

Effects of Social Value, Self-Discrepancy, and Face Consciousness on Status Consumption: Perceived Consumer Need for Uniqueness as a Mediator

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Abstract

The current research aims to examine the effects of face consciousness, social value and self-discrepancy on status consumption and mediating role of consumer need for uniqueness. In the culture of East, individuals understand distinctiveness as the dissimilarity of status rather than separateness or deviance. Ten hypotheses have been explored by researcher. Five-hundred and twelve participants completed a survey. Cross-sectional study design has been employed. This research concentrated on the issue of status consumption by using the luxury apparel industry. The outcomes can be beneficial for the managers of luxury apparel brands. The findings will facilitate managers of luxury apparel brands who are dealing with status consumption. They can get better insight of customers and manage their marketing strategies efficiently.

Keywords: Face consciousness, social value, consumer need for uniqueness, self-discrepancy, status consumption

1. Introduction

The majority of consumers are enthusiastic to spend wealth to own status goods apart from their earnings or social class before they have protected the suitable resources; nearly in all over the world consumers of luxury products demonstrate same behavior (Husic & Cicic, 2009). A lot of customers use huge level of disposable earnings on status consumption related goods and this trend appear to be increasing equally in United States (US) and in the other countries of the world (Nunes, Johnson, & Breene, 2004; Singh, 2002).

Nguyen and Ngamsiriudom, (2015) explored the effects of ideal self, ought self, and actual self on consumption behavior. But, the study used this relationship between self and consumption a bit further by looking at the discrepancy between real self and ideal self, and examines the outcomes of these gaps on status consumption in the presence of consumer need for uniqueness. Face consciousness is a cultural concept and most important in the countries of East. It was suggested to investigate how face consciousness manipulates customer's decision making across cultures (Sun, Chen, & Li, 2015).

There are only three studies which investigate self-discrepancy in a marketing perspective (Nguyen et al., 2015). This research, add to the scarcity of knowledge with regard to the impact of self-discrepancy on SC. In reality, existing research relating to the self in marketing context fundamentally has mostly studies issues related to self-congruity, self-regulation, and self-concept, not self-discrepancy.

Earlier research has tried to give explanation about SC from the view point of materialism which signify that customers has aspiration for material possessions, it has been determined by their desires for happy time as their person earnings permitted (Prendergast & Wong, 2003). But, almost materialism cannot explain why customers have such intense demands for luxury goods, apart from of their societal class and earnings (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). But, there is still found very limited research relating to combination of psychological, social and cultural variables such as self-discrepancy, social value, face consciousness, consumer need for uniqueness and status consumption with respect to apparel industry in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan. The present study aims to examine the effects of face consciousness, social value and self-discrepancy on status consumption and mediating role of consumer need for uniqueness.

Theory of social identity and social comparison are the two significant theories of consumer psychology which present valuable theoretical details for why customers use status related goods. Snyder and Fromkin, (1980) formalized uniqueness theory, According to this theory; it is perceived that when self gets extreme dissimilarity or extreme similarity from others then it generates negative emotions.

2. Literature review

FC reveals one's wishing to retain and improve face in social actions (Bao, Zhou, & Su, 2003). The individuals who are more face conscious extra care about their self-image and societal appreciation from other people and be inclined to purchase eye-catching goods to boost their social status (Liao & Wang, 2009; Li, Zhang, & Sun, 2015). Status can be defined as position or level of an individual in a society (Sun et al., 2015). Possessing

luxury goods is a means of bestowing a prosperous image and gaining face (Li et al., 2015). The following hypothesis can be built from the above discussion.

H1: Face consciousness significantly increases the status consumption.

Feelings of insufficiency and inferiority motivate persons to enhance their consumptions (Christen & Morgan, 2005; Drèze & Nunes, 2009). Particularly, in order to “keep up with the Joneses” low-income persons spend more on conspicuous consumption as compare to high income individuals (Christen & Morgan, 2005; Drèze & Nunes, 2009). On one hand, among the low income customers, the higher the self-threat, i.e., ideal is greater than actual, the higher the desire to balance the unbalanced and incoherent self- through status consumption (Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010).

H2: Self- discrepancy significantly increases the status consumption.

