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Feminine and Masculine Brand Personalities and Consumer-based Brand Equity: An Explanation through Dual Mediation Model

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ABSTRACT

Currently, it is difficult for marketers to excel by virtuously focusing on traditional marketing approaches. Thus, marketing managers are relying more on the gender of the brand, as individuals are more attracted towards those brands which are consistent with their personalities. It has been proposed that brand personality is a crucial source of consumer-based brand equity, but empirical research on the relationship between perceptions of brand personality and brand equity is sparse. Considering the importance of brand gender, this study has analyzed the effect of brand gender on consumer-based brand equity through two mediators (i.e., consumer-brand engagement and emotional brand attachment) through an empirical investigation of 299 respondents. The model was shadowed under self-congruity theory. Structural equation modelling was utilised to test hypotheses. Results show that if managers position their brands based on gender and when there is a match between consumer gender and brand gender, it will engage the customers more and attract them, which helps build consumer-based brand equity.



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Introduction

The continuing revolution of branding in emerging economies remains an under-researched area even though it is of fundamental significance for creating competitive advantage (Cho & Hwang, 2020; Shaalan et al., 2022); at the same time, the nature of branding is changing. Developing strong brands is the main objective of every marketing manager (Alvarado-Karste & Guzmán, 2020; Veloutsou et al., 2020). At the same time, building brand equity is also a 'dominant concern for the marketing managers because it is a crucial factor of corporate value' (Zarantonello et al., 2020). Digital platforms have gained a pronounced status across the extensive literature in this regard, and in the actual practice of marketing due to the constantly changing and upgraded technology (Chen & Qasim, 2021), this growing tendency has resulted in the formation of an appealing atmosphere for customers precisely through different social media platforms, at the same time, consumers are also increasingly concerned with how products are brought to them (Kirchoff et al.,

2019). Social media communication, either firm generated or consumer-generated, plays a vital role in supporting brands to build consumer-based substantial brand equity (Arya et al., 2021; Schivinski et al., 2021). Brahmhatt and Shah (2017) and Nguyen Viet and Nguyen Anh (2021) reveal that brand awareness and brand associations affect brand equity.

Due to hyper-competition, firms' offerings have become homogenous, with no significant functional differences, and consumers' choices are increasingly influenced by emotional rather than rational factors (Pina & Dias, 2021); brand becomes a source of differentiation for companies, with its role expanding from a collection of attributes to a sum of experiences. Consequently, it is now difficult for marketers to get Brand Equity (BE) through traditional ways. BE both with a financial and perceptual focus has preoccupied researchers for many years (Tasci, 2020). Nowadays, marketing managers rely more on the gender of the brand as people are more attracted or attached to the brands or products which are consistent with their personalities or gender. After the seminal research of Grohmann (2009), many types of research have been carried out on brand gender concept. Brand gender is one of the important constructs of brand personality and, above all, the components of brand personality.

This study focuses on the effect of brand gender on consumers' responses to the brand in the social media context. Currently, social media has become an essential part of our lives. This study studies the effect of Feminine Brand Personality (FBP) and Masculine Brand Personality (MBP) on consumer responses using Facebook and Instagram platform. The main reason behind using especially Facebook and Instagram is that Facebook is famous among the people with 2.45 billion active users and Instagram also got 1 billion active users (Statista, 2020). It is also important to take these sites because most of the fortune 500 companies have their pages on these sites, 90% of Fortune 500 companies have their page on Facebook while 49% have their page on Instagram (Statista, 2018).

The concept of Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) is essential in the social media context as this concept is considered very often in it (Cheung, Pires & Rosenberger, 2020; Simon & Tossan, 2018). A previous study has demonstrated that CBE in the social media context helps the marketers create value for the brand, and it helps them engage the customers online by giving them timely and relevant content (Azar et al., 2016; Cheung, Pires & Rosenberger, 2020). In social media context engagement with a brand, helps the brand build a relationship with customers and thus helps create equity (Tsai & Men, 2013). According to brand personalities' conceptualization by Aaker, brand personality can affect the Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA) (Orth et al., 2010). According to Huang et al. (2017) there is a significant relationship between brand personality, self-congruity and EBA. Previous literature on consumer behavior shows that the brand attachment is connected to consumers' congruence with the brand and the match between the individual's actual self and brand personality can greatly affect the EBA (Malär et al., 2011). In this study the relationship between BG and consumer responses is analyzed by applying the personality theory and self-congruity theory.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Personality Theory

Aaker (1997, p. 347) defined BP as the characteristics of humans, related with the brand. Even though brands are not living entities but consumers see them as having the characteristics of humans. According to Fournier (1998) consumers tend to associate their personalities with the brand because they connect with brands as they connect with their friends or families. BG is an important dimension of brand personality and is considered as an important organizing construct because consumers choose those brands who fulfill their gender identity (Avery, 2012).

