

Importance of Actual and Real Self- Congruency in Influencing Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Brand Passion

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the present study is to understand the industry dynamics of Bakery sector in Pakistan. The present study investigates the relationship between Self-Congruence and Purchase Intention of bakery consumers with Brand Passion acting as a mediator. Data was gathered from more than 200 individuals in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lahore as part of the methodology. The survey participants were provided with questionnaires for collecting data and responses were evaluated using Smart PLS software. The study results indicate that Self-Congruence has a major impact on Purchase Intention of bakery consumers in Pakistan with Brand Passion mediating the relationship between Self-Congruence and Purchase Intention. Tehzeeb, Layers, Fresh Co, and Bakeman are four well-known bakery brands investigated in the present research. These bakery brands have branches in cities of Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad. The key limitations of the research are its focus on particular sector and geographical area. Marketers and brand managers in the bakery sector may find great value in findings of this study as it offers a valuable perspective to use Self-Congruence and Brand Passion to build strong brand connections and improve Purchase Intentions.

Introduction

According to Phuong and Dat (2017), consumer Purchase Intentions are positively influenced by their attitudes towards functional food products. Marketing research validates the notion that customers' purchasing intentions are significantly influenced by their perception of themselves (Wu, Ren,

Pitafi, and Islam, 2020). Sung and Huddleston (2018) assert that companies with symbolic imagery that appeals to customers and fits with their self-image likely to be preferred by them. According to Sirgy and Su (2000), Self-Congruence refers to the extent to which self-image of a customer aligns with a brand's perception. Similarly, Ideal Self-Congruence refers to the extent to which a customer's idealized self-image aligns with that of a brand. Previous studies have demonstrated that self-image Congruity can influence customer choices for products and their intentions to make a purchase (Mehta 1999; Erickson 1996). Relationship between Self-Congruence and Purchase Intention is influenced by various factors, including brand attitudes, brand love, brand engagement, and brand personality. However, the past research has not thoroughly investigated the importance of role of Brand Passion as a mediator in the relationship between Purchase Intention and self-congruence. Previous research demonstrate the influence of congruence between one's ideal self and actual self-varies depending on the specific area of behavior being studied (Zhu, Teng, Foti and Yuan 2019; Ahn, Ekinci, and Li 2013; Ekinci, Dawes and Massey 2008). Future research needs to investigate the impact of a moderator or alternative mediator on the intention to make a purchase (Vijayan and Oo 2022). He and Mukherjee (2007) state that it is important to look at the ways that individual characteristics affect Self Congruity, which in turn affects how a certain brand attitude is formed. Past literature has mostly focused on how consumers' true self-images correspond with that of the brand or retailer. Empirical research that establish a connection between a robust self-concept and brand attitude, which subsequently influences the intention to purchase, are scarce, especially in the context of Pakistani customers (Sandhu, Usman, Ahmad and Rizwan 2018). Despite the fact that studying consumer behavior in the bakery business becoming more and more important there is still lack of research on the mediating impact of Brand Passion in relation to Purchase Intention and Self-Congruence. While numerous studies have examined various aspects of Consumer Behavior and Brand Engagement, there is a limited amount of research that investigates the interplay between Purchase Intention, Self-congruence, and Brand Passion within the baking business. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by examining the role of Brand Passion, mediating the connection between Self-Congruence and Purchase Intention. This research seeks to enhance our comprehension of customer preferences and motivations in the bread business.

The present study aims to examine the influence of Self-Congruence on Purchase Intention, while also exploring the potential mediating effect of Brand Passion. The research seeks to examine the correlation between an individual's self-perception and their perception of a brand. The main objective is to ascertain whether the robust correlation between self-image and brand image results in heightened affection for the brand. Moreover, the study aims to ascertain whether this passion impacts individuals' inclination to purchase products from the company.

