructs should be less than 0.90 to avoid multicollinearity issues. The study results (Table 1) depict all the values of HTMT below 0.9, thus establishing the discriminant validity of the study constructs.

4.3.1.1. Structural model hypothesis testing. The structural model was assessed for collinearity issues before testing the hypothesized paths. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance are the frequently used indicators to assess the collinearity of the formative indicators (Hair et al., 2019). Past research indicates that each predictor constructs VIF value should be lower than 03, and tolerance value should be higher than 0.20 (Becker et al., 2015). For Study 1, all the observed VIF were below 2.4, and tolerance values were above 0.67. Moreover, the structural model was used to assess the significance of the hypothesized paths (Sarstedt et al., 2017). The bootstrapping technique was employed using 500 sub-samples (Henseler et al., 2015; Mansoor, 2021). Moreover, β -coefficient, t -value, and p -values were calculated to confirm the results. Likewise, to observe the changes in the dependent construct and determine the overall model fitness, the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) was used. The R^2 values depict that 77.8% of the brand evangelism showed by the respondents is due to independent, mediating, and moderating variables of the current study (Fig. 2). These results show a good fit for the model. The results (Table 3) revealed a significant and positive association of MPB ($\beta = 0.226^{**}$, $t = 4.283$), BP ($\beta = 0.279^{***}$, t

Table 1
Convergent and Discriminant Validity (Study 1).

| Var. | CA | CR | AVE | Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) | | | | | | | |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| MBP | 0.787 | 0.889 | 0.616 | 0.784 | | | | | | | |
| BP | 0.791 | 0.807 | 0.584 | 0.578 | 0.764 | | | | | | |
| PPP | 0.743 | 0.786 | 0.647 | 0.532 | 0.476 | 0.804 | | | | | |
| BH | 0.827 | 0.938 | 0.557 | 0.495 | 0.489 | 0.522 | 0.746 | | | | |
| BE | 0.805 | 0.822 | 0.606 | 0.504 | 0.458 | 0.507 | 0.472 | 0.778 | | | |
| SPE | 0.756 | 0.854 | 0.595 | 0.621 | 0.407 | 0.461 | 0.444 | 0.393 | 0.771 | | |
| PB | 0.754 | 0.851 | 0.589 | 0.445 | 0.397 | 0.483 | 0.548 | 0.436 | 0.518 | 0.767 | |

Note: CA = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. The diagonal elements (in bold) are the square roots of the AVEs. Below the diagonal elements are the HTMT values."

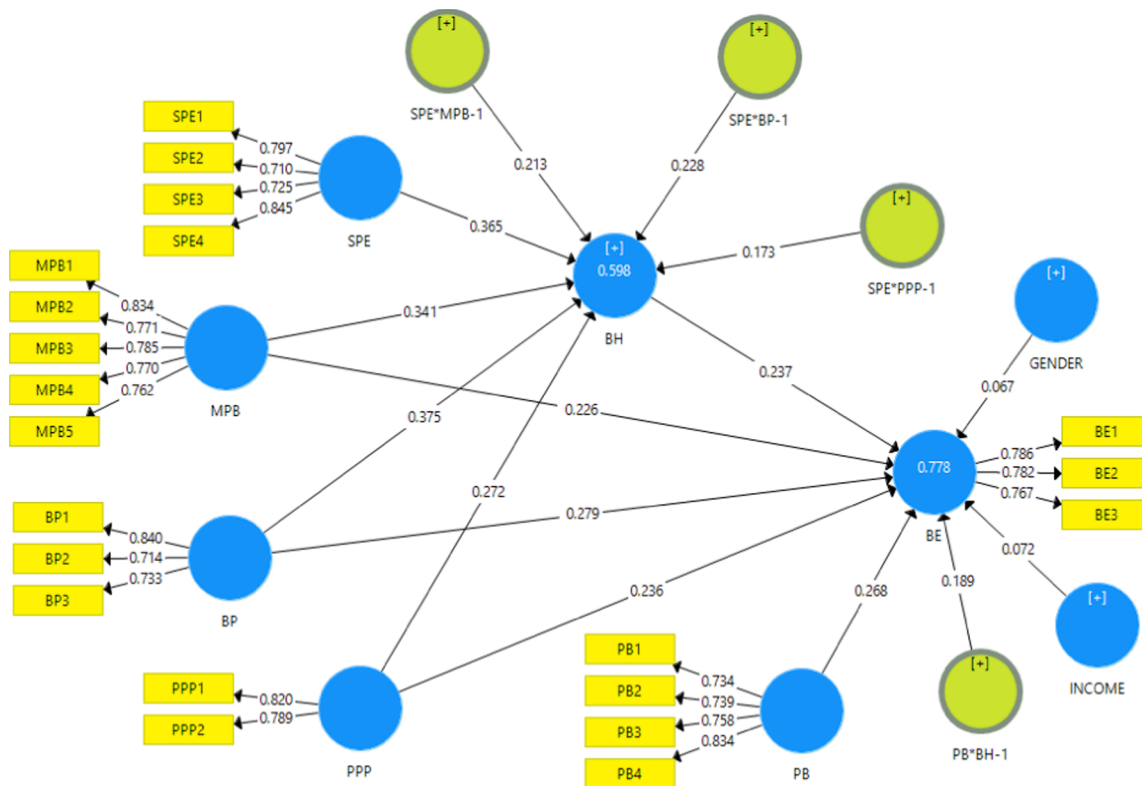


Fig. 2. Full Measurement Model (Study 1).

= 5.440), *PPP* ($\beta = 0.236^{***}$, $t = 4.791$) and *BH* ($\beta = 0.237^{***}$, $t = 4.800$) with *BE*. Likewise, a positive and significant association of *MPB* ($\beta = 0.341^{***}$, $t = 6.791$), *BP* ($\beta = 0.375^{***}$, $t = 7.367$), and *PPP* ($\beta = 0.272^{***}$, $t = 5.358$) with *BH* was found. Thus, the study results fully supported H1a, b, c; H2 a, b, c; and H3. The results also supported H4 a, b and c. An indirect and positive impact of *MPB* ($\beta = 0.201^{**}$, $t = 4.021$), *BP* ($\beta = 0.218^{**}$, $t = 4.214$), and *PPP* ($\beta = 0.252^{***}$, $t = 5.123$) with *BE* in the presence of *BH* as a mediator was proved by the results.