Previous researches have shown that the effect of brand personality on brand loyalty and willingness to pay is positive and both of these are the components of Consumer-based Brand Equity (CBBE) (Roy et al., 2016). According to brand personalities' conceptualization by Aaker, Brand personality can affect the EBA (Orth et al., 2010). Brand gender is one of the dimensions of brand personality so; it can also affect the EBA. Marketers tend to match the personality of the brand with consumers personalities to form EBA (Malär et al., 2011). Previous researches have shown that personality traits of an individual can affect the online activities of the brand and particularly influence the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) (Ehrenberg et al., 2008). According to the previous studies among the five personality traits, three traits (extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience) from "the BIG FIVE" model of Goldberg (1981) anticipate the use of SNS and their anticipation is connected to liking and commenting behavior of individuals on SNS (Kabadayi & Price, 2014). When the personality of the brand matches the gender of consumer it will generate higher BE (Lieven & Hildebrand, 2016).

Self-Congruity Theory

According to Sirgy (2018), Self-congruity is the similarities between the user imagery or brand personality and the self-concept of consumers (actual, ideal, and social self). According to Sirgy (1985), Self-congruity theory states that individuals choose or buy those products whose user image is consistent with individuals' self-image. Previous researches have shown that when personality of the brand is congruent with individual's gender then it will generate higher equity (Grohmann, 2009). According to Lieven and Hildebrand (2016) when there is a congruity between the BG and an individual gender then higher brand equity will be generated. Previous research has also shown that consumers are attracted to those brands whose gender is congruent with an individual's gender and prefer those brands whose gender characteristics match an individual's gender (Lieven & Hildebrand, 2016). Previous literature shows that there is a linkage between self-congruency, brand personality and brand attachment (Huang et al., 2017). When the brand personality is consistent with consumer's actual, ideal, and social self than high EBA will be generated. The process through which consumers realize the congruity with any brand and then use that particular brand to show their selves, it leads to the formation of EBA.

Previous literature on consumer behavior shows that the brand attachment is connected to consumer's congruence with the brand, and that the congruence between the consumer's actual self and brand personality can have a substantial effect on the EBA (Malär et al., 2011). When the congruity between the consumer's self and brand will be greater than higher EBA will be formed towards the brand (Huang et al., 2017). Lee et al. (2018) postulates that the relationship between brand personality self-congruity and engagement is positive. According to authors, consumers try to compare their personalities with the brands personalities to see if there is any congruity between them. As the inconsistency between the individuals' personality and personality of brand increases, then consumers will be less engaged with the brand's Facebook and Instagram activities for example liking, commenting, and sharing (Lee et al., 2018). It is also postulated that if the congruity between consumer's personality and brand personality is not consistent then consumers will not associate their selves with the brand.

Brand Gender and Consumer-based Brand Equity

Brand gender is the masculinity and femininity associated with the brand. It is comprised of two independent dimensions, MBP and FBP. FBP consists of more relational personality traits such as they are more connected with interdependence and tender feelings while MBP traits consists of more independent and sturdy feelings (Lieven & Hildebrand, 2016). Aaker (1997) defined brand equity as the set of assets and liabilities associated with a brand, its name and symbol, which add to or detract from the value supplied by a product or service to a corporation and/or its customers. As per the definition of Yoo and Donthu (2001) individuals respond differently towards the brand

that are known or famous and the unknown brands even the attributes of both are the same. Their empirical work shows that brand association and brand awareness can titled as brand awareness/association. As they are treated as one factor so they shape certain brand image (Yoo et al., 2000) that helps the marketers in building a distinctive brand attitude and positioning. Brand association/awareness is mostly estimated by the communications and interactions between the organizations and customers that takes place on the social media sites (Cheung, Pires & Rosenberger, 2020; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015).

Different researches have shown that brands who have a higher masculine personality or feminine personality generate more BE (Lieven et al., 2014; 2015). According to Lieven et al. (2014) Brand Gender influences the BE more than any other personality attribute. Lieven et al. (2015) also proposed that the effect of MBP and FBP on brand equity is significant. Lieven and Hildebrand (2016) also tested the effect of brand gender on CBBE across different cultures and countries and their results also shows that higher masculine and higher feminine brands can generate higher BE. Hence

H1a: Feminine Brand Personality has a positive effect on Consumer-based Brand Equity on Social Networking Sites.

H1b: Masculine Brand Personality has a positive effect on Consumer-based Brand Equity on Social Networking Sites.

Brand Gender and Consumer-brand Engagement

According to Hollebeek et al. (2014, p. 254) the definition of CBE depends upon the customers level of investment when the interaction with particular brand occurs and it is reflected by multiple dimensions of the construct i.e. “Cognitive, Behavioral and Emotional”. This study has followed the behavioral approach to CBE. Although most researchers have used the three-dimensional engagement conceptualization but behavioral approach is also used in many studies (Schamari & Schaefer, 2015). The first step consumer takes towards engaging with a brand is liking the brand page on Instagram or Facebook and according to previous researches when customers like a brand on Facebook or Instagram there is a causal effect of it on brand evaluations (Beukeboom et al., 2015). When consumers like the Facebook or Instagram page of their favourite brand or any brand, they are exposed to the brand's message, and as a result, they consume and create brand/product-related content. According to Heinonen (2011) and Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011) the engagement of consumer with brand pages have two important types i.e. consuming and contributing. Consuming refers to looking brand-related videos and pictures or reading comments on brand posts or content posted by the brand (Muntinga et al., 2011). Lurkers are vital to brands (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011) because they actively use brand pages and absorb material (Azar et al., 2016). The brand must encourage the lurkers and make them active users (Machado et al., 2019). Contributing refers to sharing or commenting on brand-related content (Muntinga et al., 2011). Likes, comments, and content sharing are considered kinds of word-of-mouth communication. When a user likes, comments on, or shares a brand's post, it displays on their own wall and in their friends' newsfeeds.