The purchasing choice of customers can be found by the consumer value which stated as, in general, the customer’s evaluation of the usefulness goods is depending on awareness of what is provided and what is received (Zeithaml, 1988, p.14). Customers buy those products which has value (Li et al., 2015). It is projected that customers buy luxury goods primarily for SV, which stated as, the effectiveness resulting from the capacity of goods improve societal self-concept of individuals (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001, p. 211). Buying conspicuous goods is often motivated by societal value because these goods can express societal prestige (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004). The following hypothesis can be built from the above discussion.

H3: Social value significantly increases the status consumption.

Face reveals one’s social self-worth and the wish to be appreciated in interpersonal exchanges (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Wong and Ahuvia, (1998) expected that the larger concern for face leads Southeast Asian customers to place further stress on publicly noticeable goods than customers of West do. FC could apply a constructive persuade on CNFU, to reflect the wish of people to accomplish their distinctiveness stimulus with goods. The following hypothesis can be built from the above discussion.

H4: Face consciousness significantly increase the consumer need for uniqueness.

When the differences between the actual and ideal/ought self to becomes high, it increases the discrepancy, there is also more chances of self-conflicts and condition of anxiety (Higgins, 1987). Therefore, the negative influence stimulate behaviors intended at lessening the gaps of discrepancy either with altering existing self-representation to strongly match the ideal self-representation or turn aside self-attention (Hoyle, 2006). Consumer need for uniqueness (CNFU) is an important variable; it is the characteristic of seeking differentness relative to others by using consumer goods to enhance their image (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Tian & McKenzie, 2001, p. 172; Tian et al., 2001, p. 52). The following hypothesis can be built from the above discussion.

H5: Self-discrepancy significantly increase the consumer need for uniqueness.

Customer activities are shaped not only by the personality of individuals but also by the societal customs and values of the cultural background. In the extremely mutually dependent and hierarchical cultures spending is a means for meeting higher societal needs (Tse, 1996). This is stated that the symbolic meanings of goods demand more to customers than in the West (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). By consuming unique products need for uniqueness can be satisfied (Lynn & Snyder, 2002). The following hypothesis can be built from the above discussion.

H6: Social value significantly increase the consumer need for uniqueness.

FC is the wish to increase, retain and defend face in the dealings of society (Bao, Zhou, & Su, 2003). Individuals who have strong face consciousness be inclined to use funds and material means apart from how wealthy or deprived they are (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Bao et al. (2003) exposed that due to FC; customers connect additional value to the extrinsic features of goods (e.g. brand, status) than the intrinsic features (e.g. value, quality). Distinctive products can be utilized to get constructive ruling from other people, it increases equally and social image and self-image (Tian & McKenzie, 2001). The CNFU must have a relationship with FC and SC.

H7: CNFU significantly mediates the effect on the FC and SC.

Persons rely on consumption and assets to rebuild their social identity and self-identity (Kleine Iii & Kleine, 2000). In order to build up a separate self-image and a distinctive social image customers also gain and exhibit material possessions. People get uniqueness as status distinctive while individual practice it through being separate in Eastern culture (Becker et al., 2012). Therefore, in the same way the search of uniqueness and rendezvous in SC can improve social image (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Consequently, the CNFU must have a relationship with self-discrepancy and SC.

H8: CNFU significantly mediates the effect on the SD and SC.

Buying conspicuous services or products (e.g., watches and clothes) is frequently motivated by social value because these goods express prestige and societal status (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; O’Cass & McEwen, 2004). Another way for customers to satisfy their wish for individuality is to obtain products which contain valuable status symbol value. The main form of distinctiveness has been interpreted as it gives status distinction in East Asian cultures (Becker et al., 2012). Hence, CNFU must have a relationship with social value and SC. The following hypothesizes can be built from the above discussion.

H9: CNFU significantly mediates the effect between SV and SC.

Uniqueness enhances the social status by contributing in self-identity (Codol, 1984; Maslach; Tesser, 1988). One method for customers to gratify their wish for distinctiveness is to obtain products which have valuable status sign value. The main form of distinctiveness is assumed as conferring status dissimilarity in East Asian cultures (Becker et al., 2012). Customers who have consumer need for uniqueness strongly desire for status consumption. The following hypothesis can be built from the above discussion.

H10: Consumer need for uniqueness significantly increase the status consumption.