This research has the potential to significantly improve our knowledge of customer behavior inside brand partnerships. This research might provide significant information for marketers and brand managers. It investigates ways to strengthen brand connections and enhance purchase intent by improving Self-Congruence and building Brand Passion. Moreover, examining the role of Brand Passion as a mediator can give valuable insight on the psychological mechanisms that explains the connection among Self-Congruence and the intention to purchase. Through employing a research-based methodology, we can explore the potential for enhancing marketing strategies by effectively leveraging Self-Congruence and Brand Passion to impact client buying behavior. The present study

attempts to answer questions i.e. What is the relationship between Self-congruence and Purchasing Intention? To what extent does Brand Passion mediate the relationship existing between Self-Congruence and Purchase Intention?

Literature Review

Self-Congruence

According to Sirgy (1982), Self-Congruity refers to the extent to which the perception of individuals about themselves aligns with the typical image associated with a certain brand. Sirgy (1982) introduced the notion of Self-Congruity in consumer research, describing it as the degree to which an individual's self-perception corresponds with the conventional image of a brand's user. Self-Congruence alignment of an individual's self-concept with the self-concept of another person or entity, such as brands, travel destinations, products, or celebrities. This concept has been explored in various studies, i.e.(Zhu et al., 2019; Huber, Meyer, Matthes and Hissnauer 2012; Liberatore and Tscheulin 2011; Sirgy, Johar, Samli and Claiborne 1991).

The Self-Congruity hypothesis posits that customers develop positive brand attitudes and behaviors when they see compatibility between a brand's personality and their own self-concept (Sirgy 2018). Customers increasingly seek firms that correspond with their social identities, making this idea more pertinent. Loureiro, Ruediger, and Demetris (2012) revealed that consumers develop strong emotional connections with companies that align with their personal identity, leading to further investigation into the influence of social Self-Congruity on consumer-brand interactions (Rabbanee, Roy, and Spence 2020; Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2016). Self-Congruity refers to the outcome of customers forming a deep emotional bond with a brand by evaluating how its personality aligns with their own perceptions of themselves, their desired self-image, their social ideals, and their desired societal ideals, as described by Roy and Rabbanee (2015); Liu, Li, Mizerski and Soh (2012). Self-Congruence significantly influences consumer choices by aligning the company's personality with the customer's self-perception which fosters a sense of affinity and connection between the two parties.

Ideal Self-Congruence

Ideal Self-Congruence is the assessment made by an individual regarding alignment existing between a brand's personality and their ideal selves (Rogers 1951). The self-improvement drive can enhance self-esteem and the sense of social acceptance among group members, leading to higher congruence between their ideal self and actual self. As a result, this can positively influence their like towards a brand (Astakhova, Swimberghe, and Wooldridge, 2017). According to Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, and Nyffenegger (2011) the desire to enhance oneself and achieve congruence with one's ideal self encourages individuals to seek ways to increase their sense of self-worth and connection with others and this in turns contributes to the development of Obsessive Brand Passion.

Actual Self-Congruence

Actual Self-Congruence defined as the extent to which an individual perceives a personality of a brand aligns with their own real-life personality. The alignment between one's ideal and actual self has a substantial impact on consumer behavior. This is because when individuals perceive a high level of compatibility between themselves and a brand (referred to as self-harmoniousness), they have a greater sense of consistency and agreement (Malär et al., 2011).

Purchase Intention

Purchase Intention refers to the consumers' personal disposition to pay for things or services, as opposed to simply desiring them (Bagozzi and Burnkrant 1979) while buying intention refers to the discretionary inclination of customers to make investments in items or services, rather than simply desiring to obtain them. When examining someone's conduct, the initial consideration is their inclination to make purchases. Purchase Intention refers to a customer's present inclination and likelihood of making a purchase (Bebber, Milan, De Toni, Eberle and Slongo 2017). Purchase Intention is the amalgamation of a buyer's focus and their capacity to obtain a thing (Cuong 2020). According to Akturan (2018), marketing actions have a direct impact on Purchase Intention, which is the primary outcome.

