Universidade do Minho
Escola de Economia e Gestão

Muhammad Zakria

Brand democratization and customer brand engagement: Understanding the customer-brand power distance

Doctoral thesis in Marketing and Strategy
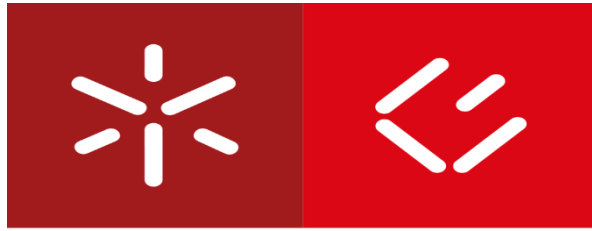
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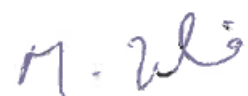Supervised by:

Professor Claudia Simoes

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Authorship Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work which has been produced from research carried out under supervision. This thesis has not been presented by anyone for any academic award, neither in this nor in any other educational institution. All the research work has been duly referenced, to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of different scholars and laureates. I am solely responsible for any shortcomings in this work.

Muhammad Zakria   Date: 15/11/2022

Signature

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis first and foremost to Almighty God for His divine guidance and protection, I also dedicate it to my parents Khizar Hayat, and Irshad Begum for their constant moral and material support. A lifetime of thank you can never be enough for what you have done and continue to do for me till this very day. Thank you for giving me the much-needed clarity and strength at every step of my life, it is only due to your efforts that I have been able to come this far. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my brother and sisters for their continuous support throughout my studies. May God always shower His blessing upon you and keep you under His protection.

Acknowledgements

Statement

In the quality of Muhammad Zakria's supervisor, Student from Doctoral Programme in Marketing and Strategy, I hereby declare that the student has conducted the thesis corrections, as required by the panel.

15 November 2022

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Resumo

Marcas de luxo, anteriormente acessíveis à elite da sociedade estão agora a ser comercializadas para um segmento maior do mercado, isto pode ser atribuído principalmente ao processo de democratização da marca (DB). No entanto, no context académico há uma falta de escrutínio sobre a influência da democratização da marca de luxo e o seu impacto no envolvimento do cliente em relação à marca. Para explorar os pressupostos sublinhados da democratização da marca e do envolvimento do cliente-marca, desenvolveu-se um modelo conceptual baseado na literatura proporcionando um entendimento mais profundo da democratização da marca.

Utilizando uma metodologia predominantemente quantitativa de recolha de dados, esta pesquisa explora os pressupostos subjacentes a uma marca de luxo mais democrática, conduzindo três estudos. O estudo 1 explora o construto da democratização da marca através de uma revisão sistemática da literatura e identificando várias dimensões que apoiam uma melhor compreensão do conceito. O estudo 2 desenvolve uma escala de democratização da marca baseada na acessibilidade e comunicação, enquanto o estudo 3 testa a relação entre a democratização da marca e o envolvimento do cliente com a marca (ECM).

Os resultados revelam o impacto positivo da democratização da marca no envolvimento do cliente com a marca, apelando assim a mais investigação sobre o impacto mediador das interacções cliente-marca. O controlo e o empowerment que os consumidores/clientes de marcas de luxo desejam exercer sobre as marcas foram considerados como moderadores sobre a relação entre DB e ECM. Globalmente, os resultados confirmam as hipóteses, revelando que variáveis como o "eu ideal", a auto-congruência com a marca e o prestígio em massa, têm um impacto positivo na democratização da marca.

Este estudo empírico sobre a democratização da marca apresenta vários avanços teóricos e visa ajudar as marcas de luxo a desenvolver uma estratégia coerente a longo prazo para gerir desafios únicos.

Palavras-chave: envolvimento do cliente-marca, democratização da marca, luxo democrático, interacção, controlo, empatia com o cliente, "eu ideal", auto-congruência, massificação, luxo, moda, marcas, Paquistão, Ásia do Sul.

Abstract

Luxury brands which were once accessible to the elite of the society are now being marketed to a larger segment of the market, this can be mainly attributed to the process of brand democratization (BD). However much academic scrutiny on the influence of democratization and its consequent impact on customer brand engagement is lacking. To explore the underlined assumptions of brand democratization and customer-brand engagement preliminary conceptual model and the existing literature, advocates for a deeper understanding into brand democratization.

Using pre-dominantly quantitative methods of data collection, this research explores the underlying assumptions of a more democratic brand by simultaneously conducting three studies, study one primarily explored brand democratization through a systematic review of the literature and identified several dimensions which support a better understanding of the construct. Study 2 helped develop brand democratization scale based on accessibility and communication while study 3 tested and confirmed the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement (CBE).

The results revealed positive impact of brand democratization on customer brand engagement thus calling for further investigations on the mediating impact of customer-brand interactions. The control and empowerment that luxury brand consumers/customers wish to exert on brands were taken into consideration while study for the moderating impact on the relationship between BD and CBE. Overall, the results were favourable to the hypothesized statements, revealing that predictors such as ideal-self, self-congruity with the brand and mass-prestige to have positive impact on brand democratization

This academic empirical exploration on brand democratization therefore provides several theoretical advancements and aims to assist luxury brands in developing a coherent long-term strategy to manage unique challenges.

Keywords: Customer-brand engagement, brand democratization, democratic luxury, interaction, control, customer-empowerment, ideal-self, self-congruity, mass-prestige, luxury, fashion, brands, Pakistan, South-Asia

List of Abbreviation

BD------------------------------ Brand Democratization

CBE----------------------------- Customer Brand Engagement

MMS----------------------------- Masstige Mean Score

CE------------------------------ Customer Empowerment

IS------------------------------ Ideal-Self

SC------------------------------ Self-Congruity

SD-Logic------------------------ Service Dominant Logic

CD-Logic------------------------ Customer Dominant Logic

IMC----------------------------- Integrated Marketing Communication

EFA----------------------------- Exploratory Factor Analysis

CFA----------------------------- Confirmatory Factor Analysis

AVE----------------------------- Average Variance Extracted

CR------------------------------ Construct Reliability

GFI----------------------------- Goodness-of-Fit Index

RMSEA--------------------------- Root Mean Square of Error Approximation

SRMR--------------------------- Root Mean Square Residual

IFI----------------------------- Incremental Fit Index

NFI----------------------------- Normed Fit Index

TLI----------------------------- Tucker-Lewis Index

CFI----------------------------- Comparative Fit Index

AGFI---------------------------- Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index

PNFI---------------------------- Parsimony Fit Index

KMO----------------------------- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

PCA----------------------------- Principal Component Analysis

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background of the research

This research was carried out to understand brand democratization and customer-brand engagement from the customer's perspective in the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan. Since this research is primarily centred on luxury fashion brands within Pakistani luxury fashion context, it focuses on the identification of brand democratization, defining its parameters through systematic literature review(s) and scale development. The study further developed a theoretical framework which explored and addressed brand democratization and its relationships with other relevant constructs such as customer-brand interactions, and the moderating role of power (control and customer-empowerment). Apart from showing brand democratization and its composition into the whole luxury context, this research thesis also explored the relationships between customer self-congruence with ideal self and luxury fashion brands and the underlying assumption that brand democratization is also influenced by luxury fashion brands focused on mass-prestige (Masstige).

The elements of a brand and its definition range from being a legality, a logo, and an identity system to build relationships based on certain key characteristics (Ogbeide, 2015). Over the years several authors such as Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Bashir, Wen, Kim, & Morris, 2018; Casado-Díaz, Pérez-Naranjo, & Sellers-Rubio, 2017; Islam, Hollebeek, Rahman, Khan, & Rasool, 2019; V. Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2012) have noted that for a brand and its relationships with consumers to truly exist, there needs to be an existing partnership which houses benefits for both parties. This premise affects and shapes the dynamics of relationship of brands with its consumers, therefore consumers as a result become partners in crime rather than just ordinary consumers. One way to legitimize this relationship for both parties is to highlight the ways in which brands are personalized for individual consumers (Fournier, 1998). There exists a need to anthropomorphize objects to ease interaction, thus giving meanings to products, and services has served as one of those needs (Aaker, 1997). Therefore, this treatment of products and services as an important part of the relationship spectrum end up marketers trying to relate brands and give them meanings of attachment (Levy, 1985).

At this core meaning, brands relationships serve a more profound purpose for consumers/individuals, for one it brings comfort, stability and add meanings to people's lives. This provision of meanings can change self-concept and further expand into new dimensions such as brand loyalty and brand trust which are previously influenced by perception about the brand itself (J. Kumar & Nayak, 2019). Different theories such as (brand personality and brand relationship theory) (Fournier, 1998) argue the nature of collaboration between brands and consumers end up being the highlight of associations. When personalized products and services are offered by the brand, they can be based on personal characteristics bearing strong characteristics so that the person's spirit itself would dwell in the brand and as a result the inanimate, lifeless object would have an association, and personality of its own. (Fournier, 1998). Moreover, earlier research on branding offers a complete anthropomorphising of the brand itself highlighting a complete overtake of humanistic characteristics so that the objects under discussion would serve as a point of reference. While the population continues to grow, this has brought in huge number of consumers who possess unique qualities of their own, and consumers associate multiple humans like characteristics to consumer goods (Mick & Fournier, 1998).

Literature states that achieving brand commitment is one of the ultimate goal for brands (Das, Agarwal, Malhotra, & Varshneya, 2019), the authors also observed that in the presence of brand passion, brand ethicality is of no concern to the users thus eliminating the possibility of any power distance and struggle between brand and the customer. Likewise in the apparel industry (Wang, Pelton, & Hsu, 2018) the negativity for a brand is often offset by increasing brand value in the minds of the customers, which reduces customers disengagement. Similarly cognitive dissonance is of the essence when it comes to explaining multiple shopping behaviours (Frasquet, Mollá Descals, & Ruiz-Molina, 2017). Brand loyalty positively effects brand trust and attachment therefore it can be assumed to have no impact on customers belief of power distance. When it comes to conflicting interests of customers and the brand, brands often end up presenting a mirror image of the society, thus removing any conflicts (Preiholt, 2012) with in the apparel industry. Furthermore when it comes to maintaining brand salience, developments in brand equity play a very important role (E. Y. Kim & Ko, 2010).

Brands associations have been studied at length, the personality traits they are attached to provide self-expressive and symbolic values to the users (Aaker, 1999), and enhance customer experiences. These associations have even more so focused on the role that brand attributes

and the utilitarian value of consumer responses towards the efforts directed to the brands. However little efforts have been recorded which shows that these very dimensions of associations can become important drivers of self-expressions and engagement with the brands. The perceptions that consumers hold for a brand and the expected value and experience they aim for not only depends on the utilitarian value of it, but also the products outlook, how it fits with their overall agenda of consumption and the values that the brands offer in terms of experiences. Therefore, brands are managed to perform to a level of congruence that offers maximum benefits to the user. (Aaker., 1999)

Furthermore, coupled with all the different aspects of branding, the luxury industry itself in the last two decades has been aimed at masses. This has further aided brands in producing products and services which are not only of highest quality but are accessible for many consumers. Therefore, the very concept of luxury has evolved, and brands have created a whole new model (Ramadan, 2019) to suit the needs of 21st century. Consumption and growth of luxury fashion brands in particular have outpaced other consumer goods (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Literature associates this growth to several factors including the increase in the net worth of consumers with an increasing appetite for luxury goods. The luxury industry itself comprises of several categories, namely fashion, cosmetics, automobiles etc. The focus of this study is therefore the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan, the justification being the scant number of studies done on the subject, while research gap exists in the literature.