Moreover, to assess the moderating effect of *SPE* between the association of *MBP*, *BP*, and *PPP* with *BH*, interaction terms between the moderator, i.e., *SPE* and predictor variables, i.e., *MBP*, *BP*, and *PPP*, were created using the product indicator approach in PLS-SEM to examine their impact on *BH* among the cosmetics brands' consumers. The results show the significant effect of interaction terms *SPE*MBP-1*, *SPE*BP-1*, and *SPE*PPP-1* on *BH* (Table 3). In addition, the R^2 for the main effect of the predictors on *BH* was ($R^2 = 0.391$), whereas its R^2 with interaction effects was ($R^2 = 0.598$). The change in R^2 depicts an increase in the explanatory power of *BH* by 20.7%. Likewise, to assess the moderating effect of *PB* between the association of *BH* with *BE*, an interaction term between the moderator, i.e., *PB* and *BH*, were created to

examine its impact on *BE* among the cosmetics brands' consumers. The results show the significant effect of interaction terms, *PB*BH-1*, on *BE* (Table 3). In addition, the R^2 for the main effect of the predictor and mediating constructs on *BE* was ($R^2 = 0.613$), whereas its R^2 by adding interaction term was ($R^2 = 0.778$). Thus, the change in R^2 depicts an increase in the explanatory power of *BE* by 16.5%. Moreover, Fig. 5 represents the full structural model of the study. The interaction effects are explained through the following moderation graphs.

Fig. 3 a, b, and c depict an enhanced level of brand happiness among consumers of cosmetics brands due to the interactive effect of *SPE*MBP-1*, *SPE*BP-1*, and *SPE*PPP-1*. Besides, the line labeled for higher values of *SPE* has a steeper gradient than the line labeled for lower values of *SPE* for all three moderating effects. Thus, consumers enjoy more brand happiness when the self-pleasing experience for using cosmetics brands interacts with the Masstige (*MBP*, *BP*, and *PPP*). Thus, hypotheses H5 a, b, and c for Study 1 was supported.

Fig. 4 shows an increased level of brand evangelism among the cosmetics brands consumers due to the interactive effect of *PB*BH-1*. The line labeled for positive *PB* has a steeper gradient than the line labeled for negative *PB*. This represents that when consumers are happy

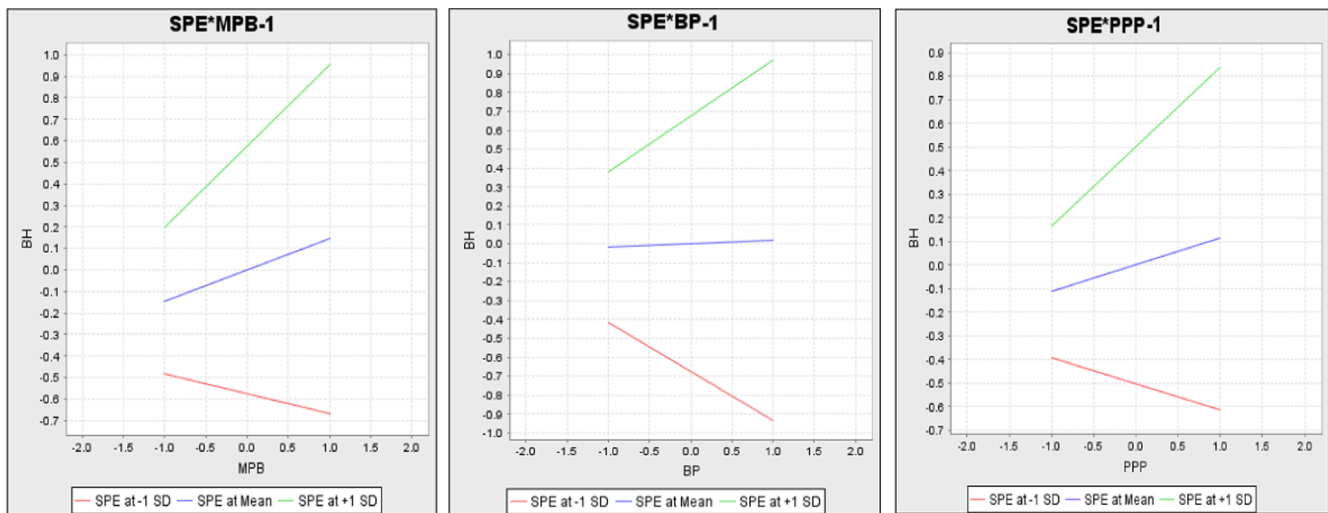


Fig. 3. a, b, c. Interaction plots for the moderating effects of SPE (Study 1).

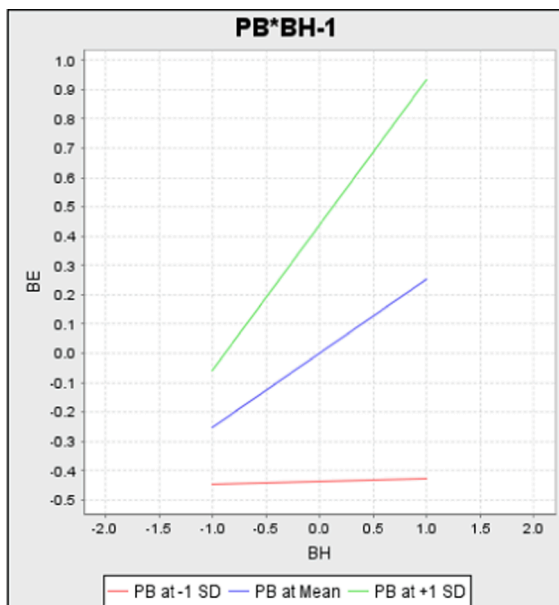


Fig. 4. Interaction plots for the moderating effects of PB (Study 1).

buying/using prestigious brands with positive beliefs about their quality and uniqueness, they are more engaged in brand evangelism. Hence, they want to persuade their close ones to buy/use the same brand to enjoy the same happiness. Thus, hypothesis H6 for Study 1 was also supported.