According to Lee et al. (2018), the relationship between brand personality self-congruity and brand engagement is positive. Consumers try to compare their selves with the brands and if the consumer's personality is inconsistent with brand personality then they will be less engaged with the brands online activities. As brand gender is one of the dimensions of brand personality, so when the brand gender is congruent with gender of consumer then they will be more engaged with the brands' online activities. There is scarce evidence behind the effect of brand gender in dimensional terms on CBE. According to Machado et al. (2019) MBP has a significant positive

impact of CBE while FBP has no significant impact on CBE but there is a partial effect of brand gender on CBE. Hence:

H2a: Feminine Brand Personality has a positive effect on Consumer-brand Engagement on Social Networking Sites.

H2b: Masculine Brand Personality has a positive effect on Consumer-brand Engagement on Social Networking Sites.

Brand Gender and Emotional Brand Attachment

Brand attachment is defined as the attachment between consumer, the brand and the feelings towards the brand (Malär et al., 2011). Feelings towards the brand incorporate Affection, Passion and Connection. According to brand personalities' conceptualization by Aaker, brand personality can affect the EBA (Orth et al., 2010). Marketers tend to match the brand personality with individuals personalities to form EBA. According to Huang et al. (2017) there is a significant relationship between brand personality, self-congruity and EBA. Previous literature on consumer behavior shows that the brand attachment is connected to consumer's congruence with the brand and the compatibility between an individual's actual self and brand personality can have a significant impact on the EBA. Brand gender is one of the important dimensions of brand personality so it can also affect the EBA. Hence:

H4a: Feminine Brand Personality has a positive effect on Emotional Brand Attachment.

H4b: Masculine Brand Personality has a positive effect on Emotional Brand Attachment.

Consumer-brand Engagement and Consumer-based Brand Equity

Consumer-brand Engagement construct is important in this study as this research is executed in social media context and this construct is frequently used in studies related to social media (Simon & Tossan, 2018). Nowadays BE is being generated by consumer's engagement through social media (Bruhn et al., 2012). So when consumers interact with brand through social media it shows how involved they are with the brand and thus creates the brand equity (van Doorn et al., 2010). Hence, the engagement of consumers increases the brand knowledge, which makes the association with the brand strong, favorable and unique, which effects the purchase intention (Hutter et al., 2013) and creates the CBBE (Algharabat et al., 2020).

Previous studies have shown that CBE in social media context is crucial as it opens many opportunities for the brand in online context, it helps them in creating value and also in creating the relevant content and creation of new ideas (Azar et al., 2016). According to Beukeboom et al. (2015) when the individuals are engaged with the brand on social media it can favorably affect the brand evaluation and intention to purchase. Which form the significant relationships and thus help in creating BE. Hence:

H3: Consumer-brand Engagement has a positive effect on Consumer-based Brand Equity.

Emotional Brand Attachment and Consumer-based Brand Equity

The brand attachment effect on CBBE can be understood by using brand knowledge concept (Dwivedi et al., 2018). Brand knowledge is the association regarding the brand in consumers mind which changes regarding strength, favorability and uniqueness (Keller, 1993) this entire association reflects the CBBE. Brand association can be perceived as emotional impressions other than the associations related to product or brand. These emotional impressions are the emotional reactions stored in the individuals mind related to brand-related stimuli (Dwivedi et al., 2018). EBA helps in devising the emotional impression which increases the salience of Brand Association and increased Brand Association is an essential part of CBBE (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). According

to Keller (1993) when the level of EBA is higher it can create the Point of difference which can distinguish the brand from its competitors and also enhance the CBBE. So, it can be presumed that EBA has a significant positive impact on CBBE, hence:

H5: Emotional brand engagement has a significant effect on Consumer-based Brand Equity.

Consumer-brand Engagement as Mediator between Brand Genders and Consumer-based Brand Equity

As this study has been carried out in the context of social media, it is important to explore the CBE role in the relation between brand gender and CBBE. Currently, CBE construct is frequently used in studies related to social media (Simon & Tossan, 2018). In social media context CBE is important as it opens many opportunities for brands in online context like creating value and creation of new ideas (Azar et al., 2016). When the consumer engages with brand through social media, it effects the brand evaluations and creates the CBBE, hence:

H6a: Consumer-brand Engagement mediates the effect of Feminine Brand Personality on Consumer-based Brand Equity.

H6b: Consumer-brand Engagement mediates the effect of Masculine Brand Personality on Consumer-based Brand Equity.