McKinsey published state of the fashion 2020 and reported Total luxury fashion industry growth for the year at 3.0-4.0%, despite that fact that this figure stood for the total growth figure for the industry worldwide and it also stands for the industry's growth. However, the report also accounted for value segment and that the luxury segment's growth also remained consistent at 4.0 to 5.0%, although affordable luxury segment experienced 3.0-4.0% growth in 2020 as compared to 3.5-4.5% growth in 2019. Customer engagement and the value that it holds for brands has had a lot of attention both from managers and academics although the experiences that customers derive from consumption of both luxury and non-luxury brands differ substantially.

1.2. Research problem

In response to the knowledge gap identified in the literature and the possibility to contribute to the body of knowledge related to customer-brand engagement, brand democratization,

customer-brand experiences, and brand relationships. This study defines its focus as *'Brand democratization and customer-brand engagement within the luxury fashion brand industry'*. This study thus concentrates on the view that throughout the customer-brand interactions, experiences are shaped by the brand's initial promise and if the customer responds to promise fulfilment.

Housed within the object of this study, following research questions are addressed:

1. *To what extent customer-luxury brand engagement and brand democratization are related to customer-brand power?*
2. *To what extent does customer-brand interactions mediate, the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement?*
3. *To what extent do control and customer empowerment moderate the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement?*
4. *To what extent do ideal-self, self-congruity, and mass-prestige (masstige) impact brand democratization?*

1.3. Purpose and objectives of research

This study organizes brand democratization and customer-brand engagement literature in a way which resonates to the definition of the constructs. Organizing literature helped develop a theoretical framework to define the phenomenon of brand democratization and aided in developing a scale which captured the dimensions of brand democratization. Customer-brand engagement was set to be predicted/explained by brand democratization scale (developed in study 2). The scale CBE helped define and reaffirm the relationship between the predictor (BD) and the dependent variable (CBE).

The research questions are further split into the following objectives:

i. To examine and identify engagement factors which hinder customer-brand experiences within the luxury brand industry.

ii. To find out if luxury brand democratization impacts customer-brand engagement.

iii. To discover whether customer perceptions shape customer-brand engagement.

iv. To discover brand related activities which shape and influence customer-brand power.

v. To identify the consequences of ignoring customer-brand power and its influence over brand democratization and customer-brand engagement.

1.4. Relevance and contributions of the research

1.4.1. Theoretical contributions

This thesis was developed to articulate the branding literature in a way that presented brand democratization as a construct that resonated with the luxury fashion brand consumption. The majority and primary contribution of this research is showing the domain of brand democratization construct by conducting a systematic literature review which identifies and examines BD as a construct that has significant implications for marketing literature in general and more specifically for understanding customer engagement among luxury fashion consumers in an industry (Pakistan) that is often over-looked. Systematic literature review helped explore existing articles, books and other published materials from a holistic perspective which further aided in identifying certain overlooked perspectives. Primarily in terms of how luxury fashion branding has evolved to include a vast number of consumers from all walks of life, secondly a systematic review of the literature scrutinizes brand democratization construct through the lens of a luxury fashion brand being a brand which not only communicates effectively with its target audience but also makes its products more accessible in the market.

Secondly, systematic literature review helped supply building blocks for study two, which develops a measurement scale for brand democratization based on the dimensions of communication and accessibility. Scale development stage indicated 5 dimensions and further dictates that accessibility and communication resonated precisely in predicting brand democratization. Thirdly this thesis develops a framework in study three which establishes the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement, to help understand the link between BD and CBE. In this case, the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement is significant, which signifies that BD does impact CBE. Moreover, the framework also helped guide the inclusion of mediation between BD and CBE through interaction, and another iteration helped assess the moderating impacts of control and customer empowerment. While the moderating and mediating impacts can be studied in several ways nevertheless the analysis does provide evidence into how brand democratization can be impacted through mediation and moderation.

Moreover, this research studied luxury fashion brands in Pakistan, these brands have had a major impact on the luxury consumer industry in the country. Therefore, another contribution of this research was to provide a framework to test for luxury fashion brands in Pakistan under the assumption that a relationship exists between brand democratization and customer-brand

engagement. The Major impact of the contributions of this study would be on the expansion of literature which is through the development of a conceptual framework and then the testing of the framework to confirm the identified theories in the form of customer-brand engagement and brand democratization which would thus be available for use for the entire academic community. The significance of this study however lies in the amalgamation of contracts such as brand democratization and customer-brand engagement and negative customer engagement. The knowledge gathered by this research is also important and relevant for the research community and students who have an interest in the realms of customer brand engagement and brand democratization.

This study also employs literature from various marketing theories and builds up the constructs on customer-brand engagement and brand democratization on those theories and further utilizes them in the luxury brand industry. Therefore, it is clear that knowledge arising from such research initiative will most likely boost and add to the literature on brand engagement and democratization in general. The existing literature has vastly researched customer engagement and negative customer engagement, from identifying their antecedents and consequences to studying the constructs in the light of specific theories such as justice, cognitive dissonance, and disconfirmation theory. Finally, this research initiative may also serve as a reference point for future researchers.

1.4.2. Managerial Contributions

Fist, and foremost managers can use the framework developed on brand democratization and customer-brand engagement to review their strategies to assess their businesses (luxury brands) so that an extra know how may aid them to overcome disengagement patterns with the customers. Since the very manifestation of customer-brand interactions is being represented by the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement, therefore this knowledge of customer-brand interactions and the relationships which it represents can be utilized to provide guidance to managers when it comes to handling negative/positive customer engagement. More popular brands in Pakistan such as HSY, JJ, and Maheen Khan could benefit from the brand democratization scale to analyse their brands and to better understand the accessibility on which a more profound strategy could be introduced to increase quality of communication with its customers. Furthermore, since the luxury brands are housed in a very saturated luxury market, knowledge of brand democratization and the ability to provide democratized brands to the rest of market. This will prove to be of immense importance as the

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awareness itself will aid brand managers in uplifting their brand to deliver on initial brand promises.

1.5. Organization of the thesis

This thesis is organzied into three studies and six chapters. The first chapter highlights the introduction to thesis, background of the research and the research problem/gap identified during preliminary research, the purpose and objectives of the study and, finally the relevance and contributions of the study. Chapter two begins by introducing study one, a systematic literature review which was carried out in this chapter to further explore Brand democratization, this chapter presents all the relevant literature where conceptual, theoretical and empirical review of the literature is done. Study one also explored systematic literature review and a potential method of highlighting research problems and identifying research agendas, which ends with main findings and conclusion.

Chapter three introduces the main construct as a gap in the literature, and the literarure reviews done on the subject. This chapter highlights the brand democratizaiton scale development (study two) through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The scale was developed and tested to house robust and precise items which were further used to measure brand democratization, keeping in mind two main dimension on which the entire construct was based. Chapter four includes study three which depicts brand democratization paired with customer brand engagement, separate literature reviews were carried out to find precise explainations regarding the potential impact that brand democratization can have on customer brand engagement. The methodology section within study three depicts the quantitative methodology employed in data collection, and in accordance with the literature reviews and data collection, the results are discussed and conclusion is provided. Chapter five discusses the three studies which can have a potential impact for luxury fashion brands and chapter six concludes the three research studies in light of theoretical and managerial contributions of the study.

Chapter 2: Study One: Brand democratization; A Systematic Literature Review

To unearth the core meaning of brand democratization, this chapter sets out to explore the construct by conducting a systematic literature review to explain and map brand democratization. This chapter therefore explores and reviews literature(s) using keywords most relevant to the study: branding, democratization, democratic luxury, accessibility, communication, and fashion. Since Sutton and Staw (1995) reiterated that prior research developed helps set the stage for developing future theories and new theoretical arguments, the knowledge accumulated needs to be referenced to acknowledge the contributions to be made in the research study. Several authors have also expressed on the need to acknowledge the building blocks of theory to help set up grounds for the need and purpose for conducting a systematic review. Given the fact that this thesis builds up on marketing discipline to interact with the luxury context, and fashion in particular, this chapter though highlights most relevant literature. Reviewing the content helped analyse brand democratization and conclude with identifying components which may foster/hinder democratization of brand(s), e.g., accessibility and communication, luxury vs non-luxury brands, empowered customer and the power distribution between customers and the brands and lastly the sophistication with which technology integration can help achieve democratization. This chapter also stresses on how the research done here can be carried out in the future keeping in mind the foundation on which democratization stands; inclusion of excluded market segments and underlying co-creation opportunities between the brand and its stakeholders.

2.1. Introduction

Since the introduction and conceptualization of the construct of Democratization (Pouillard, 2013), the subject has been up for debate within various fields, such as, management (Värttö, 2019), strategy (Gutsatz & Heine, 2018) political science (Eisenstadt & Maboudi, 2019) and educational systems (Rambe & Moeti, 2017). Although democratization has been studied from different angles and in different contexts, this paper focuses on the realms of democratization in brand consumption and its management. For example, democratization has been of influential power in the luxury industry where multinational luxury brands of products, such as, apparel and contemporary consumer brands, have succeeded in democratizing their products and services for masses (Pouillard, 2013).

From the nineteenth century, Europe held supremacy over fashion in the luxury industry. European luxury brands dictated women's fashion to ensure market acknowledged their intellectual property rights. This meant that buyers from other markets could purchase the fashion products and remodel them accordingly (Pouillard, 2013). Despite numerous restrictions, in terms of copyright and patent laws imposed by the European fashion industry, shoppers were more than interested in engaging with market brand leaders. This later compelled the US fashion managers to warrant for an American Fashion Democracy. In practice, companies adopted a strategy by developing brands commonly known as masstige brands, a term conceived by (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). More precisely this term associated with brands defined as 'brands meant for masses, with a masstige marketing strategy aimed at penetrating markets in terms of brand knowledge, brand likability, brand love and prestige'(A. Kumar, Paul, & Unnithan, 2019). . This democratization of brands to masses has been helpful in improving the standards/benchmarks for many brands and organizations alike. Facing the increase in demand from emerging markets, such as, China, India, and Africa, brands started marketing their luxury products to masses on prices suitable for each target segments. This has given such brands considerable edge over their competitors in reaching a larger consumer base.