4.4. Brief discussion

Study 1 results present the positive impact of MBP, BP, and PPP on BH and BE, depicting that Masstige plays an essential role in making consumers happy and motivating them to evangelize others to buy such brands. Results also showed that brand happiness mediated the association of Masstige with BE. Hence it is inferred that MPB, BP, and PPP bring joy among the consumers based on the self-fulfillment of being a user of a Masstige brand. Moreover, the individuals who reported a higher level of BH also reported a higher BE level, thus proving the BH as an underlying mechanism between Masstige and BE. In addition, results revealed the significance of SPE to augment brand happiness among the consumers. Hence marketers should focus on making the consumers'

experiences pleasant when encountering prestigious brands. Furthermore, results showed that consumers' positive beliefs about prestigious brands make consumers spread happiness from consuming such brands. This can be done in the form of convincing others to buy/use the same brand.

5. Study 2

Study 2 used a time-lagged research design by applying the mall intercept survey technique (Leong et al., 2020; Noor, Mansoor, & Rabani, 2021).

5.1. Participants and procedures

A multistage random sampling technique was used to collect primary data from the respondents visiting the shopping malls (i.e., The Giga Mall, The City Shopping Mall, The Centaurus Mall, and The Safa Gold Mall) in the twin cities, i.e., Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. During this process, the customers visiting the shopping malls were stopped, and their voluntary participation in the study was requested. The purpose of the survey was explained, and anonymity was ensured to them. If selected respondents were reluctant to participate in the survey, the subsequent possible respondents were approached. Also, strict adherence to COVID-19 precautionary measures was ensured while interacting with respondents. Based on the participants' willingness to participate in the time-lagged survey, they were guided about the entire survey procedure, including obtaining information at two different times. The data collection process started on October 15, 2020. Those who showed a willingness to participate were invited to the research facility located in the mall to fill out the questionnaire. The contact information of all the qualified respondents was recorded and saved by the authors to contact them again in 5 months to answer the remaining part of the survey.

Before handling the questionnaire, respondents were asked to think about the brand/brands of clothing they bought/used. The survey questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part 1 consisted of questions related to the respondents' demographic information. Part 2 consisted of 26 items related to the five study constructs, i.e., Masstige (MPB, BP, and PPP), brand happiness, and self-pleasing experience. Following this procedure, in 3 months, the authors successfully collected 835 responses from all selected locations at the end of the Time 1 survey on January 15, 2021. After 6 weeks of completing the Time 1 survey, the authors contacted all respondents who participated in the Time 1 survey on March 1, 2021. They were requested to complete the remaining part of the

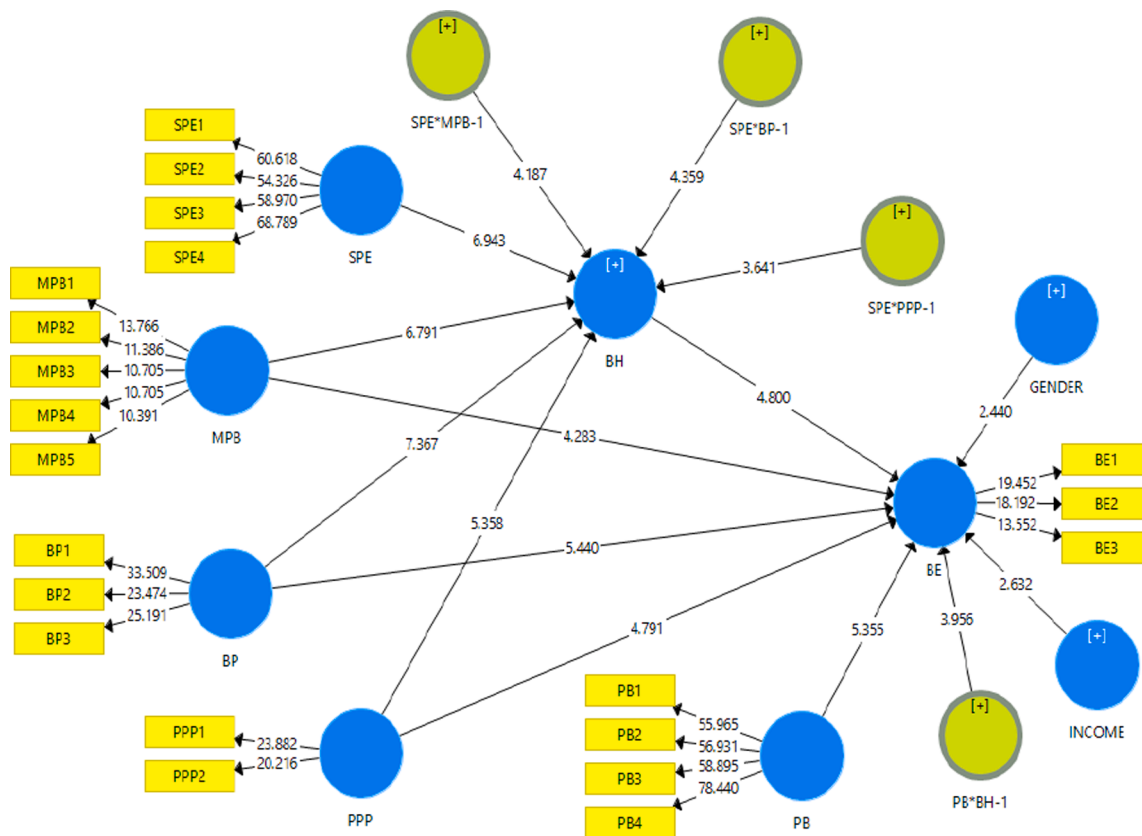


Fig. 5. Full Structural Model (Study 1).

survey comprising items of product beliefs and brand evangelism. Upon initial contact, it was realized that 153 respondents were out of communication due to multiple reasons. In the Time 2 survey, 682 respondents participated in a Google survey via email or WhatsApp as per their feasibility until May 05, 2021. Out of 682 questionnaires, the authors received 619 questionnaires back. All the responses were scrutinized further, and after careful screening, 18 questionnaires were found with unengaged patterns and 24 with missing values, which were excluded from further analysis. Therefore, the authors left with 577 useable paired questionnaires filled at Time 1 and Time 2 by the same respondents, generating a final response rate of 69.10%.