Emotional Brand Attachment as Mediator between Brand Genders and Consumer-based Brand Equity

EBA is treated as a mediator between brand gender and CBBE relationship in context of Facebook and Instagram. EBA is critical in this research because when the individuals personality fits with the personality of brand it can create higher EBA (Malär et al., 2011) so, when the gender of the brand is congruent with consumer gender than higher EBA will formed and according to Keller (1993) when the EBA is higher, it helps in enhancing the CBBE. According to Dwivedi et al. (2018) EBA has as direct effect on CBBE. So, when the brand gender matches the consumer gender it enhances the EBA which in turn enhances the CBBE. Thus,

H7a: Emotional Brand Attachment mediates the effect of Feminine Brand Personality on Consumer-based Brand Equity.

H7b: Emotional Brand Attachment mediates the effect of Masculine Brand Personality on Consumer-based Brand Equity.

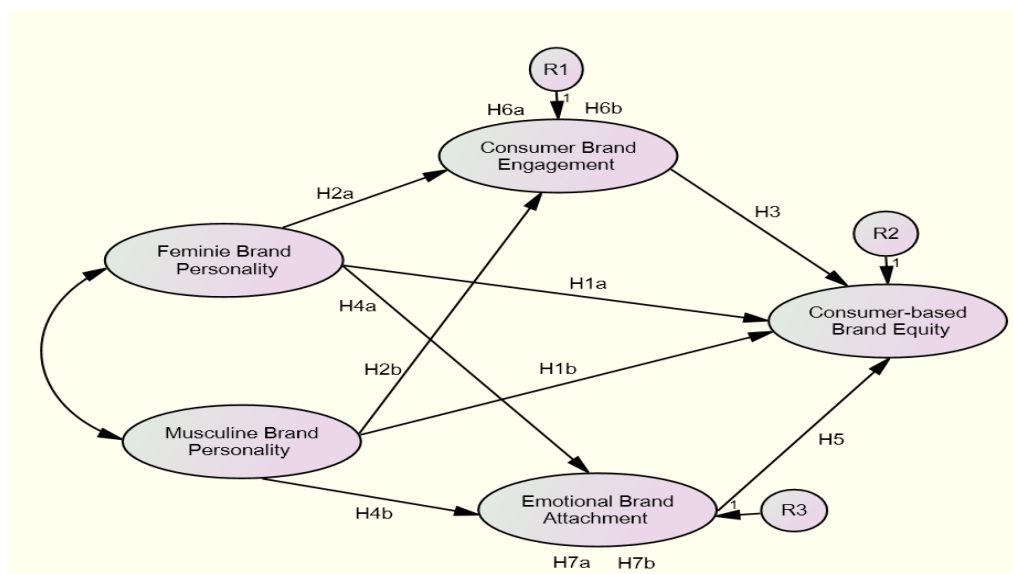


Figure-1
Research Model

Methodology

Population Sampling and Data Collection

The population of the study is the social media users in Pakistan and the sample taken from the population are individuals who engaged with the brand on Facebook and Instagram. The sampling technique used in this study is non-probability, judgmental sampling. As those respondents are selected for data collecting who are engaging with brand on Facebook and Instagram. Data was collected through online questionnaire and 352 responses are received from the respondents.

The instrument used for data collection process in this study is online structured questionnaire with close ended questions. People who use Facebook and Instagram and are indulged with the brands on these forums were selected for the data collection. For the respondent to answer the questions first they were asked about their usage of internet and the time they spend on Facebook and Instagram. They were also asked about the number of fashion apparel brand pages they like on Facebook and Instagram and afterwards they were asked to fill the remaining survey by considering their preferred brand.

Respondents were asked five qualifying questions before filling the rest of the questionnaire. Four demographic questions were also asked from the respondents in Section B. The majority of the respondents were female 56.5%. Table 2 shows the sample demographics.

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

Variable name	Values	Frequency	Percentage
Time spent on internet	Less than 30 min	8	2.7
	Between 30 min and 1 h	31	10.4
	Between 1 and 2 h	57	19.1
	More than 2 h	203	67.9
Time spent on Facebook	Less than 30 min	165	55.2
	Between 30 min and 1 h	55	18.4
	Between 1 and 2 h	36	12.0
	More than 2 h	43	14.4
Time spent on Instagram	Less than 30 min	112	37.5
	Between 30 min and 1 h	69	23.1
	Between 1 and 2 h	50	16.7
	More than 2 h	68	22.7
Number of online brands pages liked on Facebook	Fewer than 10 brand pages	166	55.5
	Between 11 and 20 brand pages	55	18.4
	Between 21 and 30 brand pages	35	11.7
	More than 30 brand pages	43	14.4
Number of online brands pages liked on Instagram	Fewer than 10 brand pages	161	53.8
	Between 11 and 20 brand pages	63	21.1
	Between 21 and 30 brand pages	26	8.7
	More than 30 brand pages	49	16.4