Despite of the benefits resulting from brands democratizing their products, the literature is still developing (Gutsatz & Heine, 2018; Rambe & Moeti, 2017) and calls for a deeper analysis of the term 'brand democratization'. Hence, this study seeks out to theoretically address the following questions: (i) How pervasive is the concept of brand democratization in the literature, (ii) What are the relevance and challenges of democratization for brands? (iii) What are the future avenues for democratization of luxury brands? To address these questions, we carried out a systematic literature review looking at how the concept of brand democratization has been spread out, what sort of effect(s) (in terms of opportunities and threats) it has created for the luxury fashion brands and what directions into brand democratization can be provided for future investigations. The paper follows with the examination of the main concept under study brand democratization. Next, we describe the article selection process for the systematic literature review. Subsequently the results are synthesized and discussed together with recommendations for future research.

2.2. Brand Democratization

Before mass production options, high end, or luxury goods were only being consumed by those who could afford it, i.e., exceptional consumers with high incomes (Ramadan, 2019). Literature points out that brand availability to mass markets has been occurring as branding becomes tied not to affordability but to experiences (Mortimer & Laurie, 2019). Since democratization of brands, a new market reality is being overtaken by various factors such as digitalization and globalization. Therefore the democratized brands now offer wider choices, brand extensions (Nobre & Simões, 2019) and personalized customer experiences. Hennings et al. (2015) synthesize and explain the rising demand for luxury brands in the era of democratization and concluded that luxury brands include the following dimensions of value perceptions: financial, functional, individual, and social consumer perceptions.

Brands has led consumers on wanting to experience quality and lifestyle. For example, technologically savvy brands are developing tailored relationships by infusing technology (Hamann, Smith, Tashman, & Marshall, 2017; Pouillard, 2013). New players also came into the market making existing brands rethink their position in the market. Pouillard (2013) addressed the European (French) fashion brands, when faced with the challenges presented by the US masstige and mass-producing brands. According to the author, the French industry managed to retain much of the profits by reinventing brand image, by 'trickling down to the lower strata of fashion consumption'. The author further proposed the outsourcing production model aimed at simultaneously reducing cost of producing fashion, retaining brand exclusivity, and remaining desirable in the market.

In the words of (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 312), democratic luxury is defined as a 'luxury item that extraordinary people consider ordinary and at the same time is extraordinary to ordinary people'. The authors note a clear distinction between luxury and non-luxury, such that the brand/item would seem extraordinary to ordinary people and ordinary to extraordinary individuals. This build up to the very core of luxury goods and services, that a symbolic desire to belong to a superior class is attached to luxury items, thus making it a social signifier. These markers of luxury can be found all over, from objects, houses, art, beauty and all else that can be classified as an unnecessary item without which people can survive.

The literature on brand democratization is scarce. There is a scant number of studies specifically addressing brand or service democratization (Ramadan, 2019; Sinha & Sheth, 2018; Thubert, Francoulon, Weber, Maniere, & Boyaval, 2017).

The line of inquiry of particular interest to this study focuses on the luxury brand democratization. Luxury brand democratization widens the brand reach to a larger user base, yet disruptive to the traditional system. Gutsatz and Heine (2018) note that if democratization is to be measured in terms of pricing and luxury goods, there has not been much democratization due to the nature of pricing mechanisms. Regarding the expensiveness of luxury, democratizing brands can be somewhat linked to the basis of pricing mechanisms (Gutsatz & Heine, 2018): due to inflation, the prices of luxury brands keep increasing over time; and, new entries/new product introductions impact in the market. That is, despite mass producing luxury, pricing strategies for brands are still the same.

A parallel line of research looks at the widening of service availability and how technology made it possible. Technological advancements have fueled the availability and personalization of choices for customers. This democratization helps customers and relevant stakeholders participate in branding activities (Asmussen, Harridge-March, Occhiocupo, & Farquhar, 2013). Different brands choose to offer customized services to customers willing to pay a little extra. Products/brands become customized and co-produced with customers. Within democratization the customer co-produces, creates and disrupts the conventional ways of doing business (Ramadan, 2019). Customers advocate the brands by spreading the word to their peers, which have been made easier through the spread of social media channels and handheld devices. Customers also have a strong influence on the brand itself, by, for example stressing the brand's environmental posture or the match between promised quality of product/services and the brands delivery.

2.3. Methodology

In this study we developed a Systematic Literature Review (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003), putting together research that has contributed towards the topic of branding and brand democratization. A systematic review adopts a narrative base to help organize the contents of the selected research studies. This process, helps minimize biases which may occur in gathering the information and in developing high quality assessment criteria (Tranfield et al., 2003). The

review took the following steps: identification, selection, appraisal, data retrieval and amalgamation (Cordero P & Ferreira, 2019).

The literature *identification* process was carried out on two most renowned databases: Web of Science and Scopus. We used a search string which resulted in an automatic search on the databases, using the main keywords: Brand Democratization, democratic luxury, fashion. The filters on both databases were limited to: (a) type: Article; and (b) subject categories: Economics, Finance, Business, and Management. In terms of *sample selection* and to ensure that the studies included are relevant, we used as inclusion (and exclusion) criteria studies which evidently related to the research questions and were specifically addressing democratization and branding.

For the sample selection, a primary search through the databases resulted in 72 papers from Web of Science and Scopus. An analysis of the papers showed that twenty studies were duplicated, which were considered only once for example; (Asmussen et al., 2013; Dong & Tian, 2009; Gutsatz & Heine, 2018; Pohlmann & Kaartemo, 2017; Ramadan, 2019; Ryan & Silvanto, 2011; Vogel & Watchravesringkan, 2017)). After processing (*appraisal*) the fifty-two results through the inclusion and exclusion criteria, eighteen articles were selected to be analyzed.

Hence the final number of articles which were considered for this review were 18, published between 2001 and 2020. Research papers which were excluded in this review, such as, (Alekseyeva, 2014; Hadiz, 2007; Öniş, 1999; Ozbilgin & Yalkin, 2019) appeared until phase three of the search process. Yet, they were excluded despite housing the keyword 'democratization'. The basis for exclusion was grounded on the fact that they were not in the areas of business/management but instead addressed issues related to political science and administrative studies. Table 1 summarizes the paper selection process used to conduct systematic literature review.

Phase	Process	Number of papers
1	Choice of Database (WOS, Scopus)	-
2	Search using keywords: Brand Democratization	72
3	Limiting results to articles, while excluding conference proceedings	52
4	Limiting to subject area: Business, Management, Finance	18

5	Finalizing selection process of research papers	18
	Total	18

Table 1: Paper selection process

Prior to the analysis, the relevant data/information was to be extracted so that at a later stage the relevant information can be transferred to data composition (Tranfield et al., 2003). This step of data extraction ought to house the information that will be required at a later stage to answer the research questions. To profile this sample of papers gathered, we used the following fields: Author(s), method, Fieldwork location/Industry; and Publication outlet. Table 2 below summarizes the sample profile, by listing authors/publication year, methodology employed to study a specific industry and the publishing journal.

Table 2: Sample profile of selected papers

Author/Publication date	Method	Fieldwork location/Industry	Journal
Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020	Quantitative-Survey	Tunisia-Luxury-leather goods	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services
Zahy Ramadan, 2019	Qualitative-Interviews	Lebanese Luxury services, IVA device	Marketing Intelligence and Planning
Gutsatz & Heine, 2018	Qualitative-Case study	Europe-Accessible luxury products	Journal of Brand Management
Pohlmann & Kaartemo, 2017	Qualitative-Bibliometric analysis-interviews	-	Industrial Marketing Management
Rambe & Moeti, 2017	Qualitative	US-Africa	Education Technology Research and Development
Vogel & Watchravesringkan, 2017	Quantitative- scenario based experimentation	US-neo mass luxury	Journal of Product & Brand Management
Hennigs et al., 2015	Quantitative-Survey	Germany-Luxury brands	International Journal of Retail & Disruption Management
Asmussen et al., 2003	Qualitative-Integrative review	Non-luxury.IT	Journal of Business Research
Veronique Pouillard, 2013	Qualitative-Review	Europe/Fashion-Luxury	European Review of History Revue européenne d'histoire
Aristotelis Zmas, 2012	Qualitative	Europe/Education-non-luxury	European Journal of Education
Dant et al., 2012	Quantitative survey	China/Fast-food industry	Journal of Small Business Management
Ruan & Silvanto, 2011	Quantitative-multivariate analysis	US/Non-Luxury-Tourism	Marketing Intelligence and Planning
Anjali Bal et al., 2010	Qualitative	US/Non-luxury	Journal of Public Affairs
Kemming & Humborg, 2010	Quantitative	Tourism-Non-luxury	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy
Dong & Tian, 2009	Mixed method	China/Non-Luxury	Journal of Consumer Research
Rojsek, 2001	Quantitative-Survey	Slovenia/Non-luxury-FMCG	Purchasing and Consumption Behavior

Kapferer & Bastien, (2009)	Qualitative	Luxury fashion	Journal of Brand Management
(Kapferer, 2014)	Qualitative	Luxury	HEC-Paris

(Source: Authors's own elaboration based on Review of the Literature)

Data analysis entailed content analysis of the papers. The underlying process consisted in maintaining an objective viewpoint and systematically applying the categorization rules. This allowed for data comparability. We summarized, integrated and gathered the findings of different studies on a specific topic (Tranfield et al., 2003). The content analysis focused on the constructs used, relevant theories and paper conclusions. Overall, the content analysis aided in processing information through research objectives and applying systematic rules, so that the data from various sources could be compared (Kassarjian, 1977). Such criterion in analysis allowed for mitigating reviewer(s)' biases while reviewing support materials on the topic under study selected by the reviewers' own design (Kassarjian, 1977).

2.4. Findings

Luxury goods portray sound financial strength and a dormant image. The luxury industry has continuously evolved through technological innovation and has thrived in creating attractions to expand the target market. Over the years, managers have overcome convoluted challenges with regards to economic and cultural environments. Such context has brought in new challenges to overtake and new consumers to satisfy. Consumers whose habits result from social inaccuracies (i.e., consumers seeking to match products with their individual selves due to social influence), set out to match everyday needs with luxury items. Technological innovations have also increased consumer boldness and new engagement with brands due to technology. In parallel, mass-produced luxury goods and services have unfolded to reach out to and appeal to larger markets. Effects of this booming activity have been related to the expansion in luxury markets and observed by cross-cultural studies in multiple contexts (Bahri-Ammari, Coulibaly, & Ben Mimoun, 2020).

Since the 1980's, luxury has been mass produced, creating a democratization effect, often referred to as from 'happy few to happy many' (Gutsatz & Heine, 2018). Research has linked the rise in luxury consumption with conspicuous consumption and the Veblen effect (Veblen, 1901), where the consumption itself is showing the status in order to deliver a message of success. Luxury products are brought up in the market above their functional prices to induce a sense of perception of luxurious products and brands. The phenomenon of democratization of luxury branding has resulted in brands offering products at multiple levels of quality (e.g.,

counterfeits) and pricings. However, the literature points out to the fact that consumers react differently to counterfeit brands, and their respective impact on brand image/authenticity. This approach based on brands' actions, despite their attempt to democratize to lower markets, can have different impacts on consumer brand attitudes, brand equity and brand preferences (Veblen, 1901).