5.2. Respondents profile

The respondents' demographic characteristics depict that 41.6% of respondents were male, and 59.4% were female. 40.6 percent of the respondents were 18–30 years old, 29.8% were 31–40 years old, 19.4% were 40–50 years old, and 10.2% were above 50. In addition, 25.2 percent of the respondents were undergraduates, 45.4% were graduates, and 29.4% were postgraduates and highly qualified. Moreover, 47.3% of the respondents were married, whereas 52.7% were unmarried. 20.6% of the respondents were students, 29.4% were employed, 35.2% were self-employed, 14.7% were others. The income level of the respondents was as follows, 34.2% (10 K PKR-30 K PKR), 34.6% (31 K PKR-50 K PKR), 16.2% (51 K PKR-75 K PKR), 9.3% (76 K PKR-100 K PKR) and 5.7% (101 K PKR and above).

5.3. Data analysis and results

5.3.1. Measurement model

Like the Study 1 results, in Study 2, the respondents' gender and education significantly impacted the dependent variable; therefore, both demographic variables were controlled during further analysis.

Moreover, as reported in Table 2, the results reflect that CA and CR for all study constructs were above 0.7, meeting the minimum reliability criteria (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Furthermore, results showed that all the factor loading of the study constructs was above the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Fig. 6), and AVE was above 0.50 (Henseler et al., 2015). Moreover, Table 2 shows the square root of AVEs are greater than the diagonal correlation values, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. Furthermore, the study results (Table 2) depict all the values of HTMT below 0.9, thus establishing the discriminant validity of the study constructs (Henseler et al., 2015).

5.3.2. Structural model hypothesis testing

Results revealed that for Study 2, all the observed VIF were below 2.2, and tolerance values were above 0.61, indicating no collinearity issues. Moreover, in Study 2, the R² values of the dependent variable show that 56.2% of the brand evangelism displayed by the respondents is due to independent, mediating, and moderating variables of the current study (Fig. 6). These results show a good fit for the model. The results (Table 3) revealed a significant and positive association of MPB ($\beta = 0.231^{***}$, $t = 4.736$), BP ($\beta = 0.253^{***}$, $t = 5.036$), PPP ($\beta = 0.254^{***}$, $t = 5.056$) and BH ($\beta = 0.262^{***}$, $t = 5.279$) with BE. Likewise, a positive and significant association of MPB ($\beta = 0.323^{***}$, $t = 6.408$), BP ($\beta = 0.345^{***}$, $t = 6.805$), and PPP ($\beta = 0.298^{***}$, $t = 6.180$) with BH was found. Thus, the study results fully supported H1a, b, c; H2 a, b, c; and H3. The results also supported H4 a, b and c. An indirect and positive impact of MPB ($\beta = 0.225^{***}$, $t = 4.575$), BP ($\beta = 0.221^{***}$, $t = 4.487$), and PPP ($\beta = 0.240^{***}$, $t = 4.922$) with BE in the presence of BH as a mediator was proved by the results. The results show the significant impact of interaction terms SPE*MBP-2, SPE*BP-2, and SPE*PPP-2 on BH (Table 3). In addition, the change in R² of BH depicts an increase in the explanatory power of BH by 19.3%. Likewise, the results show the significant effect of interaction terms, PB*BH-2, on BE (Table 3). The change in R² depicts an increase in the explanatory power of BE by

Table 2
Convergent and Discriminant Validity (Study 2).

| Var. | CA | CR | AVE | Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) | | | | | | | |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| MBP | 0.771 | 0.887 | 0.614 | 0.783 | | | | | | | |
| BP | 0.762 | 0.853 | 0.559 | 0.491 | 0.747 | | | | | | |
| PPP | 0.789 | 0.757 | 0.610 | 0.503 | 0.521 | 0.781 | | | | | |
| BH | 0.820 | 0.935 | 0.545 | 0.483 | 0.441 | 0.490 | 0.738 | | | | |
| BE | 0.795 | 0.823 | 0.608 | 0.476 | 0.411 | 0.397 | 0.428 | 0.779 | | | |
| SPE | 0.813 | 0.864 | 0.616 | 0.500 | 0.507 | 0.390 | 0.470 | 0.443 | 0.784 | | |
| PB | 0.817 | 0.866 | 0.618 | 0.542 | 0.480 | 0.476 | 0.503 | 0.451 | 0.496 | 0.786 | |

Note: “CA = Cronbach’s Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. The diagonal elements (in bold) are the square roots of the AVEs. Below the diagonal elements are the HTMT values.”