Table 2 Sample Demographics

Variable name	Values	Frequency	%	Variable name	Values	Frequency	%
Age	16-22	94	31.4	Education	FA/FSC	14	4.7
	23-28	177	59.2		Bachelors	154	51.5
	29-35	20	6.7		Masters	107	35.8
	36-45	6	2.0		Others	24	8.0
	46-70	2	0.7	Job Status	Full-time	85	28.4
Gender	Male	130	43.5		Student	148	49.5
	Female	169	56.5		Not working	66	22.1

Measures

The measure utilised in this study was a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument used for the data collection was structured questionnaire with close ended questions adopted from the previous studies. The scale adopted to measure the construct of brand gender was 12-items scale developed by Grohmann (2009). It is sub-divided into MBP and FBP six items each. The scale used to measure CBE has two indicators consuming and contributing with 3 items of consuming and 4 items of contributing. We did not include the final item, liking the company's Facebook page, because we only chose respondents who had already liked the brand's Facebook page. The scale for measuring EBA is developed by Thomson et al. (2005). EBA is a multi-dimensional variable. 10 items were used to measure it. The fourth variable in the questionnaire was CBBE, which is brands added value and is conceptualized by Yoo and Donthu (2001) on the basis of dimensions like: brand awareness/association, perceived quality and brand loyalty. It was being measured using the scale which includes 4-items and developed by Yoo and Donthu (2001).

Analysis and Results

Data Normality Checks

The key assumptions regarding normality were checked as shown in Table 3

Table 3 Data Normality Statistics (N=299)

Constructs	Min	Max	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE	Tolerance	VIF
FBP	8.00	20.00	-0.52	0.14	0.11	0.28	0.89	1.12
MBP	8.00	20.00	-0.16	0.14	-0.29	0.28	0.86	1.15
CBE	6.00	30.00	0.07	0.14	-0.12	0.28	0.83	1.20
EBA	13.00	35.00	-0.22	0.14	-0.16	0.28	0.69	1.43
CBBE	7.00	20.00	-0.17	0.14	0.06	0.28	Dependent Variable	

Notes: FBP= Feminine Brand Personality; MBP= Masculine Brand Personality; CBE= Consumer-brand Engagement EBA= Emotional Brand Attachment; CBBE= Consumer-based Brand Equity; SE=Standard Error; VIF=Variance Inflationary Factor

Measurement Model (Measure Validation)

Reliability and Unidimensionality

Numerous goodness-of-fit indices, such as those recommended in the SEM literature, were employed (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2005) such as χ^2/df ; GFI, NFI, CFI, RMR and RMSEA. Prior to analyzing path model the measurement model was developed to check unidimensionality. Reliability and validity of the items was also measured. Table 4 shows the results of individual CFA. Few items with extreme low FL were deleted. To get better fit indices some error terms were also correlated like $e_5 \leftrightarrow e_6$, $e_4 \leftrightarrow e_6$, $e_3 \leftrightarrow e_5$ and $e_2 \leftrightarrow e_4$ of CBE and $e_4 \leftrightarrow e_7$, $e_6 \leftrightarrow e_7$, $e_2 \leftrightarrow e_6$ and $e_1 \leftrightarrow e_2$ of EBA. The value of Cronbach alpha α for all the variables are greater than 0.7 which means the items are error free and the value of CFI, GFI and NFI are also greater than 0.9.

Table 4 Results of Individual CFA (N=299)

Constructs	Items	Unidimensionality					Convergent Validity		Reliability
		χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	FL (min-max)	α
FBP	4	2.54	0.99	0.98	0.01	0.05	0.97	FL (0.52-0.78)	0.70
MBP	4	0.20	0.99	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.99	FL (0.57-0.81)	0.77
CBE	6	2.00	0.98	0.99	0.03	0.05	0.98	FL (0.56-0.76)	0.81
EBA	7	1.99	0.98	0.99	0.01	0.05	0.98	FL (0.51-0.88)	0.87
CBBE	4	2.50	0.98	0.98	0.02	0.05	0.97	FL (0.58-0.73)	0.72

Notes: FBP= Feminine Brand Personality; MBP= Masculine Brand Personality; CBE= Consumer-brand Engagement EBA= Emotional Brand Attachment; CBBE= Consumer-based Brand Equity; GFI= Goodness of fit index; CFI= Comparative fit index; RMR= Root mean square residual; RMSEA= Root mean square error approximation; NFI= Normed fit; FL= Factor loadings; α = Cronbach's alpha

The method given by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) was used to test discriminant validity; if the square root of the AVE of a construct is greater than its correlation coefficient with other constructs, then the construct is regarded to be distinct from the other constructs. According to Table 5, all constructs satisfy this criteria of discriminant validity.