Considering how current marketplaces have evolved, including advances in web development, new paths have been created for brands to maintain and enhance their relationships with stakeholders. The developments of technology can be also seen as internet-based brand democratization (Asmussen et al., 2013). Table 3 below provides a summary of the literature concerning brand democratization. The systematization of publications showcases the respective authors, constructs studied, the literature(s) consulted, and the conclusions and future research directions provided to supplement arguments regarding democratization.

Table 1: Systematization of Publications of democratization of luxury fashion brands

Author(s)	Construct(s)	Literature Reviews	Conclusion(s)	Future Research Recommendations
(Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020)	Social comparison Interdependent self Independent self Materialism Bandwagon consumption	Lux goods, globalization Consumer psychology Self-concepts Materialism Bandwagon effect	Psychological and sociological factors explain bandwagon Social comparisons Importance of materialistic aspirations	Self-concept and social aspirations Self-esteem, self-awareness, culture, social class
(Ramadan, 2019)	Luxury services Consumer experience	Personalized services Personal consultant	Adoption and effects of PA devices Benefits outweigh privacy and security risks Personalized fashion consultant	Research into multiple context Adoption of personal assistant technology by fashion brands
(Gutsatz & Heine, 2018)	Luxury pricing techniques Conspicuous consumption Luxury product categories Veblen, bandwagon, and the snob effect	Price mechanisms Price can be used to distinguish between luxury and non-luxury	No general democratization of luxury brands due to the increase in prices over time This increase in relative pricing does not only apply to high end products but to entry level segments as well	Measurement of pricing and its evolution The evolution of pricing itself Analysis of pricing techniques
(Pohlmann & Kaartemo, 2017)	Bibliometric analysis Content analysis Qualitative	Service-dominant logic	Value co-creation Resource integration Brands and services Innovation	Value co-creation Resource integration Brands and services Innovation
Rambe & Moeti, 2017	Learning experience, costs, restructuring, disruptive innovation theory, benchmarking, academic elitism	Disruptive innovation theory, Disruptive potential, Potential to democratize service, Elitism in the process of democratizing	When democratization strategy is appropriately implemented, it disrupts the traditional system	-

Authors	Constructs	Literature Reviews	Conclusions	Future Research Recommendations
Vogel & Watchravesringkan, 2017	Brand equity, Brand attitude, Band preference	Brand democratization,	Brand democratization and brand imitation has a significant impact on brand equity, brand attitude, and brand preference	Explore shopping contexts and environments and the democratization effect, and consumers ability to identify copy brands from original brands
Authors	**Constructs**	**Literature Reviews**	**Conclusions**	**Future Research Recommendations**
(Hennigs, Wiedmann,	Luxurification of society	Functional and psychological needs,	Several dimensions of luxury exist,	Consider the individual perceptions
Klarmann, & Behrens, 2015)	Examining the antecedents and outcomes of individual value luxury perception	Based on brand quality, uniqueness, and perceived quality Consumers personal orientation towards luxury	Financial, functional, individual, and social consumer perceptions Further individual perception is related to purchase intentions, recommendation behavior, and the willingness to pay premium price	comparative study, between brands and industries. Impact of demographics and cultures Cross-cultural similarities
(Asmussen et al., 2013)	Internet Technology Information, freedom Social Capital	Brand management Stakeholder integration Socio-technological phenomenon Co-creation Democratization	Democratization of information Democratization of social capital Democratization of internet technology Brand management has been democratized through internet as a change agent	Requires in depth exploration of power and control structures over core brand manifestations
(Pouillard, 2013)	Branding Globalization Mass-production Masstige brands	Counterfeit brands French fashion entrepreneurs and designers	Despite slow growth of haute couture, brand image was able to be capitalized. Globalization Make brands desirable through exclusivity Relocation of production worldwide Branding was used to justify authenticity	
Zmas, 2012	Productivity Competition Quality	Transnational organizations European Union Educational epidemic Modernization Educational democratization Economic assistance National education policy	Political economic and social changes and system borrowing has greatly aided in productivity and quality targets	National policy should not be studied in isolation

Dant & Zhu, 2012	Unique products Consumer Power Consumer perceptions	Planned economy Ethnocentrism Traditionalism Democratization Franchising	Contextual realities ought to be considered while analyzing brands and their democratization process. Consumer agreed that democratization has brought in low-cost, and freedom of choice	Competition and its impact on democratizing brands
Authors	**Constructs**	**Literature Reviews**	**Conclusions**	**Future Research Recommendations**
(Ryan & Silvanto, 2011)	Economic and social indicators	Tourism branding Politics and democracy Economic development	Ensure that commercialization and democratization does not endanger sustainability and preservation	
Suniti Bal et al, 2010	Democratization Engagement Public opinions Viewer responses Public Relations Spoof videos	Democratization of internet Video production Social media platforms Political advertisement campaigns Strategic Brand Decision Making Political Brands	Politicians exist in the public eye; public relations can largely impact voter sentiments. Public can play a large role in image management of political brands. With democratization of media power has shifted.	Future research should house use of integrative software for analysis of data. Secondly, research needs to be done, weather knowledge of the power shift can influence stakeholders.
(Kemming & Humborg, 2010)	Democratization in commercial and non-commercial context Governance Nation Brand ranking	Democracy theory Brand Management Global Brands Branding Theory Nation branding Management strategy Stimulus-organism-response paradigm	Significant relationship between brand and its performance Technology driven empowerment of consumers	Research whether structure and processes are important for nation brands, it further needs longitudinal research
(Dong & Tian, 2009)	International brands Cultural dominance Military dominance Consumer responses	Cultural identity	Limited explanation on part of response from a single context, A possibility that Chinese nationalists love western brands	
(Rojšek, 2001)	Purchasing behavior Consumer behavior Brand loyalty Quality orientation & price sensitivity	FMCG Domestic brands vs western brands Unknown vs new brands Quality orientation and indicators	Traditions affect consumer preferences	Consumer value and belief systems can provide further insights to consumer preferences
(Kapferer & Bastien, 2009)	Luxury, Fashion, Brand, premiumization	Nature of luxury, Luxury and self, Luxury and fashion, Advertising of luxury fashion	Rediscover the fundamentals of luxury, so that fashion brands could be explored from inside to provide managers with working models	Brands can achieve profitability through extensions out of core brand promise. Focus on consumers to whom luxury is more than just a logo. Seduce consumers through craftsmanship, and creativity

(Kapferer, 2014)	Luxury, art, culture, fashion, prestige, masses, Masstige	Growth and radical transformation of luxury brands, the relationship between art and luxury, capturing new markets with luxury brands projected as work of art,	Luxury can be presented as art through various media outlets., luxury can also be presented to the consumers as a multi-dimensional experience	Luxury brands must be studied as combinations of creativity, art, and craftsmanship
(Source: Systematization based on literature reviews)				

Based on the literature overview we came up with the following sub-topics as reflecting the scope of research in brand democratization: Luxury vs non-luxury; Technology and systems integration; Power differences; Control and Customer empowerment; and Accessibility and Communication.

2.4.1. Luxury vs. Non-Luxury Brands

Research on the luxury customer globalization brings insights into the decision-making process. This integration is helping brands to better target customer needs. The bandwagon effect is also emphasized (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020). Psychological and social factors have helped shape customer orientation and self-concept (Grohmann, 2009).There is an overall attempt to capture the continuous aspirations of customers to achieve material belongingness. Recent developments have further highlighted that the luxury industry's pricing mechanisms have failed to account for any democratization effect, since the very nature of the luxury goods/services dictate high pricing strategies (Gutsatz & Heine, 2018). While luxury brands are affected, research on FMCG's has highlighted that consumers preferences are merely shaped by their orientation of traditions in which the brand decides to operate (Rojšek, 2001).

2.4.2. Technology integration

Technological advancements also emerge from the literature (Asmussen et al., 2013), referring to the introduction of self-servicing technologies, which has been in the form of facilitation and enhancement of customer experiences (Song, Zhan, & Guo, 2016). From voice activation products to customization and personalization options, consumers and prospective customers can now choose the level and quality of product/service they desire from the brand. The constant feedback loop is also helping brands to make improvements on their part, to ensure best possible quality (Song et al., 2016). Authors have further noted that technology is helping in reshaping the customer orientation as well as the system in which the brand operates. With the implementation and integration of technology, brands might hold the power to disrupt

current structure (Rambe & Moeti, 2017). In such context benchmarking and standardization has become relevant.

2.4.3. Customer empowerment

Democratization of brands is helping reshape the customer orientation and role (Dant & Zhu, 2012)(Anjali Suniti Bal, Colin L. Campbell, Nathaniel Joseph Payne, 2013). For example, political brands are under influence from customers/stakeholders (e.g., permanently disrupting contemporary media influences the brand image) (Bal et al., 2010). Although there has been standardization as a result of democratization on the part of global brands, cultural differences as to where the brand operates still dictates the preferences of local consumers (Rojšek, 2001)

2.4.4. Power and control differences

The power and control differences dimension reflect the fact that globalization and democratization of brands is accentuating differences in customers and brand power. Although brands may decide which segment of the market to operate in, stakeholders can exert more power by claiming transparency and ethical behavior from the brand's end as customers have better and wider choices. Considering the wide spread of luxury brands, consumers can decide which brand best fits in their orientation. This orientation might be influenced by culture (Dong & Tian, 2009), political aspirations (Anjali Suniti Bal, Colin L. Campbell, Nathaniel Joseph Payne, 2013; Kemming & Humborg, 2010)(Dant & Zhu, 2012) and individual preferences (Hennigs et al., 2015).

2.4.5. Accessibility and communication

Sheth and Sisodia (2012) define accessibility as the ability of the customers to acquire brands with ease. Accessibility in this sense refers to the convenience, availability, and the location with which brands can be easily accessed (Sinha & Sheth, 2018). Literature points to specificity of brands making its products more accessible to its customers, although this may not happen very often given finite amount of resources luxury brands have, as access to some markets/consumers is challenging which requires adequate infrastructure and access to modern retailing platforms. Similarly, access needs to be created to explore mass markets through modern retailing landscapes. Literature on the subject further expands on multiple marketing tools and techniques used to become more familiar to their consumers. This includes traditional stores, along with online platforms to enhance brand reachability for the target market. From establishing presence in the market to partnering with multiple organizations to work on future

projects such as fashion shows aimed at luxury fashion consumers. However, in most cases availability of infrastructure only adds to critical success of such endeavors. From creating new distribution channels by expanding to multiple locations to granting channel ownership certificates (licensing, joint ventures, and franchising), this further helps democratize the consumption of luxury fashion.