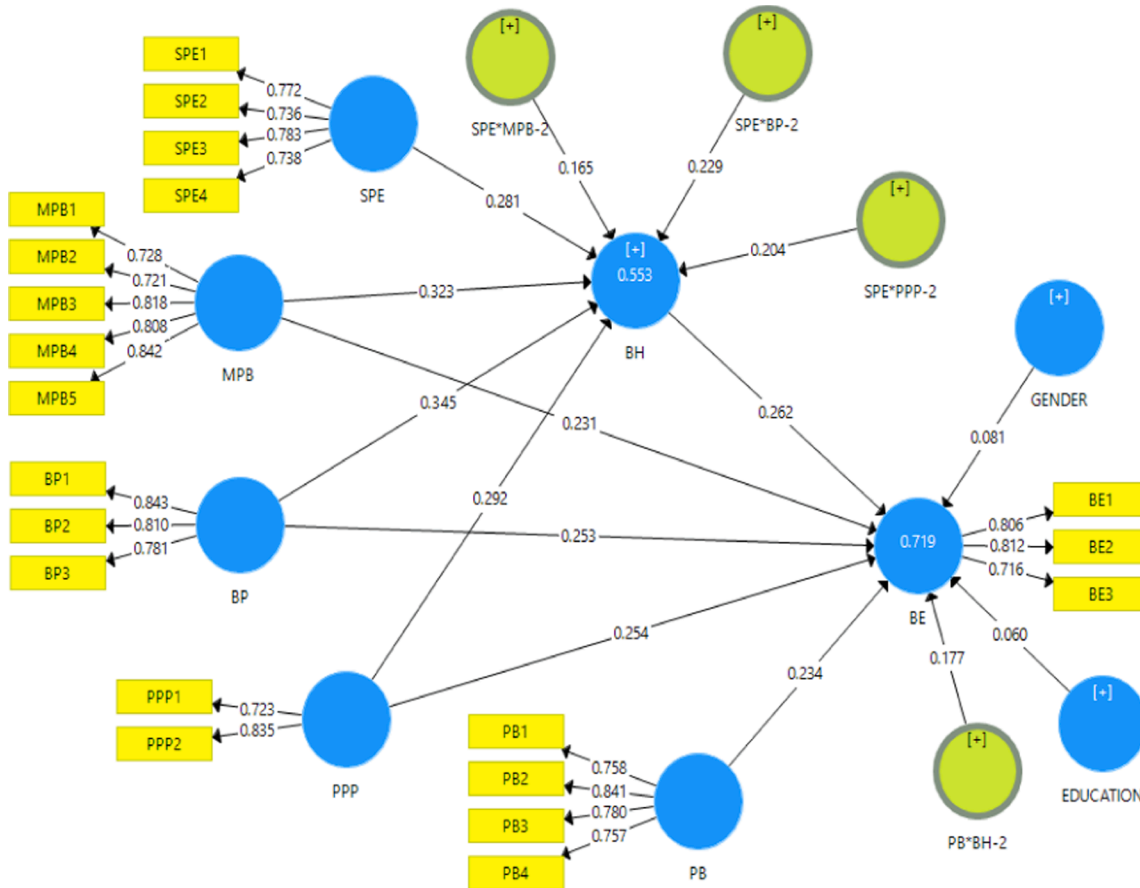


Fig. 6. Full Measurement Model (Study 2).

15.7%. Fig. 9 represents the full structural model of the study. The interaction effects are explained through the following moderation graphs.

Fig. 7a, b, and c depict an enhanced level of brand happiness among the consumers of clothing brands due to the interactive effect of $SPE*MBP-2$, $SPE*BP-2$, and $SPE*PPP-2$. The line labeled for higher values of *SPE* has a steeper gradient than the line labeled for lower values of *SPE* for all three moderating effects. This shows that consumers of garment brands become happier when their experience of buying/using Masstige is pleasant. Hence, more *SPE* results in more happiness among the consumers of prestigious garment brands. Thus, hypotheses H5 a, b, and c for Study 2 were supported.

Fig. 8 shows an increased level of brand evangelism among the clothing brands’ consumers due to the interactive effect of $PB*BH-2$. The line labeled for positive *PB* has a steeper gradient than the line labeled for negative *PB*. This depicts that positive product beliefs among the

consumers of prestigious garment brands transmit their happiness into brand evangelism with more intensity. Hence, they get motivated to convince their friends, family, peers, etc., to opt for their favorite brands to enjoy the same level of happiness. Thus, hypothesis H6 for Study 2 was also supported.

5.4. Brief discussion

Like Study 1, all the hypothesized links of Study 2 are also supported by the results. Moreover, there are minor differences in the results of Study 1 and Study 2. These differences may result from respondents being consumers of different brand categories or the modes of data collection. However, the differences are not significant enough to affect the generalizability of the results. Nevertheless, the consistency of the results depicts the importance of Masstige to derive brand happiness among the consumers to make them brand evangelizers ultimately.

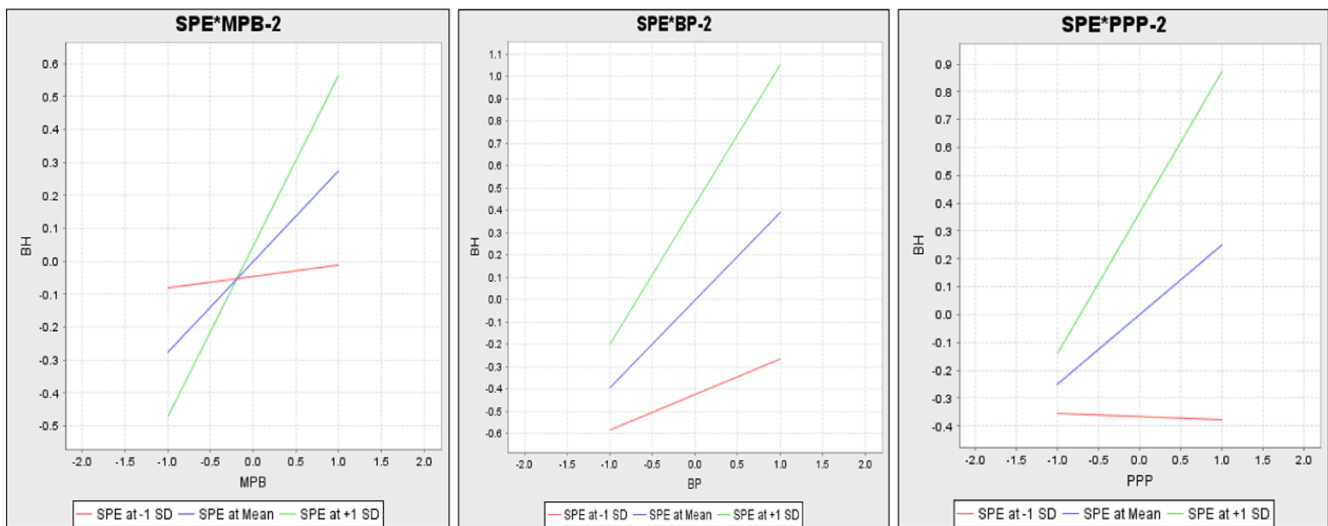


Fig. 7. bc Interaction plots for the moderating effects of SPE (Study 2).