Customers are more inclined to purchase products or services that they have explicitly chosen when their attitude or impression corresponds with their expectations (Spears and Singh 2004). Purchase intent is a crucial indicator of Information Technology user adoption and a powerful motivator for customers to make online purchases (Mansouri et al., 2012).

Past research suggests that authentic Self-Congruity has an impact on individuals' intentions to make a purchase (Tooray and Oodith 2017). Purchase Intention is found to be positively associated with luxury apparel brands that aligned with individuals' true self-concept (Wallace, Buil, and Catalán 2020). Marshall et al., (2008) found that the level of Self-Congruity is associated with the brand's attitude and influences consumers' decision-making when buying products. The decision to purchase establishes linkages that are advantageous for firms and their products, leading to increased customer loyalty towards their preferred brands (Malär et al., 2011). According to Sirgy et al., (1997), customers are more inclined to buy products associated with a specific brand when they perceive a strong alignment between their self-image and their perception of the brand. The study findings suggest that the alignment between one's ideal self and their buying intents is influenced by Self-Congruity (Tooray and Oodith 2017). Choi and Rifon (2012) found that when a consumer's ideal self-image matched that of a celebrity endorser, it resulted in a favorable customer view and a higher intention to purchase. In contrast, when the self-perceived ideal images did not correspond, it led to a detrimental customer attitude and decreased desire to make a purchase. This enhances customer devotion to the brand. In light of the literature discussed above, the present study proposes the following recommendations.

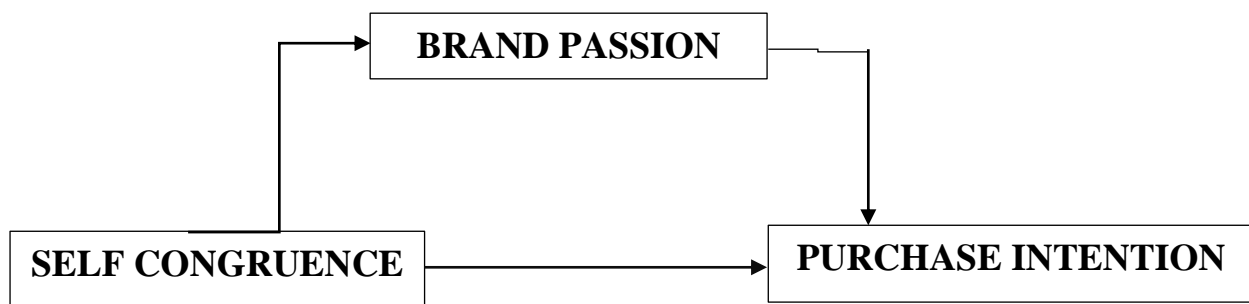
Hypothesis H1a: Self-Congruence has a significant impact on the Purchase Intention.

Brand Passion mediates the relationship between Self-Congruity and Purchase Intention

Brand Passion is described as a predominantly positive or overly favorable attitude towards a specific brand, resulting in emotional attachment and influencing important behavioral elements (Bauer, Heinrich and Martin 2007). Customers exhibit a strong and enthusiastic connection with the brand (Keh, Pang and Peng 2007) bringing pleasure and excitement to the brand (Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). According to Vallerand et al., (2008), people's passion drives their desire to achieve goals, engage in practice, and increase emotional and physical energy. According to Tumwattana (2020), customers of LeTAO Thailand believe that the brand's features, including its products, name, and diverse clientele, resonate with their own identities. As a result, they develop a good perception of the brand.

H2a: Brand Passion mediates the link between Self-Congruence and Purchase Intention.