3. Material and methods

The population for this current research was customers of various luxury apparel brands across Pakistan. Only customers of luxury apparel brands selected for study. Sample size was estimated using recommendations provided by Comrey and Lee, (2013) who posits a sample size of 500 as very good for analysis purposes. Convenient sampling was used to collect the data. Five-hundred and fifty-seven questionnaires were distributed, 512 responses were considered fit for research and response rate was 92%. Two-hundred and fifty-four responses were collected from online users by posting questioner online through social media and remaining 258 questionnaires were distributed to luxury apparel brand users.

Face consciousness: It was measured by 4-items scale originally developed by (Bao, Zhou, & Su, 2003). Respondents gave respond to each item on a five-point Likert scale. Status consumption: It was measured by the 5-item scale which was originally developed by Eastman, et al. (1999). Social value: It was measured by 4-item subscale adopted from the PERVAL scale which was originally developed by Sweeney and Soutar, (2001). It was measured by 7- items scale which was originally developed by Tian et al. (2001) to assess CNFU. Self-discrepancy was calculated with 7-item scale. It was basing on self-concept discrepancy theory (Higgins et al., 1985).

4. Data analysis and results

4.1 Demographic Analysis

Table1 Demographic Analysis		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	235	45.9
	Female	277	54.1
Apparel brands	Cambridge	86	16.8
	Chen One	118	23.0
	Bonanza	216	42.2
	Other	92	17.9
Age	<20	123	24.0
	21 – 30	351	68.6
	31 – 40	26	5.1
	above 41	12	2.3
Qualification	Intermediate	77	15.0
	Graduation	113	22.1
	Masters	145	28.3
	M.Phil	177	34.6
Monthly Income	Below 19000	252	46.2
	20000-29000	54	10.5
	30000-39000	62	12.1
	Above 40000	144	28.1

The total sample is 512 out of which 235 (45.9%) are male respondents and 277 (54.1%) are female respondents. The result shows that majority of respondents were users of Bonanza apparel brand which are 216 (42.2%), then we have 118 (23.0%) Chen One users, Cambridge users were 86 (16.8%), and 92 (17.9%) other users. Majority of respondent have the age of 21 to 30. The 77 (15.0%) participants were the intermediate students, 113 (22.1%) Graduate students fill the questionnaire, 145 (28.3%) participants had master degree and 177 (34.6%) M.Phil respondents took part in survey. In this research, 252 (49.2%) respondents had income below Rs.19000/-, 54 (10.5%) respondents had income between 20000/- to 29000/-, 62 (12.1%) respondents had income between 30000/- to 39000/- and 144 (28.1%) respondents had income more than 40000/-.

4.1.1 Correlation

	FC	SV	SC	CNFU	SD
FC	1				
SV	0.31**	1			
SC	0.38**	0.57**	1		
CNFU	0.25**	0.47**	0.53**	1	
SD	0.04	0.08	0.11*	0.03	1

Table 2 represents the finding of all variables, the value of 0.31** shows that there is a strong correlation between SV and FC. Similarly, we have strong correlation value of 0.38** between SC and FC. Correlation between CNFU and FC is also good its value is 0.25**. But, the value of 0.04 shows very weak relationship between SD and FC. We found very strong and highly significant correlation between SC and SV as their value of correlation is 0.57**. Likewise, CNFU and SV have strong relationship having value of 0.47** but correlation between SD and SV is weak and its value is 0.08. We have strong correlation value 0.53** between CNFU and SC. The value of 0.11** shows strong correlation between SD and SC. The value of 0.03 reveals very weak relationship between CNFU and SD.

4.1.2 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA):

The results of CFA show that measurement model has an acceptable model fit: CMIN/DF = 1.809, GFI = 0.925, AGFI = 0.909, CFI = 0.955 and NFI = 0.904 representing that the model is 90.4% fit, RMR = 0.049 and RMSEA = 0.040. The items SD_1 and SD_2 were removed due to low standardized regression weights. The fit indices for the re-specified 25-item measurement model were as follows: CMIN/DF = 1.868, GFI = 0.929, AGFI = 0.913, CFI = 0.957 and NFI = 0.913 representing that the model is 91.3% fit, RMR = 0.049 and RMSEA = 0.041.