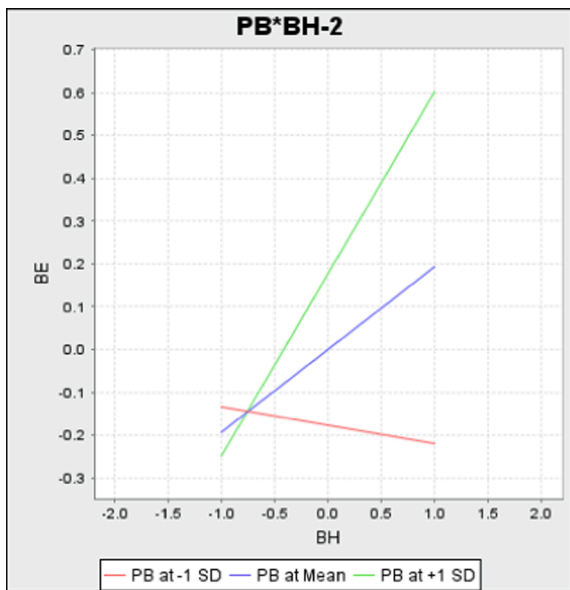


Fig. 8. Interaction plots for the moderating effects of PB (Study 2).

6. General discussion

The positive impact of MBP, BP, and PPP on BE, as depicted by the study results, can be associated with consumers’ desire to achieve inner satisfaction to represent themselves as part of such prestigious brands (Oerlemans & Bakker, 2014). Hence a sense of association with the masstige brands motivates consumers to convince their contacts to buy/use such brands. The results also revealed a positive association of the mass prestige of a brand with consumers’ brand happiness. These results contribute to the previous studies’ findings that high positioned brands are the source of consumers’ happiness (Woodside et al., 2008; Bianchi et al., 2014). Similar to the findings of Kumar et al. (2021), it can be stated that marketers should adopt a masstige strategy to make consumers happy. The consumers who exemplify their personality through prestigious brands and are conscious about how others perceive them tend to drive happiness due to the consumption of prestigious brands. In addition, the positive association of brand perception with brand happiness reflects that the more concerned consumers are about the uniqueness and quality of the brands, they derive more happiness in the

consumption of masstige brands. These findings can be related to the statement of Schnebelen and Bruhn (2018) that the brand itself does not provoke happiness among consumers; instead, consumers’ perception and interpretation of the brand characteristics make them happy. Thus, when consumers link the brand’s excitement, quality, and high standards with themselves, they are more willing to pay higher prices and feel happy buying/using such brands.

Moreover, this study supports the mediatory role of the BH in between the MPB, BP, and PPP with BE. In the current study, happiness has been studied as the consumers’ emotional state comprised of satisfaction, joy, fulfillment, and contentment (Diener, 2000), which shows that masstige makes consumers happy and further makes them evangelize the same brand. The results are further supported by Bruhn and Schnebelen (2017), who suggested that consumers want to stay connected with the brands, making them happy. Therefore, they tend to persuade their loved ones to opt for such brands to enjoy the same level of happiness. Moreover, the results proved the moderating role of self-pleasing experience between the association of Masstige and brand happiness. These findings can be related to the arguments of Kumar et al. (2021) and Paul (2019). They depicted that consumers associate their experience with the brands’ mass prestige and quality, which in turn affect their happiness and satisfaction. At the same time, the current study results revealed that when the pleasant experience of using Masstige brands is coupled with consumers’ perception of a brand, their level of happiness increases based on the feelings of looking unique and trendy. Finally, the results support the moderating role of PB between BH and BE. These findings suggest that when the consumers’ brand happiness combines with their belief in products’ superiority in terms of quality and performance, they eventually evangelize others to buy/use such brands more intensely.

6.1. Theoretical implications

The current research contributes to the theory and body of literature in multiple ways. First, it tried to bridge the gap regarding two important and least explored areas; Masstige and Brand happiness. Although, brands in the emerging economies are applying Masstige strategies to cater to a large-scale middle-class consumer by providing the mass Prestige and a sense of accomplishment for using premium-priced brands. However, Masstige is still the least explored area, and available literature is insufficient to explain the phenomenon completely (Kumar et al., 2020). Therefore, this study examined the impact of MPH, BP, and PPP, on BH and BE among the consumers of cosmetics and clothing brands. Since data has been collected from the consumers who