Table 5 Discriminant Validity (Covariance among Latent Variables) (N=299)

Constructs	FBP	MBP	CBE	EBA	CBBE	Mean	SD
FBP	0.48†	0.13**	0.13**	0.33**	0.16**	13.92	2.36
MBP		0.41†	0.22**	0.35**	0.20**	14.22	2.76
CBE			0.43†	0.40**	0.18**	17.60	4.50
EBA				0.48†	0.43**	25.57	4.55
CBBE					0.47†	13.73	2.58

Notes: FBP= Feminine Brand Personality; MBP= Masculine Brand Personality; CBE= Consumer-brand Engagement EBA= Emotional Brand Attachment; CBBE= Consumer-based Brand Equity ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed); †√ (AVE) Values in the Diagonal; SD- Standard Deviation

After running the individual CFA, nested CFA was also analyzed. To get better fit indices some error terms were also correlated in five factor nested model like, $e_{13} \leftrightarrow e_{14}$ of CBE were correlated. Convergent validity has been explained by Bagozzi and Phillips (1982) as the level of agreement of results if same construct is measured multiple times. The Bentler-Bonett NFI was calculated to fulfill the first method of finding model fit. Table 6 shows NFI value of 0.91 which means that all the latent variables NFI's are > 0.90 benchmark. The second method recommends that estimates of factor loadings should be ≥ 0.5 . Results of five factors nested CFA can be seen in following Table 6.

Table 6 Five Factors Nested CFA (N=299)

Indicators	Unidimensionality					Convergent Validity		Reliability
	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	FL [min-max]	α
25	1.78	0.90	0.92	0.04	0.05	0.91	FL [0.52-0.86]	0.86

Notes: χ^2 = Chi Square; df = Degree of freedom; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMR= Root mean square residual; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; FL= Factor Loadings; α = Cronbach's alpha.

Hypotheses Testing

Direct and Indirect Effects

To test the fit of the two structural models, a variety of goodness-of-fit indices, such as those recommended in the SEM literature, were employed (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2005) such as χ^2/df ; GFI, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA. We estimated the paths from exogenous variable to different endogenous variables. Figure 2 shows the direct and indirect effect models. In direct-effect model we estimated the paths from CBE to CBBE, MBP to CBBE, EBA to CBBE and FBP to CBBE. H_{1a} stated that there is a significant effect of FBP on CBBE. The results shows that there is no significant effect of FBP on CBBE (H_{1a}: $\beta=0.04$, $p=0.10$) so H_{1a} is rejected. H_{1b} stated that there is a significant effect of MBP on CBBE. The results shows that again there is no significant effect of MBP on CBBE (H_{1b}: $\beta=0.08$, $p=0.58$) so H_{1b} is also rejected. H_{2a} stated that there is a significant effect of FBP on CBE. The results shows that there is a significant effect of FBP on CBE (H_{2a}: $\beta=0.22$, $p=0.005$) so the H_{2a} is accepted. H_{2b} stated that there is a significant effect of MBP on CBE. The results shows that there is a significant effect of MBP on CBE (H_{2b}: $\beta=0.26$, $p<0.01$) so the H_{2b} is accepted. H₃ stated that there is a significant effect of CBE on CBBE. The results show that there is no significant effect of CBE on CBBE (H₃: $\beta=0.00$, $p=0.46$). So H₃ is rejected. H_{4a} stated that there is a significant effect of FBP on EBA. The results shows that there is a significant effect of FBP on EBA (H_{4a}: $\beta=0.36$, $p<0.01$) so the H_{4a} is accepted.