As Sheth and Sisodia's (2012) 4 A's framework, accessibility, affordability, acceptability, and awareness not only stresses on providing consumers with easy access, but rather communicating the acceptable and affordable solution to their needs. Similarly, several authors have already stressed on the need for focus on the possibility of working on accessibility and communication to enhance customer reach by introducing and incorporating key features of accessibility into the fashion brand's overall marketing strategy. While integration of the strategy into existing one may seem challenging at first, this can be overcome by addressing the heterogeneity, by possibly considering expanding on existing capabilities such as technology and distribution channels. The challenges related to resource shortages, and the ways to overcome them are described in the literature in a manner like the premise of this thesis. The premise that reiterates the need to democratize to help and create more affordable and engaged stakeholders (including) existing and new customers, thus reinventing the wheel in the form of a more democratized and accessible brand.

2.5. Conclusion

This study primarily addressed the pervasiveness of the notion of Brand Democratization in the literature. Brand Democratization recurred in various studies over time. Brands were democratized in response to early mass production options which led to the availability of luxury brands to masses. Since globalization, technological advances and competition are main forces behind democratization, the consumption patterns however are to some extent influenced by consumers themselves. Therefore, throughout the literature, involving the study of consumers and their perceptions and satisfaction, brand democratization plays an important role. Brand management has long begun to incorporate stakeholder(s) orientation with regards to products and services, being evident in the pervasiveness of brand democratization. Besides identifying brand democratization with regards to the international/local brand's strategic outlook, authors have also noted and identified ways in which this process can be accelerated. Emphasis has been placed on systems, technological integrations and constant governance.

(Kemming & Humborg, 2010; Pouillard, 2013; Zmas, 2012). This chapter thus concludes the definition of Brand democratization as:

'Luxury fashion branding which increases accessibility of the brand's products to consumers and builds up on the relationship between the customer and the brand through communication'

Brand Democratization emerged as a response to market needs, creating new opportunities for brands. Literature points out that by democratizing brands, companies make products and services available to masses: This further implies that stakeholders have higher levels of influence or control over brands by, for example, mobilizing public opinion. Technological advances play an important and constructive role as brands begin implementing new systems and governance mechanisms to help in co-creation and co-production processes. These implications have not been limited to consumer/commercial brands, educational institutions and tourism have also greatly benefited from democratization options (Dong & Tian, 2009; Kemming & Humborg, 2010; Rambe & Moeti, 2017; Ryan & Silvanto, 2011; Zmas, 2012).

Luxury brands have come far with regards to democratizing their products and services for the masses. This has given rise to masstige brands, which are solely produced and targeted for masses. Literature has to some extent shed light on brand democratization and what brands have been able to achieve by extending their lines of products and services. Democratization, luxury, and fashion brands have experienced growth, in the form of outreach and life cycle extensions and customers journey changes involving ultimate experiences, based on the analysis performed, we derived three lines of inquiry for future research under the banner of Brand Democratization:

1. Technology poses challenges and creates opportunities for brands. To fully understand and streamline the implementation of democratization strategies, (non)standardized implementation systems (such as delivery and communication) need to be identified. While this may include changing and enhancing existing strategies of luxury brands, a deeper knowledge of the processes itself may guide the development of new brands establishing their reach to larger target audiences.

2. The brand democratization construct reflects stakeholder's involvement in co-creation and contributes to the overall brand development and management processes. Such context has implications for a change due to the influential power and control that

stakeholder may have over brands due to democratization. This needs to be further researched in the context of luxury brands to fully understand customer's role and impact during brand democratization management processes.

3. Future research should also make an in-depth analysis of consumers' perspectives, as luxury brands continue to explore new territories and reach mass markets. Certain cultural contexts (e.g., European vs. Asian) are still lacking developments to instill brands to democratize. This could owe to the fear of losing control and brand authenticity. Research should explore such dynamics.

Although the sample of papers was thoroughly selected adhering to the systematic review rules, it still might be prone to biases. The systematic review adopts a narrative approach which compared to a bibliometric or integrative review might still limit the level of analysis. The preliminary selection of papers was highly dependent upon search results. Despite the specific search filters, too many irrelevant studies emerged. The exclusion criteria further dictated few studies to be left out due to their irrelevance to the topic. This impacted the overall sample selection and analysis. Being this study exploratory and preliminary in nature and by focusing on the main construct Brand democratization, the dimensions and the analysis and was limited to the number of studies. To better understand the construct brand democratization, research ought to be paired with other relevant theories and constructs to increase the scope and level of analysis.

Chapter 3: Study Two; Brand democratization scale/instrument development

3.1. Introduction

Customer brand relationships serve a more profound purpose, as brand's add meaning to people's lives, this provision of meaning enhances self-concept and provides enrichments and stability for the consumer (J. Kumar & Nayak, 2019). In the past decades we have seen the rise of luxury fashion brands, which has ultimately become an essential part of not only customer's daily lives but also played a vital role in reflecting customer's identities. The nature of these identities forms the basis of associations which consumers develop with the brand(s), and the collaborations among the two (customer's and brands) highlight the strong characteristics which then trigger the personality traits which consumers associate themselves to (Fournier, 1998). Once an inanimate and lifeless object becomes the centre around which consumers build their lives, and the anthropomorphizing of the brand serves as a point of reference for the consumer for all encounters with brands and its users (Mick & Fournier, 1998).

Previous research on branding, and more specifically on luxury brands states that a very unique transformation has taken place which is primarily driven by globalization and new markets, thereby leading to proliferation of middle classes with a substantial disposable income (Kapferer, 2014). To satisfy and capture this increase in market demand, many luxury brands therefore have adapted their strategies which are not only suitable for present markets but also develop product offerings which are more in line with luxury markets. Brands therefore has guided newer strategies to focus on branding elements such as commitment, ethicality and loyalty (Shukla et al., 2022).

Literature states that achieving brand commitment is one of the ultimate goal for brands (Das et al., 2019), the authors also observed that in the presence of brand passion, brand ethicality is of no concern to the users thus eliminating the possibility of any power distance between brand and the customer. Likewise in the apparel industry (Wang et al., 2018) the negativity for a brand is often offset by increasing brand value in the minds of the customers, which reduces customers disengagement. Similarly cognitive dissonance is of the essence when it comes to explaining multiple shopping behaviours (Frasquet et al., 2017). Brand loyalty positively effects brand trust and attachment therefore it can be assumed to have no impact on customers perception of power distance. When it comes to conflicting interests of customers and the

brand, brands often end up presenting a mirror image of the society, thus removing any conflicts (Preiholt, 2012) with in the apparel industry. Furthermore when it comes to maintaining brand salience, developments in brand equity play a very important role (E. Y. Kim & Ko, 2010).

Brands associations have been studied at length, the personality traits they are attached to provide self-expressive and symbolic values to the users (Aaker, 1999), and enhance customer experiences. These associations have even more so focused the role that brand attributes and the utilitarian value of consumer responses towards the efforts directed to the brands. However little efforts have been recorded which shows that these very dimensions of associations can become important drivers of self-expressions and engagement with the brands. The perception that consumers hold for a brand and the expected value and experience they aim for not only depends on the utilitarian value of it, but also the products outlook, how it fits with their overall agenda of consumption and the values that the brands offer in terms of experiences. So that the brands can be managed to perform to a level of congruence that offers maximum benefits to the user. (Aaker, 1999) in a study confirms that to reduce the negativity towards a brand, and the possibility of non-congruence

Furthermore, coupled with all the different aspects of branding, the luxury industry itself in the last two decades has been aimed at masses. This has further aided brands in producing products and services which are not only of highest quality but are accessible for many consumers. Therefore, the very concept of luxury has evolved, and brands have created a whole new model (Ramadan, 2019) to suit the needs of 21st century. Consumption and growth of luxury fashion brands in particular have outpaced other consumer goods (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Literature associates this growth to several factors including the increase in the net worth of consumers with an increasing appetite for luxury goods. The luxury industry itself makes up of several categories, namely fashion, cosmetics, automobiles etc. The focus of this study is therefore the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan, the justification being the scant number of studies done on the subject, while research gap exists in the literature.

This chapter capitalizes upon the systematic literature review carried out in study one and builds up on the results from the study. By defining and expanding on brand democratization, this study looks to explain brand democratization by developing a scale which captures the crux of brand democratization from the perspective of a brand being both accessible and a brand being more communicative to its target audience. Since study one has already built a

considerable amount of literature on the subject, this study furthers by looking into the construct so that a measurement scale could be pinpointed. Upon implementation of BD measurement scale, this research highlights 4 main dimensions (communication, connection, accessibility, and integration).

3.2. Scope and domain of the construct

Defining brand democratization dictates the origin and nature of democracy itself, literature confirms the nature of democratization often represented not through lower prices by instead democratization of luxury through desire (Kapferer, 2014). This change is also termed as most important driver of democratization of luxury and has its implications in two aspects; first, every-one must have equal access to luxury, thus signifying accessibility as the main component that has provided exponential growth in brand's consumer base (Jean-Noël Kapferer, 1988). Second communication, which has a broad application on how brands present their image. As all verbal, written or visual communication presents several components (e.g., advertising, promotions, and publications) allowing brands to further its marketing strategy and achieve coherence in communicating brand image to their target audience (Lloyd & Luk, 2010a).

Building on the aspects of accessibility, this research thus supports the view that luxury brand advocates for easy access to its products/services in terms of product information (Skard & Thorbjørnsen, 2014), supporting such brand designs (through market research) which are preferred by consumers (J. Kumar & Nayak, 2019), brand's online presence which again favours easy access (Schamari & Schaefers, 2015) of its products. Moreover affordability item was included to assess the scope which supports that the luxury brand thus can be bought by anyone (Roper, Caruana, Medway, & Murphy, 2013) (sold in mass markets). Since the measure was circulated among luxury fashion consumers in Pakistan, another domain was identified in terms of consumer being able to design and personalize a product (garment) according to their specifications (Rahman & Mannan, 2018). Lastly a brand's democratization was assessed in terms of its accessibility to the target consumers through evolution of brand to diversify and provide more access to its consumers, this measure evaluated a brand's willingness to provide exclusive access to its designers (Preiholt, 2012). A total number of 16 items were drafted to test accessibility, and 10 items for assessing communication as shown in the table 4 below:

Table 2: Brand democratization scale

Brand democratisation items	
Variable/dimension	**Item(s)**
Brand Democratization (Accessibility)	1. BRAND X has product items that I can easily wear on a day-to-day basis. 2. It is easy for me to have access to information about BRAND X. 3. I can easily find where to buy products of BRAND X. 4. I can buy BRAND X's products easily. 5. I can now buy BRAND X because some of its product items are affordable to a wider range of consumers. 6. BRAND X designs its products keeping in mind diverse customers. 7. I can easily buy BRAND X's products online. 8. BRAND X's products can be easily bought by anyone who can afford it. 9. BRAND X has now emerged from being reachable too few to be reachable to more. 10. BRAND X is now available at more stores in my city, than it used to be. 11. BRAND X provides latest trends in fashion. 12. BRAND X has evolved to include more diversity in style and sizes. **13.** Buying BRAND X allows me to be a part of its community. 14. I have access to BRAND X's designers on social media. 15. I have a good idea about the price of BRAND X's products. 16. BRAND X allows me to design an exclusive product just for myself.
Brand Democratization (Communication)	1. I can now easily communicate with BRAND X. 2. Overall, BRAND X has now become a democratized exclusive brand. 3. BRAND X expresses itself by sharing its values. 4. BRAND X supports social causes that I care about 5. BRAND X promotes customer's well-being through its products. 6. BRAND X encourages its customers to have a voice. 7. BRAND X allows me to book an appointment with the designer. 8. BRAND X gives me the opportunity to meet the designer. 9. BRAND X invites social media influencers to promote its products who I can easily relate to. 10. I follow BRAND X over social media

(Source: (H. J. Kim, 2012; Preiholt, 2012))

Another aspect of democratic fashion brands was defined through communication, the domain was restricted to include communication between brand and the customer (Sanwal et al., 2011). The relationship between brand and its stakeholders (consumers/customers) is expressed in terms of shared values (e.g. social causes, and customer well-being) (Hennigs et al., 2015). Literature paints that luxury fashion brands are researched through the lens of mass-consumption (A. Kumar et al., 2019), the difference that exist between the consumer and the brand in terms of power and control (Denegri-Knott, Zwick, & Schroeder, 2006; Ramadan, 2019; Shankar, Cherrier, & Canniford, 2006). Figure 1 below presents a possible framework for assessing components of brand democratization which can be used to further evaluate the impact of factors such as accessibility and communication.