Research Model



Self-Congruity Theory

The Self-Congruity theory, proposed by Malär et al. (2011), posits that there is an immediate and beneficial connection between a user's ideal, actual, and social self-concepts and their perception of a brand's image. This perception, in turn, influences the user's attitude towards the brand, their loyalty to it, and their emotional attachment to it. According to this hypothesis, buyers prefer to utilize patented products that align more closely with their own image and identity (Aaker 1999). According to Sirgy and Su (2000), Self-Congruity manifests itself in four distinct ways i.e. two of these selves pertain to an individual's private identity, specifically their Actual Self-Congruity and Real Self-Congruity. The other two selves relate to an individual's public identity, specifically their Social and Ideal- Social Self-Congruity. Individuals strive to satisfy their needs by utilizing brands that give them chance to achieve their desires (Razmus, Jaroszyńska, and Palęga 2017; Howard and Sheth 1969). Tsai, Chang and Ho (2015) validated the phenomenon by discovering that the similarity between one's self-concept and a brand has a beneficial impact on the decision to choose that brand. The behavior of consumers is driven by their need for consistency and harmony with their private and social identities. Therefore, individuals can fulfill their desire for both social and personal gratification by choosing a brand that aligns with their self-image. Marketers who comprehend the correlation between Self-Congruity and Brand Attitude in consumers will have a greater ability to effectively attract their intended audience.

Methodology and Analysis

We employed the method of surveying in our study because of its frequent association with an approach to research that is deductive. This widely employed methodology is mostly utilized in business and managerial research to address inquiries pertaining to "what," "who," "where," "how much," and "how many." We have used five Likert scales: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Here are the survey questions that were utilized:

Table 1: Validity Scale

Dimension	Construct	Reference
ASC1: The personality of "Bakery" is consistent with how I see myself (my actual self) ASC2: "Bakery" reflects who I am ASC3: The personality of "Bakery" is a mirror image of me (my actual self)	Actual self-congruence	Malär et al., 2011; Sirgy et al., 1997
ISC1: The personality of "Bakery" is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self) ISC2: "Bakery" reflects who I would like to be ISC3: The personality of "Bakery" is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self)	Ideal Self-Congruence	Malär et al., 2011; Sirgy et al., 1997
BP1: No other "Bakery" in the category can quite take the place of this "Bakery". BP2: I have a powerful attraction toward this "Bakery". BP3: I have feelings for this "Bakery" that I don't for many other "Bakeries".	Brand Passion	Hsu, 2019
PI1: It is highly likely that I will purchase from this "Bakery". PI2: It is most probable that I will prefer this "Bakery". PI3: For the next purchase, it is possible that I will purchase from this "Bakery".	Purchase Intention	Choi and Miracle 2004

In the survey method, questionnaires are typically distributed among people to gather data because this approach yields very affordable and easily understood surveys. We were able to get quantitative data by launching online survey forms. We are now able to comprehend the connections between the variables and have greater control over the study process thanks to this strategy. The present study using the positivism paradigm adopts quantitative research methodology leading to deductive research approach, which place a strong focus on utilizing evidence to assess hypothesis. The correlations between the variables for our study that were assessed numerically have been examined via quantitative research.

The data for this research study was collected by administering a questionnaire through online forms. The questionnaire received over 70 replies, with a majority of them coming from male participants between the ages of 20 and 25. The questionnaire included of two primary sections that examined the demographics of the respondents and their impressions of four specific bakeries: Tehzeeb, Layers, Fresco, and BakeMan. Respondents provided their answers using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" — "Strongly Disagree." The data was analyzed using regression analysis to investigate the relationships between the variables. SPSS and Microsoft Excel were utilized for the data analysis. The poll was distributed across Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Wah, Taxila, and Lahore, covering a wide range of geographical areas to gain a thorough grasp of consumer viewpoints.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Statistics

	Gender	Age	Education	Monthly income	Favorite bakery
Mean	1.09	2.50	1.09	1.83	1.81
Std. Deviation	.282	2.302	.329	1.154	.921
Variance	.080	5.297	.108	1.333	.849
Range	1	19	2	3	3
Minimum	1	2	1	1	1
Maximum	2	21	3	4	4