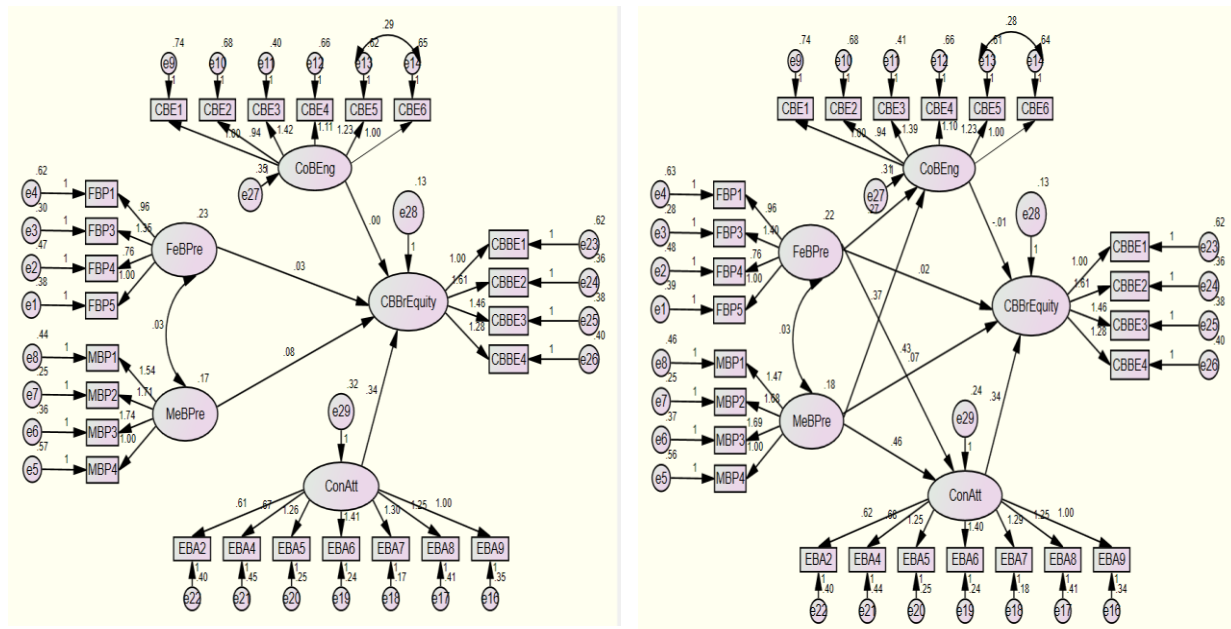


Figure-2 Direct and Indirect Effect Models

H4b stated that there is a significant effect of MBP on EBA. The results shows that there is a H_{4b} stated that there is a significant effect of MBP on EBA. The results shows that there is a significant effect of MBP on EBA (H_{4b}: $\beta=0.34, p<0.01$) so the H_{4b} is accepted.

H₅ stated that there is a significant effect of EBA on CBBE (H₅: $\beta=0.48, p<0.01$). Hence, H₅ is also accepted. Regarding mediation related hypotheses like H_{6a}: FBP → CBE → CBBE, H_{6b}: MBP → CBE → CBBE, H_{7a}: FBP → EBA → CBBE and H_{7b}: MBP → EBA → CBBE. We compared the model fitness values of direct and indirect models, as can be seen in Table 6 that there are improved and better fit indices. With these improved values it can be establish that CBE and EBA mediates the effects of FBP and MBP on CBBE. After comparing both the models we can conclude that H_{6a}, H_{6b}, H_{7a} and H_{7b} are also accepted.

Table 6 Results of Structural Equation Analysis for Two Competing Models

The relationships between variables	Direct effect model		Indirect effect model		
	β	S.E	β	S.E	
H _{1a} : FBP → CBBE	0.04	0.06			Insignificant
H _{1b} : MBP → CBBE	0.08	0.07			Insignificant
H ₃ : CBE → CBBE	0.00	0.05			Insignificant
H ₅ : EBA → CBBE	0.48**	0.07			Significant
H _{2a} : FBP → CBE			0.22	0.10	Significant
H _{2b} : MBP → CBE			0.26	0.11	Significant
H _{4a} : FBP → EBA			0.36	0.10	Significant
H _{4b} : MBP → EBA			0.34	0.10	Significant

Model Comparison Indices between Direct and Indirect Effect Models

H _{6a} : FBP → CBE → CBBE		
H _{6b} : MBP → CBE → CBBE		
H _{7a} : FBP → EBA → CBBE		
H _{7b} : MBP → EBA → CBBE		
χ^2	584.632	500.7
df	270	266
χ^2 / df ratio	2.17	1.88
GFI	0.86	0.90
NFI	0.81	0.91

CFI	0.88	0.91
RSMEA	0.06	0.05
R ² (CBE)	0.00	0.13
R ² (EBA)	0.00	0.27
R ² (CBBE)	0.24	0.26

Notes: FBP= Feminine Brand Personality; MBP= Masculine Brand Personality; CBE= Consumer-brand Engagement EBA= Emotional Brand Attachment; CBBE= Consumer-based Brand Equity; χ^2 = Chi Square; df= Degree of freedom; χ^2 / df = Chi- χ^2 / df Square ratio; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

Discussion and Conclusions

The first hypothesis infers that there is a significant relationship among brand gender and CBBE. Some previous researches also showed mixed results regarding the effect of brand gender on CBBE (Machado et al., 2019). Although brand gender has an indirect effect on CBBE, through CBE and EBA, Brand gender affects the CBBE. So, it can be inferred from these findings that brand gender may have no direct impact, means no positive assumptions and recognition in the mind of consumers but, when the brand gender engages and attract the individuals first then it can enhance the CBBE. To engage the consumers online is not an easy job. Marketers needs to be vigilant towards all the opportunities and should try to forge an emotional relationship with the brand by engaging with them timely. In the study CBE mediates the relationship between brand gender and CBBE which means individuals are consuming and contributing towards the brand gender stimuli on the SNS.

Attaching individuals with brand is not an easy undertaking as they will not be attached with brand unless there is a fit between the personalities of individual and brand. In the study EBA mediates the relationship between brand gender and CBBE that means individuals think of brand as a part of their selves and with the help of brand positioning individuals attach with brand which thus generates the equity. In most of the studies gender is used as a moderator as it helps in analyzing the results for instance it can tell that how females behave towards certain relations and how male reacts towards certain relations. Industry is also important because may be females and males do not show different behaviors towards fashion clothing brands but may behave differently towards brands from different industries.

In today's dynamic markets it is difficult for marketers to attract and retain the consumers. Marketers are using different techniques to attract the consumers. One the most important technique by which consumers can be attracted and engaged is positioning the brand on the basis of their gender. Many researches have shown that when the personality of the consumers match the brand personality they attach with the brands for the long term (Malär et al., 2011). As attachment theory states that individuals emotionally attach with the things like pets, people, or brands for the long time so when consumers think that their personalities match with the brand personality they will be more attracted with the brand. As gender is one of the dimensions of brand personality so it can also create consumers attachment with the brand.