Table 3 shows that the item loadings, Cronbach's alpha, AVE (average variance extracted) and CR (composite reliability). Study results depict the satisfactory results for convergent validity as per the all five construct with factor loads, AVE, CR and Cronbach's alpha. Factor loads of Face consciousness ranges from 0.52 to 0.76, AVE is 0.47 which is slightly below 0.50 and CR is 0.72, and Cronbach's alpha is 0.74. Similarly for Social value factor loads are .69 to .79, AVE is 0.55, CR is 0.83 and Cronbach's alpha is 0.83. Likewise for Status consumption factor loads are 0.57 to 0.85, AVE is 0.59, CR is 0.88 and Cronbach's alpha is 0.87. For consumer need for uniqueness factor loads are ranging from 0.69 to 0.78, AVE is 0.56, CR is 0.90 and Cronbach's alpha is 0.90. For self discrepancy factor loads ranges from 0.50 to 0.71, AVE is 0.45 which is slightly below 0.50, CR is 0.71 and Cronbach's alpha is 0.77, fulfilling the criteria for convergent validity.

Table 3 factor loadings, SMC'S, AVE, CR and Cronbach's alpha

	Codes	SMC'S	Factor loadings	AVE	CR	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Face consciousness	FC1	.350	.59	.47	.72	4	.74
	FC2	.275	.52				
	FC3	.579	.76				
	FC4	.477	.69				
Social value	SV1	.627	.79	.55	.83	4	.83
	SV2	.594	.77				
	SV3	.471	.69				
	SV4	.483	.70				
Status consumption	SC1	.685	0.83	.59	.88	5	.87
	SC2	.721	0.85				
	SC3	.586	0.77				
	SC4	.321	0.57				
	SC5	.629	0.79				
Consumer need for uniqueness	CNFU1	.471	.69	.56	.90	4	.90
	CNFU2	.508	.71				
	CNFU3	.548	.74				
	CNFU4	.602	.78				
	CNFU5	.611	.78				
	CNFU6	.573	.76				
	CNFU7	.614	.78				
Self-discrepancy	SD3	.247	.50	.45	.71	7	.77
	SD4	.460	.68				
	SD5	.501	.71				
	SD6	.369	.61				
	SD7	.294	.54				