Frequency Table

Table 3: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	64	91.4	91.4	91.4
	Female	6	8.6	8.6	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-25	57	81.4	81.4	81.4
	25-30	10	14.3	14.3	14.3
	30 -Above	3	4.3	4.3	4.3
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelors	65	92.9	92.9	92.9
	Masters	4	5.7	5.7	98.6
	PhD	1	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Monthly Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rs. 20,000-30,000	41	58.6	58.6	58.6
	Rs. 30,000-40,000	12	17.1	17.1	75.7
	Rs. 40,000-50,000	5	7.1	7.1	82.9
	Rs.50,000-60,000	12	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: Favorite bakery

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Layers	29	41.4	41.4	41.4
	Tehzeeb	33	47.1	47.1	88.6
	FreshCo.	8	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Factor Loadings

The model was tested using the PLS-SEM for the collected data. Convergent and validity tests were used to assess the measurement model. According to Hair et al., (2014) the outer loadings were checked to determine the reliability of the individual items involved in the present study. The convergent validity was assessed using the factor loading (FL > 0.5) (Gefen et al., 2000) and greater 0.40 to 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014) the results of the factor loading are given in Table 1 which indicates that the elements in the model have loading between 0.761 to 0.913 with none of the items deleted.

Table 8: Factor Loading Results

	ASC	BP	ISC	PI
ASC	0.761			
ASC1	0.855			
ASC3	0.842			
BP1		0.795		
BP2		0.853		
BP3		0.874		
ISC1			0.913	
ISC2			0.904	
ISC3			0.884	
PI1				0.895
PI2				0.887
PI3				0.894

Reliability and Validity

Instrument or internal reliability of the scale is measured using Cronbach alpha with all constructs having values greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). Average Variance Extracted establishes convergent validity (Zait & Berteau, 2011) with AVE > 0.5 considered to be an acceptable value (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). It can be seen in Table 9 that values of all of the constructs exceed 0.5. Composite reliability is a measure of internal consistency and is determined using structured factor loadings. 0.6 to 0.7 indicates an acceptable level and 0.8 or greater a very good level. Values greater than 0.95 are not necessarily considered as a sign of good reliability and indicate redundancy (Hulin, Netermeyer and Cudeck, 2001). The results in the table 9 indicate that composite reliability is greater than 0.7 and less than 0.95. The Dijkstra-Henseler's rho, or Rho_A, to determine the precise data consistent. The acceptable values should be higher than 0.7 (Ramírez & Palos-Sánchez, 2018).

Table 9: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ASC	0.761	0.789	0.86	0.673
BP	0.794	0.804	0.879	0.708
ISC	0.883	0.889	0.928	0.811
PI	0.872	0.873	0.921	0.796

Discriminant Validity

Table 10: Hetrotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT Ratio)

	ASC	BP	ISC	PI
ASC	1.000			
BP	0.642	1.000		
ISC	0.651	0.739	1.000	
PI	0.494	0.816	0.505	1.000

The HTMT criterion is used to examine discriminant validity and establishes discriminant validity between two reflectively measured constructs if values of HTMT are less than 1 (Henseler et al., 2015). The results of the HTMT Ratio criterion are given in table 3 and it can be seen that all of the values are less than 1. Another criterion that is used to assess the discriminant validity is the Fornell Larcker Criterion which states that This criterion states that a square root of the average variance of each construct must be larger than the correlation it has with any other construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) the results of the Fornell and Larcker criterion are given below in Table 3.10.

Table 11: Fornell and Larcker Criterion

	ASC	BP	ISC	PI
ASC	0.82			
BP	0.51	0.841		
ISC	0.534	0.625	0.9	
PI	0.413	0.683	0.447	0.892

According to Cross Loading Criterion while comparing an item to other constructs in the study, loadings on its own parent construct should be larger, based on cross loadings. In contrast to its

own parent construct, if an object loads well into another construct, then it indicates an issue of discriminant validity. The result of cross loading are given below in Table 12.