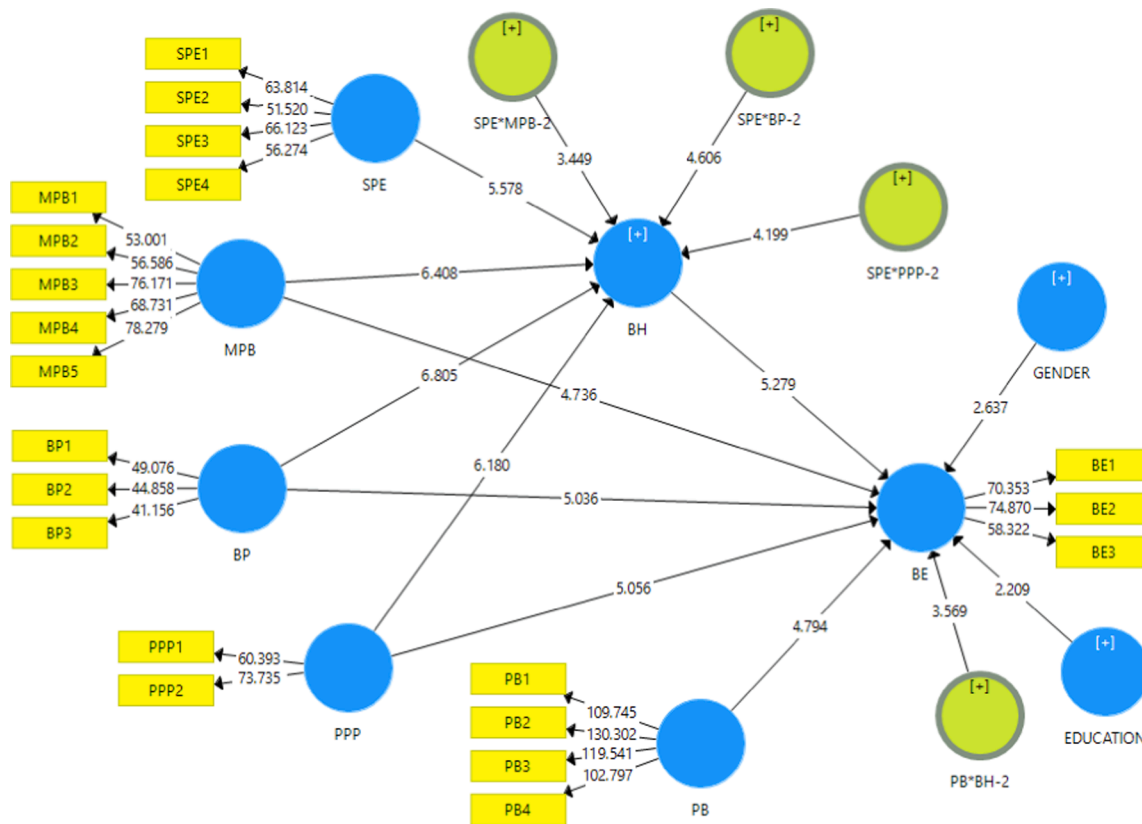


Fig. 9. Full Structural Model (Study 2).

Table 3
Hypothesized Results for Study 1 and Study 2.

| Hypothesized Paths | Study 1 | | | Study 2 | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|---------|-----------|-------|-----|
| | Std. β | t-Value | Supported | Std. β | t-Value | Supported | | |
| H1 | a | MPB → BE | 0.226** | 4.283 | Yes | 0.231*** | 4.736 | Yes |
| | b | BP → BE | 0.279*** | 5.440 | Yes | 0.253*** | 5.036 | Yes |
| | c | PPP → BE | 0.236*** | 4.791 | Yes | 0.254*** | 5.056 | Yes |
| H2 | a | MPB → BH | 0.341*** | 6.791 | Yes | 0.323*** | 6.408 | Yes |
| | b | BP → BH | 0.375*** | 7.367 | Yes | 0.345*** | 6.805 | Yes |
| | c | PPP → BH | 0.272*** | 5.358 | Yes | 0.298*** | 6.180 | Yes |
| H3 | a | BH → BE | 0.237*** | 4.800 | Yes | 0.262*** | 5.279 | Yes |
| | b | MPH → BH → BE | 0.201** | 4.021 | Yes | 0.225** | 4.575 | Yes |
| | c | BP → BH → BE | 0.218** | 4.214 | Yes | 0.221** | 4.487 | Yes |
| H4 | a | PPP → BH → BE | 0.252*** | 5.123 | Yes | 0.240*** | 4.922 | Yes |
| | b | SPE*MPB → BH | 0.213** | 4.187 | Yes | 0.165** | 3.449 | Yes |
| | c | SPE*BP → BH | 0.228*** | 4.359 | Yes | 0.229*** | 4.606 | Yes |
| H5 | a | SPE*PPP → BH | 0.173** | 3.641 | Yes | 0.204** | 4.199 | Yes |
| | b | PB*BH → BE | 0.189** | 3.956 | Yes | 0.177** | 3.569 | Yes |

Note: ***coefficients are significant at = 0.000 and **coefficients are significant at >=0.01.

actually buy and use brands in this research, the brand perceptions recorded by the consumers are actual perceptions that emerged after using prestigious brands. Also, the respondents being consumers, paid premium prices for the prestigious brands. Therefore, it reflects that happiness depicted by consumers is not based on their imagination to buy a brand in the future; instead, it is aroused after using prestigious brands. In addition, the concept of brand happiness is regarded as a new promising area of practice and research based on its influenceable and measurable characteristics (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018). Hence it has an immense potential to evaluate a brand’s strategic objectives and metrics while differentiating it from others. However, there are contradictory findings regarding the association between consumption and happiness (Laisawat et al., 2012). For instance, the scholars like (Duan, 2020; Netemeyer et al., 2018; Suzuki, Hamamura, & Takemura, 2019)

supported the association of consumption and happiness whereas, others, i.e., (Drennan, Brown, & Mort, 2011; Laisawat et al., 2012) negated the association. However, in a recent study conducted among laptop users, Kumar et al. (2021) reflected that consuming prestigious brands makes consumers happy. Therefore, the current study extends the existing literature and contributes to the theory by examining the underlying mechanism of brand happiness to transmit the MPB, BP, and PPP in positive consumer behavior like brand evangelism.