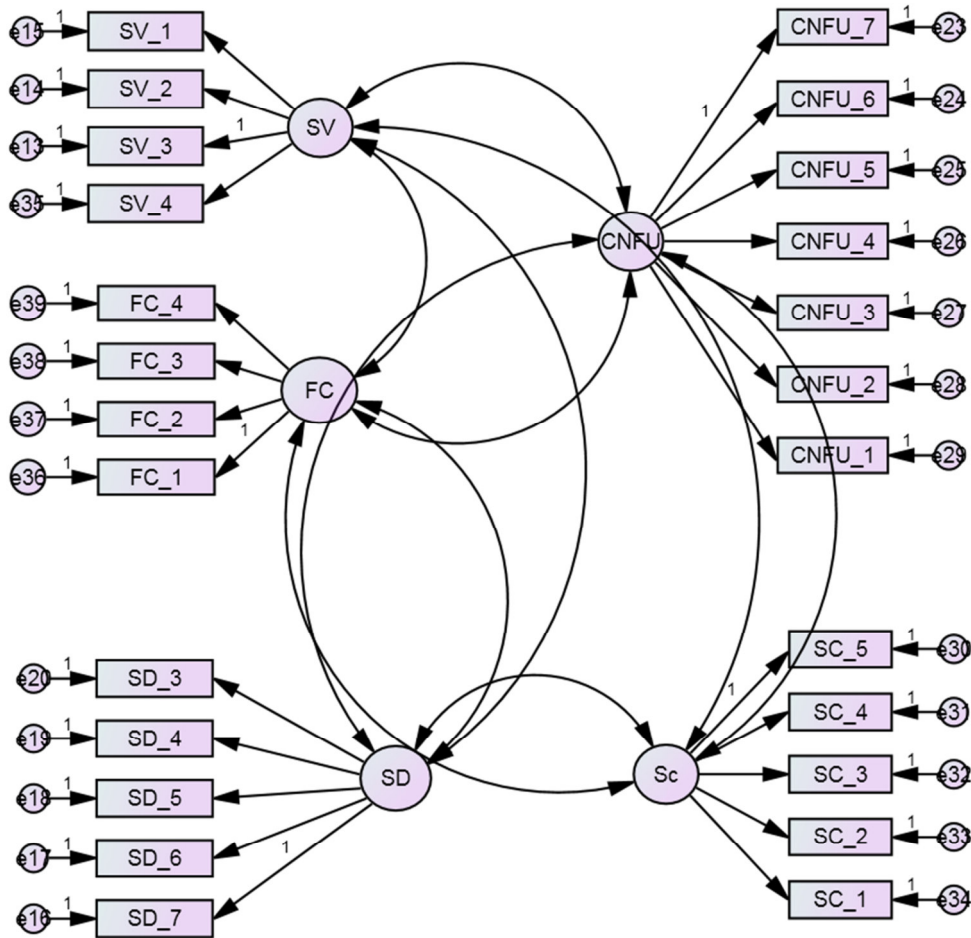


Figure 1: Measurement Model

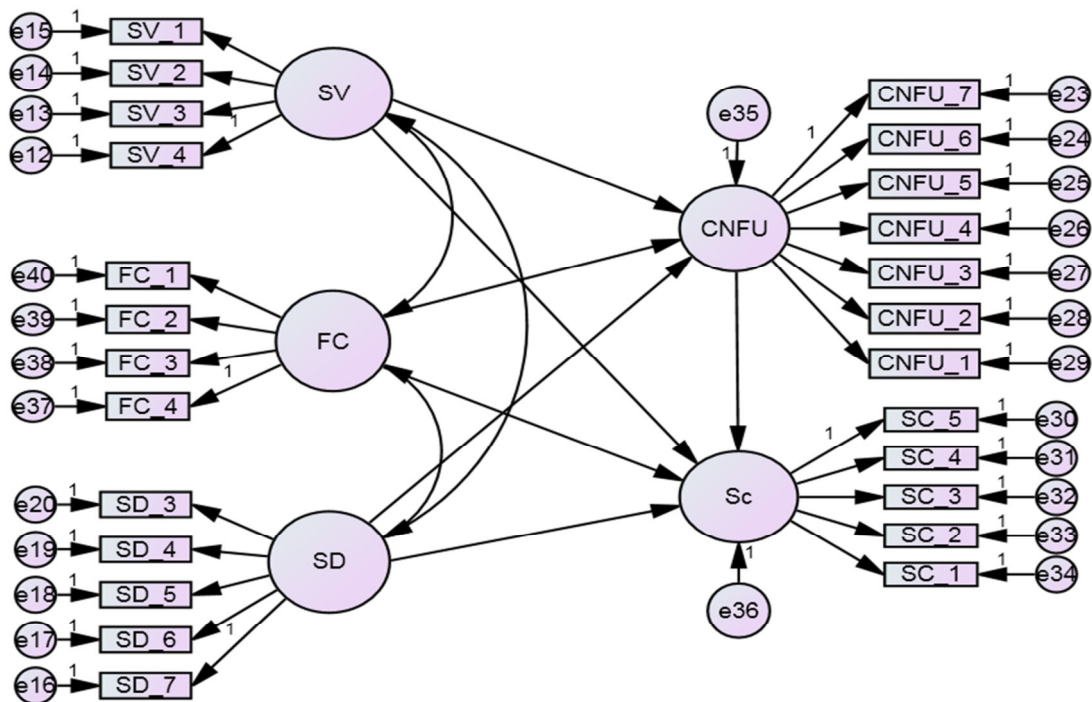


Figure 2: Structural Model with Hypothesized Causal Relationships

4.1.3 Hypotheses tests

It was proposed that SV has a significantly positive relationship with CNFU. Results revealed that SV has significant positive impact on CNFU ($\gamma = 0.643, p < 0.05$). Similarly, it was proposed that FC and CNFU have significantly positive relationship. Results had supported the proposition that FC has significant positive impact on CNFU ($\gamma = 0.116, p < 0.05$). Likewise, it was projected that SD has significant relationship with CNFU, it was not supported by the results ($\gamma = -0.051, p > 0.05$). Similarly, it was supposed that SC has significant impact on CNFU which was verified by the results ($\gamma = 0.343, p < 0.05$). It was proposed that SV has significantly positive impact on SC. Results showed that SV has significantly positive impact on SC ($\gamma = 0.595, p < 0.05$). It was proposed that FC has a significantly positive relationship with SC. Results revealed that FC has significant positive impact on SC ($\gamma = 0.222, p < 0.05$). Similarly, it was proposed that SD and SC have significantly positive relationship. Results had supported the proposition ($\gamma = 0.133, p = 0.05$). The hypotheses were tested with structural model. The fit indices were largely satisfactory with: CMIN/DF = 1.868, GFI = 0.929, AGFI = 0.913, CFI = 0.957 and NFI = 0.913, RMR = 0.049 and RMSEA = 0.041.