Table 12: Cross Loadings

	ASC	BP	ISC	PI
ASC	0.761	0.352	0.42	0.248
ASC1	0.855	0.495	0.463	0.409
ASC3	0.842	0.385	0.43	0.334
BP1	0.423	0.795	0.433	0.499
BP2	0.451	0.853	0.566	0.588
BP3	0.415	0.874	0.566	0.627
ISC1	0.451	0.554	0.913	0.464
ISC2	0.498	0.587	0.904	0.419
ISC3	0.497	0.545	0.884	0.312
PI1	0.331	0.641	0.351	0.895
PI2	0.4	0.599	0.439	0.887
PI3	0.377	0.588	0.408	0.894

R square statistic is used to measure the predictive ability of the research model the results of the R statistics are given below

Table 13 Cross Loadings

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
BP	0.433	0.423
PI	0.472	0.458

Using the SmartPLS software, variance inflation factors (VIFs) were produced for each latent variable in the model. Since every VIF result was less than 3.3, common method bias was not present in the analysis. (Kock 2015). The results of VIF are given below in Table 14.

Table 14: Collinearity Statistics VIF

Constructs	VIF
ASC	1.484
ASC1	1.507
ASC3	1.714
BP1	1.554
BP2	1.723
BP3	1.854
ISC1	2.661
ISC2	2.455
ISC3	2.394
PI1	2.301
PI2	2.264
PI3	2.408