Another technique to attract and engage the customer is the congruence between the gender of the brand and the gender on the individual. Congruity theory states when there is congruence between the individual and brand it forms the long-term relation and it is easy to attract individuals through it. When the individual's self is consistent with brand's self the consumer will engage more with the brand and attract more consumers while forming the CBBE.

Attracting and engaging consumers are easy on SNS as brands should run their pages in a way that clearly shows that the brand is muscular or feminine. When the brands online presence shows the clear gender of the brand then it will attract and engage the consumers more effectively. For engaging consumers on SNS is difficult yet if we once cultivate the favorable relationship with the

individuals it will be easy for the brands to engage with the individuals in future. Marketers should try to engage individuals online by giving them timely responses or by keeping in touch with them more frequently. For engaging the individuals, marketers should use clear gender positioning, their page outlook, colors, fonts, shapes, technicalities and even posts should show the clear gender positioning.

Marketers always try to enhance the equity of the brand through different techniques. Positioning the brand on the basis of its gender can enhance more equity than other techniques. When the brand is positioned on the basis of its gender it will affect the association of consumer towards the brand and consumer will remember the brand more easily. When consumer can easily recall the brand and recognize it easily because of the gender positioning then BE will be generated because of BG. When individuals have a positive association in their minds regarding the brand, then higher CBBE will be generated.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Previous studies have clearly shown that FBP and MBP significantly affect CBBE which means the more the brand will be muscular or feminine, the higher will be the equity (Lieven et al., 2015). This research contributes in the previous work by showing the effect of two mediators CBE and EBA on the association between brand gender and CBBE. The findings show that the model with mediators shows 26% of variation in CBBE while the model without mediators shows 24% of variation in CBBE. In this study, CBE and EBA had a substantial impact on the association among brand gender and CBBE. Therefore, this research will contribute to the literature on brand gender by enhancing our understanding of the association among brand gender and CBBE.

This study also contributes in the literature of brand gender as it shows the empirical evidence of the mediating effect of CBE in the relationship of BG and CBBE. The evidence shows that brand gender has a positive effect on CBE. The findings show that brand gender brings 13% of variation in CBE. CBE also significantly affect the relationship of brand gender and CBBE. This research also analyzed the effect of CBE on CBBE but CBE does not have any significant impact on CBBE. This study also contributes in the literature of brand gender as it shows the empirical evidence of the mediating effect of EBA in the relationship of brand gender and CBBE. The evidence shows that brand gender has a positive effect on EBA and these results may contribute in the literature of brand gender also, EBA significantly affect the relationship of brand gender on CBBE. The findings show that brand gender brings 27% of variation in EBA. This relationship is also important as many researchers believe that brand personality has a positive impact on EBA but until now very few have studied the effect of brand gender on EBA. Hence this study also extends the previous studies by suggesting that strongly gendered brands can attract the consumers more by forming EBA.

This research also analyzed the effects of EBA on CBBE and contributes in CBBE literature as when the consumer is attached with the brand, it will generate more equity. This relationship supports the previous studies that EBA has a significant effect on CBBE and also contributed in the theory as that relationship was not analyzed in the context of Facebook and Instagram.

This study entails certain managerial implications as well. Firstly, the findings of this study show that for attracting consumers, gender is an important aspect. If managers position their brands on the basis of brand gender and when there is match between consumer gender and brand gender it will engage the customers more and attract them which in turns helps the building of CBBE. Managers can highlight the gender of the brand through various ways for instance managers make their logos or names in a way that it depicts the gender of the brand and change the perception of individuals about the brand. They can also use the masculine or feminine spokespersons to

highlight the gender of the brand. Managers can also use in store settings or dresses of sales representatives to enhance individual's perception about the gender of the brand. Managers can also ensure individuals perceptions about the brand by using specific marketing campaigns.

Managers can also affect the perception of consumers through social media as the outlook of brand pages can enhance the perception of individual about the gender of the brand. The colors, brand social media posts, shapes etc. also made the perception of individual about the gender, if the brand is feminine then manager should use the lighter, bright or more colors and less technicality while for masculine brands manger should use darker and few colors and more technicality on social media sites. Managers should also try to maintain a relationship with consumers through social media sites, as the active engagement will attach the consumers emotionally with the brand. Managers should be vigilant about all the opportunities which help the brand in creating the emotional attachment with the brand.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has used the closed-ended questions to collect the data rather than the open-ended questions. If we had used the open-ended questions respondents might have more willing to complete the survey. The sampling technique is also an important limitation as the technique used is non-probability sampling and the sample profile was also considered as an important limitation as the respondents were mostly youngsters who use Facebook and Instagram but, for the generalizability, research should also be replicated among the old aged respondents as well.

This study is carried out in the context of the fashion clothing industry, other industries also need an investigation in this area or specifically research should be replicated for specific brands like feminine brands or masculine brands. When one uses the specific brands or products for research, it will engage the respondents more. Future research can also be carried out while taking all the profiles of brands like feminine, masculine, androgynous and undifferentiated and analyze their effect on CBBE in social media context.

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