Figure 1: Brand democratization framework
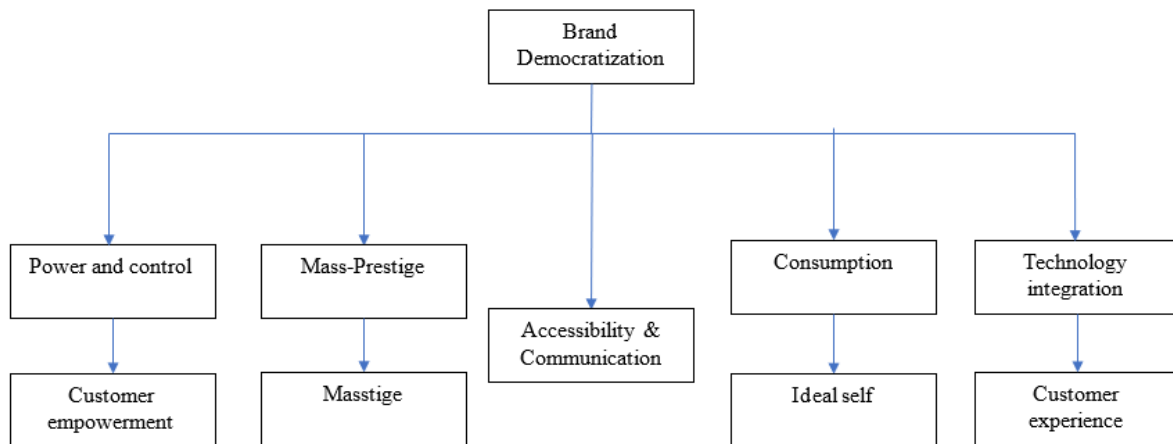
(Source: Authors own elaboration based on literature reviews)

Literature points out that democratization is a process which originates from political philosophy and is inadeptly linked with democracy (Hadiz, 2007), although disagreements do exist in the literature regarding its conceptualization and operationalizations. One notion might contain that democracy instils greater power to the people when it comes to access to knowledge and technology which thus broadens middle class structure (Shukla et al., 2022). Other forms refer to the choice of freedom and political opinion for greater inclusiveness and access (Rambe & Moeti, 2017), as some of these definitions are generic in nature while other authors have already sought to explore the construct form a consumer's point of view, by focusing on brand and brand management democratization.

The idea somewhat is also described in the literature as consumer's freedom to choose, and have greater access to readily available products and service offerings(Shukla et al., 2022). Although the construct itself overlaps with other phenomenon such as masstige and populance, where brand's strategy focuses on mass production and distribution. This overlap is again countered with the branding strategy enacted to stay exclusive and rare to influence demand and desire (Pich & Dean, 2015). Although democratization does share some common features with masstige marketing, it does have some dissimilarities in that masstige is mainly looked and driven from an organization's perspective while democratization is from a customer perspective.

With the extant literature does deliver mixed views on the potential of democratization, this study looks to investigate certain aspects which might hold the answer to measure democratization.

3.3. Research design/Methodology

Democratization has been defined from operationalization of social inclusivity (Booth, 2014), to a luxury item that is considered ordinary by extraordinary people and extraordinary by ordinary people (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Therefore, this research questionnaire was developed on primary constructs included in this research study. First and foremost, existing literature on constructs (communication and accessibility) was reviewed. After reviewing and examining the extant literature, this research paper developed and tested a questionnaire to assess brand democratization within luxury fashion industry. The research instrument developed and collected customer's responses on two different sides of brand democratization (communication and accessibility) and what most resonated with the customers regarding their favourite brand of choice in relation to their understanding of brand democratisation. In the beginning of the questionnaire the respondent were invited to choose a brand of their choice provided from a list of ten mass-consumed luxury fashion/apparel brands in Pakistan.

The target population for this study were all male/female customers who have a specific orientation to consume luxury products, above the age of 18 years, because the customers of this age are mature and have developed a sense of their own selves thus allowing them to present and satisfy themselves through luxury brand consumption. The accessible population for this research were customers from the twin cities of Pakistan (Islamabad and Rawalpindi), since these two cities have shown promising signs of development in terms of commercial value. Since the brands which we sought to study are of Pakistani origin it made more sense to survey the population where the brands were most popular. Therefore, the target population for this research study were luxury consumers in Pakistan. The data was collected between January 2021 and March 2021 in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, resulting in a total of 536 survey responses.

The questionnaire started off with respondents answering demographic questions like age, gender, occupation, and approximate monthly income. Next the respondents were asked to identify their brand of choice and brand usage frequency by replying to the following question: 'From the list below, please choose **ONE** luxury fashion brand that you like and that you have

bought over the last 6 months'. This was considered as the main filter to highlight brand usage and to assure that respondents had experience in buying luxury fashion brands. and this usage frequency was considered as the main filter to specify that the respondents were in fact consuming the luxury brands in question. The brands in question were from the same product category (Luxury fashion), and since Pakistan (Rawalpindi and Islamabad) were chosen to be the fieldwork for this study, therefore the brands selected highlighted some of the top Luxury fashion brands in the country. The questionnaire included the following 10 well known luxury fashion brands: HSY, Maheen Khan, Junaid Jamshed, Fashion and Design (FAD), Elan, Zainab Chottani, Karma, Kayseria, Unbeatable, and RiciMelion. These ten brands pretty much define the luxury fashion set-up in Pakistan mainly the purchases in Pakistan.

The scale items were derived from the literature concerning brand democratization and the items themselves were generated on the basis that the scale would resonate among customer's decision to buy luxury brands based on the dimensions of accessibility and communication. The responses were collected on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 'strongly disagree' and 7 'strongly agree'. A preliminary draft of the questionnaire was circulated among luxury fashion consumers, the pilot study helped gather 62 responses, Pilot study helped in understanding the questions/items formed and further helped refine the layout of the questionnaire. Table below stands for the final version of the questionnaire circulated among consumers in the metropolitan areas of two cities of Pakistan (Rawalpindi and Islamabad). The two cities namely Rawalpindi and Islamabad represent the biggest concentration of luxury consumer brands and customers in the Country. To target maximum number of consumers, a convenience sampling procedure was adopted, and 536 consumers responded to the questionnaire.

3.3.1. Research context

Luxury fashion is Pakistan has morphed/evolved to include both eastern and western brands into the luxury fashion context. Past decades have seen the emergence and widespread of luxury fashion brands, this proliferation and democratization of luxury brands in Pakistan has been solely due to the premium image and status attached to them (Sulehri, Malik, Qureshi, & Anjum, 2011).

The southern part of Asian continent comprises of eight nations/countries including Pakistan, within borders of the country is officially recognized as Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Once

part of British-India, Pakistan gained independence. Pakistan itself is an agricultural economy with a vast fertile land fit for cultivation of cotton and other agricultural products. The country has received much awaited attention in terms of its exports of raw material and finished products. Lahore and Islamabad chamber of commerce has greatly aided in uplifting the country's industry where bother local and foreign sponsors have joined hands to reroute the growth in the consumer goods industry. Majority of the country's consumers consume readymade fashion brands along with the existence of local retail brands (Shukla, Singh, & Banerjee, 2015).

Marketers often interpret digital communication between brands and consumers, the branding literature has observed a rise in the creation of content by users and ultimately dissemination of the similar content by brands. Which also shows that consumers somewhat have gained control over brand communications, this also proves that consumers now can act as brand managers due to their role of content creation and actions as brand ambassadors (Junaid, Hou, Hussain, & Kirmani, 2019).

3.3.2. Data analysis procedures

To prepare the data for further analysis, the data was screened to ensure that it did not hold any abnormalities in terms of missing data, to ensure that the data used for further analysis is unused, reliable, and therefore valid. To further ensure that the data collected did not have any missing values, data was screened with IBM SPSS AMOS 26. Results showed no missing data in the data set, therefore ending the need for any further screening to replace the missing data altogether. For Skewness and kurtosis: data set was normal, therefore did not require any further transformations. The main premise of this study was to develop a measurement for brand democratization construct, which was empirically examined as formed by two main constructs of accessibility and communication.

In order to examine underlying patterns and or relationships among variables, factor analysis is used which is an interdependent technique (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). This examination allows identification of structures among variables which further helps to develop relationships. Factor analysis helps to analyse correlations between variables, which can then be further used in the analysis of interrelationships within questionnaire responses. Literature further points out that factor analysis can be divided into EFA and CFA, however there still exists an ongoing debate on whether factor analysis can only be used for exploratory purposes

or confirmatory, or both (Hair et al., 2014). In this study both exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were performed to supply a better explanation of quantitative study.

In social sciences while referring to relevant constructs to the study it is important to explore real-life environments (Kline, 1994). Therefore, the goal of exploratory factor analysis is to explore the field of study keeping in mind its main constructs. Firstly, it was necessary to explore the variables and then verify the structures and dimensions identified with the help of literature. The aim here in performing a factor analysis was again to identify underlying factors through adaptation or adoption from scales of different theoretical contexts. The appropriateness of considering a factor analysis is the implication of developing measurement scales to a national context (Pakistan).

A common factor analysis was adopted, so that EFA may be conducted with the data set acquired through questionnaire distribution. This approach houses a common or shared variance of variables, which is then assessed through correlations, resulting in different factors (Hair et al., 2014). The main aim was to understand which factor loads higher and as opposed to lower factor loadings in other factors. Originally developed as an exploratory method, factor analysis is now considered as a resource to test hypothesis (Kline, 1994). For this study CFA was performed to test if the identified variables and factors represented the data (Hair et al., 2014). Factor analysis helped specify the variables, so that a structural equation model (SEM) may be found.