Table 4 SEM Output for Hypothesized Path Relationships in the Structural Model

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
CNFU ← SV	0.643	.075	8.577	***	Accepted
CNFU ← FC	0.116	.059	1.980	.048	Accepted
CNFU ← SD	-0.051	.072	-0.708	.48	Rejected
SC ← CNFU	0.343	.055	6.269	***	Accepted
SC ← SV	0.595	.081	7.393	***	Accepted
SC ← FC	0.222	.057	3.891	***	Accepted
SC ← SD	0.133	.069	1.935	.05	Accepted

4.1.4 Mediation analysis

Table 5 Mediation effects of consumer need for uniqueness

Path	Indirect Effect	Direct Effect	Total Effect	95% CI	
				Lower Level	Upper Level
FC → CNFU → SC	0.25(0.00)	0.52(0.00)	0.41(0.00)	0.08	0.19
SD → CNFU → SC	0.03(0.56)	0.58(0.00)	0.15(0.01)	-0.04	0.09
SV → CNFU → SC	0.49(0.00)	0.37(0.00)	0.66(0.00)	0.13	0.24
a FC → CNFU		a SD → CNFU		a SV → CNFU	
b CNFU → SC		b CNFU → SC		b CNFU → SC	
c FC → SC		c SD → SC		c SV → SC	

First, mediation of CNFU was checked between FC and SC. Results are based on 1,000 bootstrapped samples indicated the indirect effect (indirect effect = 0.25, $p = 0.00$), direct effect (direct effect = 0.52, $p = 0.00$), and total effect (total effect = 0.41, $p = 0.00$), were all found significant which indicate that mediation exists (lower 95 % CI = 0.08, upper 95 % CI = 0.19). Second, mediation among SD, CNFU and SC was checked. Results of indirect effect (indirect effect = 0.03, $p = 0.56$), was not significant but direct effect (direct effect = 0.58, $p = 0.00$), and total effect (total effect = 0.15, $p = 0.01$), were significant (lower 95 % CI = -0.04, upper 95 % CI = 0.09). The upper value and lower value have different signs which clearly indicate that there is no mediation effect of CNFU between SD and SC. Third, mediation among SV, CNFU and SC was tested. Outcomes of indirect effect (indirect effect = 0.49, $p = 0.00$), direct effect (direct effect = 0.37, $p = 0.00$), and total effect (total effect = 0.66, $p = 0.00$), were also significant which clearly indicate that there is mediation effect of CNFU between SV and SC (lower 95 % CI = 0.13, upper 95 % CI = 0.24).

5. DISCUSSION

Customers have a strong hunger for luxury apparel brands, and a number of individuals tighten their belt to purchase impractical things. This research explored stimulus for status consumption. In East, Customers give high regard to social self-concept. They buy luxury goods due to social value (Sun et al., 2015). It may help companies to know the profound understandings about the values of culture which help them to understand what are the products that customers choose and why they are fond of those goods.

First, it was proposed that face consciousness significantly increases the status consumption. The results are consistent with previous study of (Li et al., 2015; Liao & Wang, 2009). Face consciousness is a cultural concept (Sun et al., 2015). People in Pakistan are provoked to present themselves optimistically in social connections, and they are aware to the assessments of others. i.e., face consciousness inspire them to increase their social position through the use of luxury apparel brands.

Second, proposition was that self- discrepancy significantly increases the status consumption. The hypothesis given is true as results shows that there is a significant impact of self- discrepancy on status consumption. The outcomes are consistent with the earlier study of (Nguyen & Ngamsiriudom, 2015). It can be concluded from the results that the customers who have self-discrepancy, these customers buy apparel luxury products to minimize their self- discrepancy.

Third, it was proposed that social value significantly increases the status consumption. From the results it can be concluded that social value significantly increases the status consumption. The results are consistent with the study of (Sun et al., 2015). It can be concluded from the findings that the use of apparel luxury brands make good impression on others. Customers use apparel brands to express their value or societal position in the public.