6.2. Practical implications

Thus marketers can utilize this notion to make consumers happy to evangelize the brand to others, making the brand more successful; as evangelism is not just to spread positive words about a brand but also to

convince/persuade others to buy/use that brand (Becerra & Badrinaranayan, 2013). This construct is of immense importance and must be given due consideration by marketers to increase their market share. The moderating role of self-pleasing experience between Masstige and brand happiness brings valuable insights for scholars and marketers. The results showed that the brands whose experience makes consumers happy achieve a competitive edge over another brand as consumers not only advocate the brand to others (Loureiro & da Cunha, 2017) but also convince others to buy/use the brand. Marketers also consider pleasing experience as a significant vehicle to communicate the prestige of a brand (Choi et al., 2017). Thus, based on the research findings and evidence in the literature, which reflect that positive experiences derive happiness in consumers (Nicolao et al., 2009), marketers need to create pleasing experiences while consumers encounter Masstige brands. Furthermore, they should adopt the Masstige strategy as a mass phenomenon to make many consumers happy. For this, they can focus on the product’s attributes, i.e., rarity, unique features, appealing designs, available for masses with premium prices, quality, etc. Besides, the research shows that among other features, uniqueness is of immense importance. Based on the theory of mass prestige (masstige) for brand management, the way consumers relate to being part of the unique brands has been explained previously concerning American versus Asian laptop brands (Kumar & Paul, 2018). Therefore, marketers should focus on the uniqueness attribute and try to bring new and innovative features in cosmetics and designs in clothing to make consumers feel privileged being among the leaders to use such brands. Finally, marketers can promote positive product beliefs among consumers by achieving high quality. The results prove these product beliefs as a potential source of prompting happy consumers to promote the brand to their family, friends, and peers by persuading them to buy/use it.

6.3. Limitations and future research directions

Along with many significances, the current study has limitations that future research should consider. The current study was conducted among the consumers of all the existing cosmetics and clothing brands in South Asia without any distinction of foreign or local brands. There are many foreign cosmetic and clothing brands in the sub-continent, including India and Pakistan, that people prefer to buy/use over the local brands. Therefore, in the future, comparative studies can be conducted to check the predictive differences of Masstige among local and foreign brands. Also, how this Masstige brings happiness to consumers and how they depict brand evangelism differently for the local and foreign brands should be assessed. Moreover, research shows that the emerging economies have much more potential to explore masstige brand strategies. This is because many prestigious products (e.g.,

cosmetics, clothing, perfumes, televisions, smartphones, laptops, cars, etc.) are thought to be expensive yet attainable for the middle class (Kumar & Paul, 2018). In connection to that, in-depth studies can reveal the unexplored facts behind perceiving a brand as Masstige, especially in emerging economies. Furthermore, future studies can explore the association of Masstige with brand love being an important construct in brand management to achieve a competitive edge. Finally, future research can consider examining organizational variables such as advertising and brand credibility between Masstige and brand happiness, love, evangelism, etc., to identify valuable insights for the marketers to devise their promotional activities accordingly.

7. Conclusion

Considering the dearth of literature on Masstige (Kumar et al., 2020; Paul, 2019) and following the immense importance of middle-class consumers in a sharing economy, Kumar et al. (2021) called for research to explore the Masstige. Therefore, the current study examined the direct and indirect association of MPB, BP, PPP with BE via the mediatory role of BH. Moreover, the moderating role of SPE in between Masstige and BH was assessed. In addition, the interactive effect of PB with BH to enhance BE was investigated. Two studies were conducted among the users of two different brand categories (cosmetics and clothing), and two different data collection methods and sampling techniques were applied to achieve the study objectives. Our findings of both studies revealed the significant impact of MPB, BP, PPP on consumers BH and BE with minor differences in impact sizes. Thus, the findings depict the importance of Masstige brands in deriving happiness among consumers and making them brand evangelizers. Moreover, the moderating role of SPE was proved to reflect the importance of consumers’ pleasant consumption experiences for prestigious brands to increase happiness. Likewise, study results revealed that positive product beliefs act as a catalyst to transmit the consumers’ brand happiness to their brand evangelism.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Mahnaz Mansoor: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Software, Writing – original draft. **Justin Paul:** Writing – review & editing, Validation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix

Appendix A. . Measures of the study

| Constructs | Items |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mass Prestige of a Brand | MPB1: I would buy this brand because of its prestige. MPB2: I believe that individuals in my country, state, or district perceive this brand as prestigious MPB3: I consider this brand a top-of-mind brand in my country, state, or district. MPB4: I would recommend this brand to friends and relatives. |
| Brand Perception | MPB5: I like this brand because of its prestige. BP1: I believe this brand meets international standards. BP2: I believe this brand is known for high quality. BP3: Nothing is more exciting than this brand. |
| The Propensity to Pay the Premium | PPP1: I love to buy this brand regardless of price. PPP2: I tend to pay a premium for this brand as a status symbol. |
| Brand Happiness | BH1: I feel glad buying/using this brand. BH2: I feel cheerful buying/using this brand. BH3: I feel joyful buying/using this brand. |

(continued on next page)

(continued)

| Constructs | Items |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | BH4: Buying/ using this brand makes me feel lively. |
| | BH5: Buying/ using this brand makes me feel peppy. |
| | BH6: Buying/ using this brand makes me feel vigorous. |
| | BH7: Buying/ using this brand makes me feel proud. |
| | BH8: Buying/ using this brand makes me feel superior. |
| | BH9: Buying/ using this brand makes me feel Worthy. |
| | BH10: Buying/ using this brand makes me feel relaxed. |
| | BH11: I feel myself at ease buying/ using this brand. |
| | BH12: Buying/ using this brand makes me feel comfortable. |
| Brand Evangelism | BE1: I have proselytized several of my friends to this brand. |
| | BE2: I try to convince as many people as possible to buy this brand. |
| | BE3: I feel the need to tell everybody that this is the most appealing brand. |
| Self-pleasing Experience | SPE1: Using this brand support my desire to have many experiences in life. |
| | SPE2: Using this brand enhances my mood. |
| | SPE3: Using this brand gives me a lot of pleasure. |
| | SPE4: I feel using this brand enjoyable. |
| Product Beliefs | PB1: I believe this brand provides exclusive products |
| | PB2: I believe this brand provides an elegant style |
| | PB3: I believe this is a fashionable brand |
| | PB4: I believe this brand provides high-quality products |

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