Simply put construct validity defines the extent to which the research carried out is considered correct. To understand how well the constructs are captured by the indicators, it was important to access construct validity and reliability. Analysis of nomological validity, discriminant validity and convergent validity helps to access construct validity. Convergent validity was verified whenever Average variance extracted (AVE) was equal or higher than 0.5. (Hair et al., 2014) also advocated for using construct reliability (CR) greater than 0.7 for accessing convergent validity.

Since confirmatory factor analysis drop any need to sum up the scale(s) used in the analysis, and further computes the constructs and its scores for each of the respondents. This procedure helps to correctly define the relationships between constructs and rectify the amount of error variance that may exist. Therefore, a primary purpose/objective of CFA is to prove the

construct validity of the measurement theory. Construct validity thereby tries to assess the extent to which the measured items reflect the theoretical basis of constructs that which they were designed to measure, while showing the accuracy of the measurement. Construct validity supplies evidence that the items used to measure a given construct and the sample in question represents the true score that also exists in the population from which the sample was taken.

Convergent validity exacts the items used to measure a construct should also converge or rather share a high variance with other constructs under study. Literature on structural equation modelling and confirmatory factor analysis turns to several ways of estimating the convergent validity among the measures used. Factor loadings: The size of the factor loadings on item measures the point where the factor(s) converge on the latent construct. High factor loadings would generally show some common ground where the factors converge. At the very least apart from being statistically significant the rule of thumb is the factor loading should be 0.5 or higher, literature review point towards ideal value of 0.7 or higher. The reason behind this explanation can be attributed to the communality associated with the items, the factor loading explains the variance in the item, e.g., a factor loading of 0.7 means that the factor explains 0.7 variance while the rest being error variance. Though a factor loading of less than 0.5 might still be significant, however it would also mean that the other half is error variance.

Average variance extracted: the average variance extracted is the mean variance extracted for the item which loads onto a construct. The general rule of thumb for AVE is 0.5 or higher which indicates sufficient convergence, which further implies if AVE is less than 0.5 then more the item houses more variance than the variance explained by the factor itself which is imposed by the structure of the measure. Similarly, reliability can also be attributed to be a good indicator or convergent validity, coefficient alpha is considered a common application for reliability. The general rule of thumb for reliability is 0.7 or higher indicating good reliability, coefficient alpha between 0.6-0.7 may be acceptable, provided that the other measure is consistent as well

Discriminant validity is the extent to which the variables/constructs in question are different from each other. A high discriminant validity shows that the construct is truly unique and captures some sort of unexplained/explained event which other construct do not. Discriminant validity can be proved by correlation. Face validity is related to understating the content and meaning of the measured construct and must be proven before a confirmatory factor analysis can be conducted. Therefore, face validity in a way is an important test of validity, and without

its application it is not possible to correctly specify the measurement theory. Nomological validity targets whether the correlations in the model among the constructs being studied makes sense or not.

The data analysis was therefore conducted in two stages (Nobre & Simões, 2019), the first stage was comprised of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Cronbach's alpha was calculated to ensure internal consistency of the measures, EFA further helped appraise scale item performance with respect to its dimensions (Churchill Jr, 1995). EFA was conducted using IBM SPSS statistics 27.0. The second stage of data analysis consisted of conducting a Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to further refine the scale and confirm the measure and its items highlighted through EFA. Table 5 below highlights the fit indices which is used to prove model fit.

Table 3: Fit indices

Absolute fit index		
Statistics	**Name**	**Value**
$\chi 2$	Chi-Square GOF	p-value
$\chi 2/df$	Normed Chi-Square	Ratio of 3:1 (better fitting model)
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index	Values of 0-1 (higher the better)
RMSEA	Root Mean Square of Error Approximation	Lower values indicate better fit (0.07 or less with CFI above .92)
SRMR	Root Mean Square Residual	Lower value indicates better fit (0.08 or less with CFI above .92)
Incremental fit index		
Statistics	**Name**	**Value**
NFI	Normed Fit Index	Values that approach 1
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index	Values that approach 1
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	Values between 0 and 1, higher values indicating better fit (above .90)
Parsimony Fit Index		
Statistics	**Name**	**Value**
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	Values lower than GFI
PNFI	Parsimony Fit Index	Higher values indicate better fit

(Source: Hair et al., (2014))

3.4. Findings

3.4.1. Sample profile

The primary data was collected by administering the questionnaire to 536 respondents in the study market to consumers. Table 6 below supplies the sample's demographic profile.

Table 4: Demographic profile

	Frequency	Percent %
Gender		
Male	237	44.2
Female	299	58.8
Total	**536**	**100.0**
Age (years)		
18-20	51	9.5
21-30	152	28.4
31-40	261	48.7
41-50	60	11.2
51-60	11	2.1
61-70	1	0.2
Total	**536**	**100.0**
Education		
High school and below	43	8.0
10+2/Intermediate	19	3.5
College degree	251	46.8
Postgraduate degree	203	37.9
Doctorate	20	3.7
Total	**536**	**100.0**
Occupation		
Student	63	11.8
Employed	302	56.3
Self-employed	139	25.9
Technical expert	11	2.1
Sr. professional	15	2.8
Other occupation	6	1.1
Total	**536**	**100.0**
Income		
Below 50,000	70	13.1
51,000-100,000	178	33.2
101,000-200,000	256	47.8
201,000-500,000	32	6.0
Total	**536**	**100.0**

The demographics statistics shows that 58.8% of the sample population were females and 44.4% were males. 9.5 % of the respondents were between the ages of 18-20 years, 28.4% were between 21-30 years, 48.7% were between 31-40 years, 11.2% were between 51-40 years, 2.1% between 61-70 years and 0.2% or one respondent was between the ages of 61-70 years. 8% of the 536 responded as having high school and below education while 3.5% were 10+2/intermediate, 46.8% had college degree, 37.9% were postgraduates and 3.7% had doctorate level education. Out of the 536 respondents 11.8% were students, 56.3% were employed, 25.9% were self-employed, 2.1% classified themselves as technical expert, 2.8% responded to Sr. professionals and 1.1% responded to other. As far as the income level is concerned, 13.1% responded to income level of below 50,000, 33.2% responded to 51,000-100,000, 47.8% were 101,000-200,000 and 6% were between 201,000-500,000 income level.

Table 7 below shows the demographic statistics for the brands, their familiarity to the respondents and frequency of brand use. Respondents who bought Junaid Jamshed accounted for 18.7%, HSY 13.8%, Maheen Khan 8.4%, Fashion, and design (FAD) 14.6%, Elan 16%, Zainab Chottani 16.2%, Karma 7.3%, Kayseria 3%, Unbeatable 1.7% and RiciMelion 0.4%. On the other hand, a total of 44.7% of the respondents responded with somewhat familiarity to the choice of brand and usage frequency was higher for 1-2 years of brand use which accounted for 45.5% of the total sample population.

Table 5: Brand's demographic statistics

	Frequency	Percent %
Brand		
HSY	74	13.8
Maheen Khan	45	8.4
Junaid Jamshed	100	18.7
Fashion and design (FAD)	78	14.6
Elan	86	16.0
Zainab Chottani	87	16.2
Karma	39	7.3
Kayseria	16	3.0
Unbeatable	9	1.7
RiciMelion	2	0.4
Total	**536**	**100.0**
Familiarity		
Never heard of it	17	3.2
Not familiar	27	5.0
Somewhat familiar	218	40.7
Familiar	236	44.0
Very familiar	38	7.1
Total	**536**	**100.0**
Brand usage		
<1 year	71	13.2
1-2 years	244	45.5
2-3 years	158	29.5
3-4 years	36	6.7
4-5 years	10	1.9
>5 years	17	3.2
Total	**536**	**100.0**

3.4.2. Exploratory factor analysis:

One of the key objectives of this paper was to develop a Brand democratization scale by empirically examining key dimensions pertaining to brand and its democratization in a particular industry. As discussed earlier several steps were taken to ensure conformity to standards, and to ensure a more simplified set of items which best represented the data and key constructs. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and the use of coefficient alpha was included in the development of measurement scale. After EFA, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was

hence conducted to allow for a stricter measure to be used while assessing the uni-dimensionality of the constructs (1).

Before starting exploratory factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was performed to primarily measure the adequacy of the sample, and to further ensure the factorability of the data Bartlett's test of sphericity. Table 8 below reveals the results of KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity, the scale scored MSA (0.879), which suggests suitability of the data for Exploratory Factor Analysis and Bartlett's test of sphericity showed significant statistics with (p<0.001).

Table 6: KMO and Bartlett's test

(KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.879
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10116.635
	df	325
	Sig.	.000

The scree plot presented in figure 2 below depicts 5 factors with initial Eigenvalues of greater than 1, and consequently 6th component shows a break in the curve of the graph and rest of the items reveal variance close to each other.
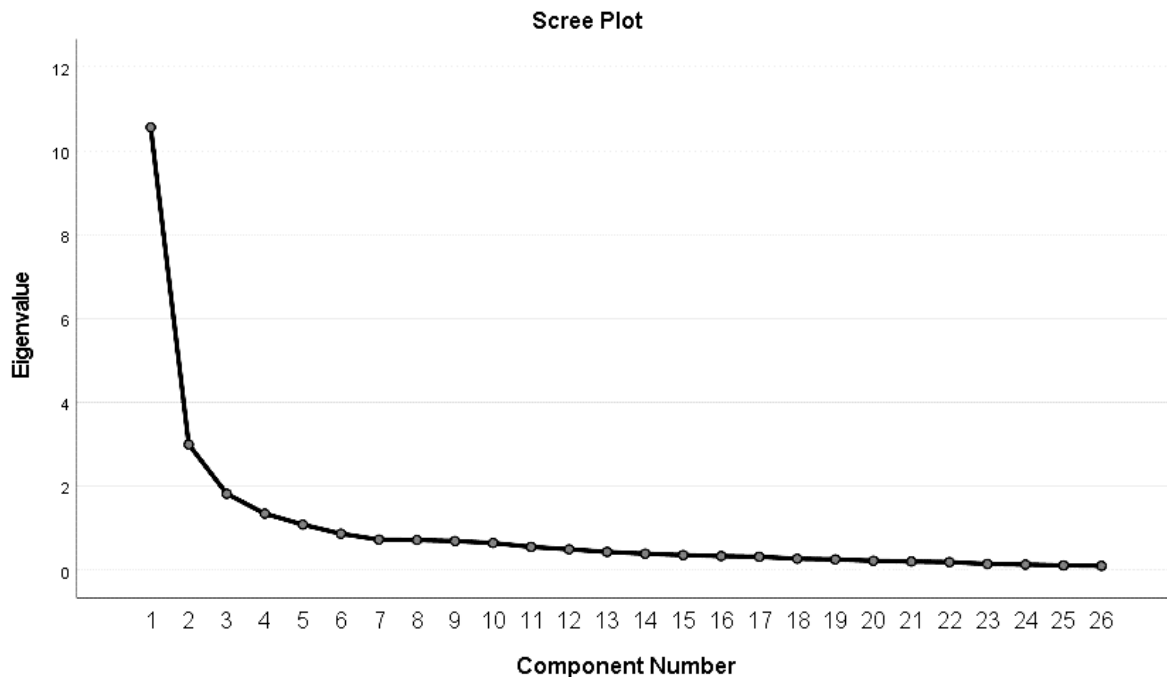
Figure 2: Scree plot

Initially exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the grouping of brand democratization items and reduce the number of items. All 26 items were therefore subjected to factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. Exploratory factor analysis and scree plot suggested 5 factors be retained, retained factors also indicated internal consistency levels of greater than 0.7 (Nunnally 1978). Table 9 below summarizes exploratory factor analysis results and Cronbach's alpha.