Testing Structural Hypothesis

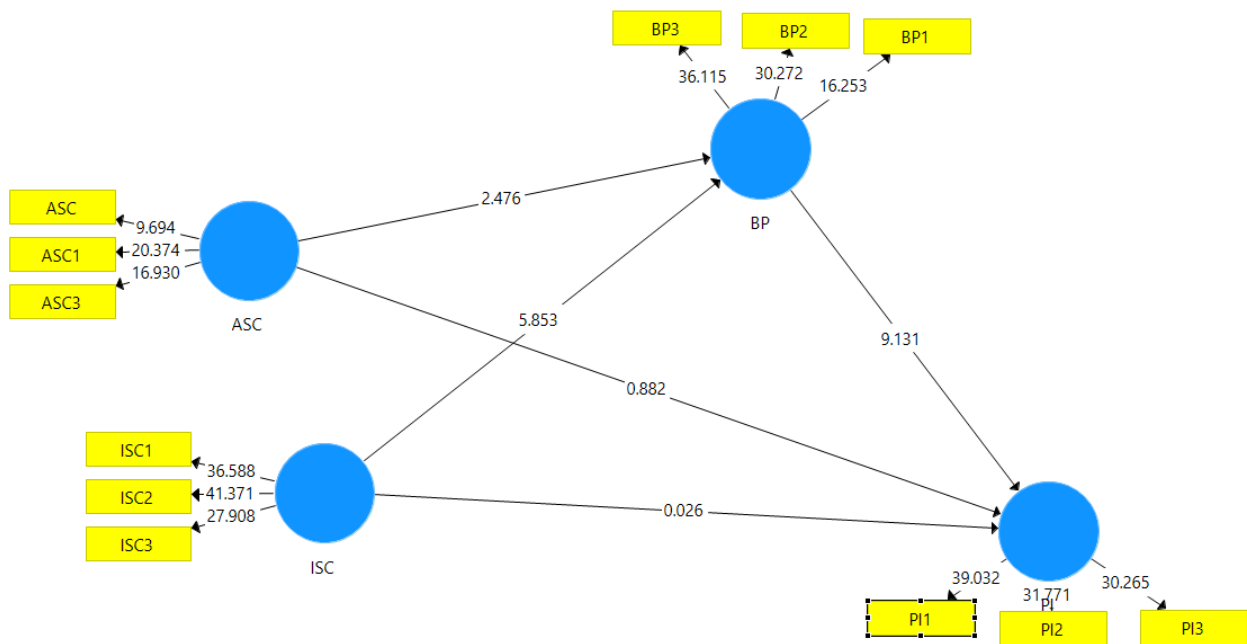


Figure 1 Research Model

Table 15: Path Coefficients results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
ASC -> BP	0.246	0.24	0.1	2.473	0.014
ASC -> PI	0.087	0.095	0.096	0.905	0.366
BP -> PI	0.638	0.639	0.069	9.192	0.000
ISC -> BP	0.493	0.501	0.085	5.773	0.000
ISC -> PI	0.002	-0.008	0.075	0.025	0.980

Table 16: Total Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
ASC -> BP	0.246	0.24	0.1	2.473	0.014
ASC -> PI	0.244	0.25	0.104	2.352	0.019
BP -> PI	0.638	0.639	0.069	9.192	0.000
ISC -> BP	0.493	0.501	0.085	5.773	0.000
ISC -> PI	0.316	0.312	0.085	3.702	0.000

Table 17: Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
ASC -> BP -> PI	0.157	0.154	0.068	2.317	0.021
ISC -> BP -> PI	0.314	0.32	0.062	5.061	0.000

The results in the total effects table indicate that all of the effects are significant with p value less than 0.5. The mediation of brand passion on the relationship is established as the entire specific indirect effects are significant which supports hypothesis brand passion des mediate the relationship between ASC and PI and ISC and PI.

Conclusion

The results of our study demonstrate a significant association between Self-Congruence and the intention to make a purchase. This conclusion is supported by past study, some of which is explained in detail in this discussion. Prior studies on customer behavior have demonstrated that the impact of congruence between one's actual self and ideal self-differs depending on the specific domain under investigation (Zhu et al., 2019; Ahn et al., 2013; Huber et al., 2012; Ekinici et al., 2008). In their study, Malär et al., (2011) shown that actual Self-Congruence has a considerable impact on individual behavior, while ideal Self-Congruence does not have a direct effect. Zhu et al., (2019) discovered that the influence of real and ideal Self-Congruence differs according on the type of brand. Rabbanee et al., (2020) discovered that when customers perceive a strong connection between a brand and their actual or desired identities, it results in favorable emotions towards the brand. Nevertheless, this may not invariably be true. Self-Congruity, that is defined as the alignment between a buyer's self-perception and a product, has been linked to Purchase Intention, influencing the buyer's decision to acquire the product. The study reports a positive link between Self-Congruity and Purchase Intention which serves as supporting evidence for this assertion. This is consistent with the results of a prior study that presents self-images as a component of self-concept that represents distinct attributes based on people' possessions. It encompasses individual self-images that can vary from person to person (Guthrie, Kim and Jung 2008).

Consumers are more inclined to purchase a product that aligns with their self-perception, a phenomenon referred to as Self-Congruity. The previous study conducted by Khalid, Wel, Alam, and Mokhtaruddin (2018), supports these finding and verifies the direct relationship between Self-Congruity and Purchase Intention.

Empirical observations and research studies have unequivocally demonstrated the significant influence of self-concept on branding and customer behavior, a fact that marketers widely acknowledge. According to Onkvisit and Shaw (1987), as stated in Choi and Rifon (2012), self-concept is the combination of an individual's thoughts and feelings regarding their own identity in relation to others. Within the psychological spectrum of self-concept, researchers have identified two distinct types of self. The term "ideal self" relates to an individual's idealized self-image, whereas their "real self" indicates their genuine perspective of themselves (Choi and Rifon 2012). Prior research, specifically Sirgy (1985) as cited in (Choi and Rifon 2012), provides substantial