Fourth, it was proposed that face consciousness significantly increase the consumer need for uniqueness. The results measured for the H4 are significant proving that the hypothesis stated is true. As per results and previous literature, it is verified that face consciousness significantly increase the consumer need for uniqueness. The results are consistent with the study of (Li et al., 2015). By creating unique features and giving sense of uniqueness to customers one can create strong connections with customers. Customers look for those luxury apparel brands which add to their personal uniqueness.

Fifth, it was proposed that Self-discrepancy significantly increase the consumer need for uniqueness. From the results, it can be concluded that Self-discrepancy was not associated with consumer need for uniqueness. The discrepancy in the selves will not stimulate customers to buy unique apparel brands to lessen the discrepancy between actual and ideal selves.

Sixth, it was proposed that Social value significantly increase the consumer need for uniqueness. From the results, it can be concluded that Social value significantly increase the CNFU. The results are consistent with the study of (Brock, 1968; Lynn, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). The research extends the literature by determining a significant relationship between SV and CNFU. The more reputation, standing or position a brand holds the more probable it will be utilized in status consumption.

Seventh, it was proposed that CNFU significantly mediates the effect on the FC and SC. The finding confirms our hypothesis CNFU partially mediates the relationship between FC and SC. The results are consistent with the studies of (Li et al., 2015). The mediation role of CNFU gives additional confirmation for its association of status distinction in the culture of Pakistan. It means that only those distinctive apparel brands that attain societal appreciation and convey superior societal place can assist customers to get face.

Eighth, it was proposed that CNFU significantly mediates the effect on the SD and SC. From the results it can be concluded that CNFU did not mediate relation between SD and SC. The results are not consistent with the studies of (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

Ninth, it was proposed that CNFU significantly mediates the effect between SV and SC. From the results, it can be concluded that CNFU significantly mediates the effect between SV and SC. The results are consistent with the studies of (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). This research extends the literature by exploring an additional significant mediating role played by the CNFU between SV and SC towards apparel brands. Moreover, it demonstrates that apparel brands are definitely handy medium to satisfy the uniqueness needs.

Tenth, it was proposed that CNFU significantly increase the SC. From the results, it can be concluded that CNFU significantly increase the SC. The results are consistent with the studies of (Becker et al., 2012; Marchegiani, 2010). Customers buy those apparel brands which establish their distinctive image.

5.1 Managerial Implications

The outcomes of present study give recommendations to managers. Uniqueness features should be used in the advertisements of luxury apparel brands to attract status consumers. Moreover, it can be concluded from results luxury apparel products are being utilized in a prominent context which may possibly be valuable for those customers who possess very high desire for ideal self. Customers who belong to collective culture possess very high concern for social approval. So, managers must underline the luxury apparel products as a source to get recognition and reputation in a reference group. Furthermore, managers who want to promote status related luxury apparel products in the market of Pakistan must also focus on value. The distinctive luxury apparel products which obtain societal sanction and communicate higher societal place can facilitate customers to gain face.

5.1.1 Conclusion

This study gives various newest insights which are associated with this concept of status consumption. The findings of this study are intriguing. The results are almost consistent with the anticipated associations which are argued in earlier researches. Moreover, the outcomes have further discovered several important factors which are essential for investigating status consumption behavior. One of the most significant stimuli for customers is to buy luxury apparel brands to improve status. It is because consumers would like to keep away from consuming

those apparel products which are similar with others. Likewise, the outcomes propose that a further incorporated outlook of SC must be taken while studying behavior of consumers. This study could be an incorporated research about the antecedents of SC.

5.1.2 Limitations

The limitations of the current study should be acknowledged. This research becomes limited due to its procedure of data collection. Data was collected only by using questionnaires. This research did not use different product categories. The majority of participants were belonging to young age group of the society i.e. ranging from 21 to 30, there were mostly young participants in the respondents list, this age group was most likely to provide the accurate information about luxury apparel brands and data has not been collected by the other parts of the population. Therefore, this limitation may be affecting the generalizability of the research.

5.1.3 Future recommendation

First, future research must explore other face-related matters. For instance, concern about the face of others, it may possibly give details why people make relations with behavior of gift giving. Second, this study must broaden to other countries of the world and build cross-cultural evaluations. Third, future research must use longitudinal design and capture the actual behavioral changes. These changes may perhaps in spending and in brand selections. Fourth, the worth of the sample increases the importance of the study. Fifth, instead of using student sample, it is suggested that data should be collected from real life consumers.

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