evidence in favor of the hypothesis that consumers buy and utilize things that correspond with their self-concept, whether it represents their real or desired self. Malär et al., (2011) conducted study that defines the ideal self as an individual's envisioned and ambitious representation of oneself, influenced by their imagination. The findings indicate that brand attachment is mostly influenced by the genuine self. Furthermore, the correlation between advocacy and brand Self-Congruence is impacted by brand loyalty and emotional attachment (Ian 2023). Our investigation specifically examines bakeries in Islamabad and Lahore; forthcoming studies may extend the geographic scope to encompass more cities in Pakistan. This would provide a more comprehensive depiction of customer behavior across various regions. In our study, we examine the influence of Self-Congruence (ideal and actual Self-Congruence) on Purchase Intention, with Brand Passion acting as a mediator. However, future research should consider incorporating different factors such as brand trust, loyalty, and customer satisfaction. By examining the interplay between these factors, namely Self-Congruence and Brand Passion, we can gain deeper insights into client behavior.

Later studies could take into account a longitudinal study, as this type of study tracks variations in buying habits over time and may provide different perspectives on how Self-Congruence and Brand Passion affect Purchase Intention across the long run. Our cross-sectional study focuses on the "Impact of Self-Congruence (Ideal and Actual Self-Congruence) on Purchase Intention with a mediating effect of Brand Passion" in an identifiable time frame. As the importance of digital marketing and online presence increases, further research could explore how these intersect with Self-Congruence and Brand Passion to influence the intention to purchase. In our study, the majority (91.11%) of the sample fell within the age range of 20-25. However, it is important to note that our sample size was very modest. Future study could incorporate diverse age groups and increase the sample size to gain additional knowledge about the Pakistani market. Our study focused on the Bakery Industry in Pakistan. However, further research might encompass other industries such as Banking, Eateries, Fashion, and others.

A crucial feature highlighted in our research is the importance of connecting a consumer's self-concept with a brand's image. The level of congruence between a consumer's self-image and a brand is a vital factor in influencing their inclination to make a purchase. Buyers are more likely to support a bakery that aligns with their character, beliefs, sense of self, and way of life. Tehzeeb, Layers, FreshCo, and Bakeman should allocate significant resources towards developing brand approaches that cultivate a strong sense of coherence with their intended customer base.

Moreover, the influence of Self-Congruence on the likelihood of making a purchase is clarified by the intermediate function of Brand Passion. Customers and companies establish a more profound sense of connection and demonstrate greater loyalty when there is a strong and genuine feeling of Brand Passion. Consumers' propensity to buy a product is strengthened when they strongly feel a match between the brand's image and their own self-identity. This phenomenon occurs when customers form a profound emotional connection with the brand. Therefore, it is imperative for bakeries to prioritize the development of captivating advertising initiatives that are cutting-edge product innovations, and immersive brand experiences. This approach will additionally ensure a consistent brand image but also cultivate a strong sense of excitement and loyalty among buyers.

This study offers an in-depth evaluation and assessment of Tehzeeb, Layers, Freshco, and Bakeman. The main objective is to identify areas that need development and propose solutions to increase their impact on consumer purchasing intentions.

- All the bakery brands in the present study could potentially enhance their brand strategy to appeal to a wider range of customers by adopting current trends and capitalizing on its extensive tradition and culture.
- They can leverage their remarkable quality and beautifully crafted design to generate feelings of refinement and luxury among purchasers. To foster a more profound psychological connection with consumers with health goals who actively pursue organic products.
- They should place a high priority on establishing and maintaining their brand identity and narrative.
- They should give top priority to emphasizing their dedication to exceptional quality and dependability, while utilizing its ease along with affordability to appeal to cost-conscious customers.

This study emphasizes the importance of Self-Congruence and Brand Passion in influencing customers' intentions to buy in the bakery business. Bakeries such as Tehzeeb, Layers, Freshco, and Bakeman can improve the appeal of their brand, cultivate customer devotion, and ultimately influence purchasing behavior by comprehending and applying these psychological ideas.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be provided by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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