Table 7: EFA Results and Coefficient Alpha

Rescaled components: Rotated factor matrix	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5
BDC5- BRAND X promotes customer's well-being through its products.	**0.694**	0.053	0.162	0.233	0.456
BDC6- BRAND X encourages its customers to have a voice.	**0.743**	0.091	0.092	0.230	0.233
BDC7- BRAND X allows me to book an appointment with the designer.	**0.824**	0.187	0.096	0.187	0.150
BDC8- BRAND X gives me the opportunity to meet the designer.	**0.842**	0.075	0.160	0.176	0.091
BDC9- BRAND X invites social media influencers to promote its products who I can easily relate to.	**0.850**	0.077	0.109	0.084	0.084
BDC10- I follow BRAND X over social media	**0.748**	0.119	0.166	0.221	0.125
BDA1-Brand X has product items that I can easily wear on a day-to-day basis.	-.077	**0.647**	-.073	0.315	0.288
BDA2- It is easy for me to have access to information about BRAND X.	-.011	**0.783**	0.005	0.306	0.243
BDA3-I can easily find where to buy products of BRAND X.	0.136	**0.632**	0.252	0.350	-.101
BDA4- I can buy BRAND X's products easily.	0.119	**0.677**	0.312	0.168	0.040
BDA5- I can now buy BRAND X because some of its product items are affordable to a wider range of consumers.	0.254	**0.732**	0.276	-.179	0.008
BDA6- BRAND X designs its products keeping in mind diverse customers	0.214	**0.694**	0.414	-.111	0.100
BDA7-I can easily buy BRAND X's products online	0.168	0.488	**0.652**	-.079	-.121
BDA8- BRAND X's products can be easily bought by anyone who can afford it.	0.238	0.187	**0.690**	0.270	0.079
BDA9- BRAND X has now emerged from being reachable too few to be reachable to more.	0.236	0.303	**0.595**	0.037	0.390
BDA10- BRAND X is now available at more stores in my city, than it used to be.	0.031	0.271	**0.642**	0.249	0.286
BDA11- BRAND X provides latest trends in fashion.	0.109	0.088	**0.709**	0.343	0.092
BDA12-BRAND X has evolved to include more diversity in style and sizes	0.184	0.078	**0.579**	0.490	0.218
BDA13- Buying BRAND X allows me to be a part of its community.	0.146	0.107	0.273	**0.687**	0.230
BDA14- I have access to BRAND X's designers on social media.	0.303	0.232	0.061	**0.671**	0.151
BDA15- I have a good idea about the price of BRAND X's products.	0.309	0.097	0.195	**0.744**	0.041
BDA16- BRAND X allows me to design an exclusive product just for myself.	0.362	0.096	0.260	**0.613**	0.096
BDC2-Overall, BRAND X has now become a democratized exclusive brand	0.351	0.261	0.196	0.163	**0.652**
BDC3-BRAND X expresses itself by sharing its values	0.439	0.101	0.198	0.188	**0.746**
BDC4-BRAND X supports social causes that I care about	0.571	0.010	0.184	0.219	**0.603**
Cronbach's Alpha for each factor/component **N= 536** **Initial eigenvalues (40.431 % of variance explained)**	0.784	0.848	0.855	0.818	0.867

As shown in *table 9* and after adjusting for factor labels such as factor/component 1; *Communication* housed 6 items (BDC5, BDC6, BDC7, BDC8, BDC9, and BDC10) with Cronbach's alpha of 0.784. Factor 2; *Accessibility* included 6 items (BDA1, BDA2, BDA3, BDA4, BDA5, and BDA6) with reliability statistics depicted through Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.848. Factor 3; *Brand reach* resulted in the grouping of 6 items (BDA7, BDA8, BDA9, BDA10, BDA11, and BDA12) with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.855. Similarly, items

(BDA13, BDA14, BDA15, and BDA16) grouped well together under factor/component 4; *Integration* with factor loadings ranging from 0.613 to 0.744 with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.818. Component 5; *Connection* included just 3 items (BDC2, BDC3, and BDC4) with Cronbach's value of 0.867 and factor loading values ranged between 0.603 to 0.746.

From initial list of 26 items, second iteration resulted in 25 items which made up of the five factors/components. BDC 1; 'I can now easily communicate with BRAND X' grouped with Accessibility; hence the item was removed despite a fair loading of 0.699. Moreover, the communalities of the items extracted were checked revealing values ranged between (0.593 to 0.781). Table 10 below lists factor/components and their initial Eigenvalues and variance explained.

Table 8: Initial Eigenvalues

Factor/Component	Eigenvalues	% Of variance	Cumulative %
1-Communication	10.108	40.431	40.431
2-Accessibility	2.994	11.976	52.407
3-Brand reach	1.718	6.872	59.279
4-Integration	1.333	5.331	64.610
5-Connection	1.085	4.341	68.951

3.4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis:

Since the final assessment from Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) resulted in 25 items loading onto 5 components/factors. Next the factors and their respective items were used to perform Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to confirm their structural validity. IBM AMOS graphics 26.0 was used to conduct CFA.

As predicted above in figure 4, first order confirmatory factor analysis shows 5 factors correlated in a measurement model revealing valid factor loadings of greater than (>0.5). In Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) full-information maximum likelihood estimation (FIML) was used. Items extracted during EFA stage were restricted to load onto pre-determined factors and the first order factors were hence permitted to correlate. CFA analysis however suggested the scale to be reduced to 19 items while loaded onto 4 factors. Table 11 presents fit indices with recommended values with Chi-square of 487.557, degrees of freedom 86 and a probability level of 0.000.
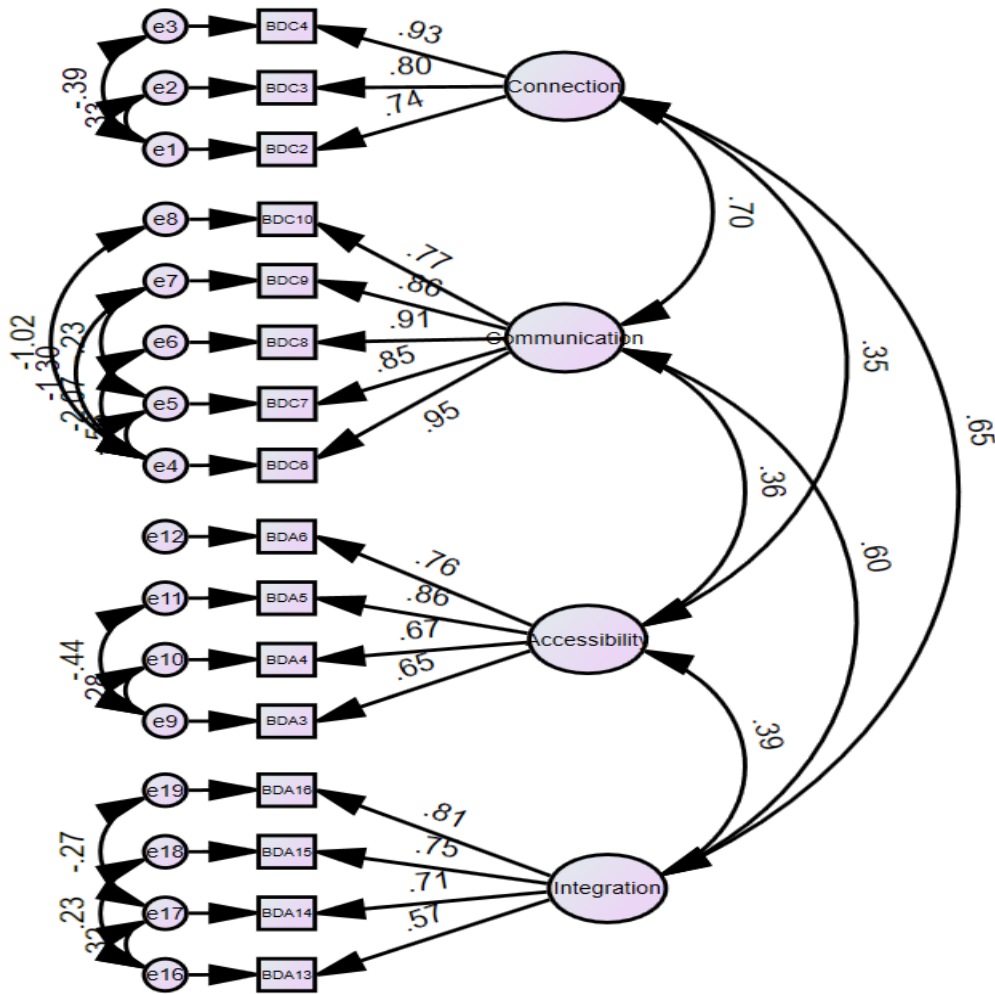
Figure 3: First-order CFA

Table 11 below reveals Comparative fit index (CFI) (0.925) and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) (0.926) whereas, Normed Fit Index (NFI) resulted in value of (0.912) and Tucker-Lewis Fit Index (TLI) (0.896). Factor loadings of the model proves convergent validity with significant standardized loading of >0.68 for all items. Results do reflect internal consistency of the scale items and its uni-dimensionality. Standard loadings indicate convergent validity, and composite reliability levels are above 0.70 (Bagozzi, 1980).

Table 9: Fit indices for first-order CFA

Fit Indices	Recommended value	Results
CMIN/DF	< 5.0	5.669
GFI	>0.90	0.901
CFI	>0.90	0.925
NFI	>0.90	0.912
IFI	>0.90	0.926
TLI	>0.90	0.896
AGFI	>0.90	0.843

Furthermore, discriminant validity is evident from the fact that shared variances are lower than extracted variance. Similarly, table 12 presents validity statistics for first order confirmatory factor analysis, statistics reveal that the first order CFA does not appear to have validity concerns as results show high level of composite reliability (p>.7) and the components display acceptable values for the variance extracted (>0.5).

Table 10: Validity statistics

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Connection	Accessibility	Integration	Communication
Connection	0.856	0.683	0.496	0.900	**0.827**			
Accessibility	0.825	0.545	0.149	0.849	0.352***	**0.738**		
Integration	0.806	0.513	0.417	0.825	0.646***	0.385***	**0.717**	
Communication	0.941	0.761	0.496	0.956	0.704***	0.358***	0.602***	**0.872**
*** p<0.001,								
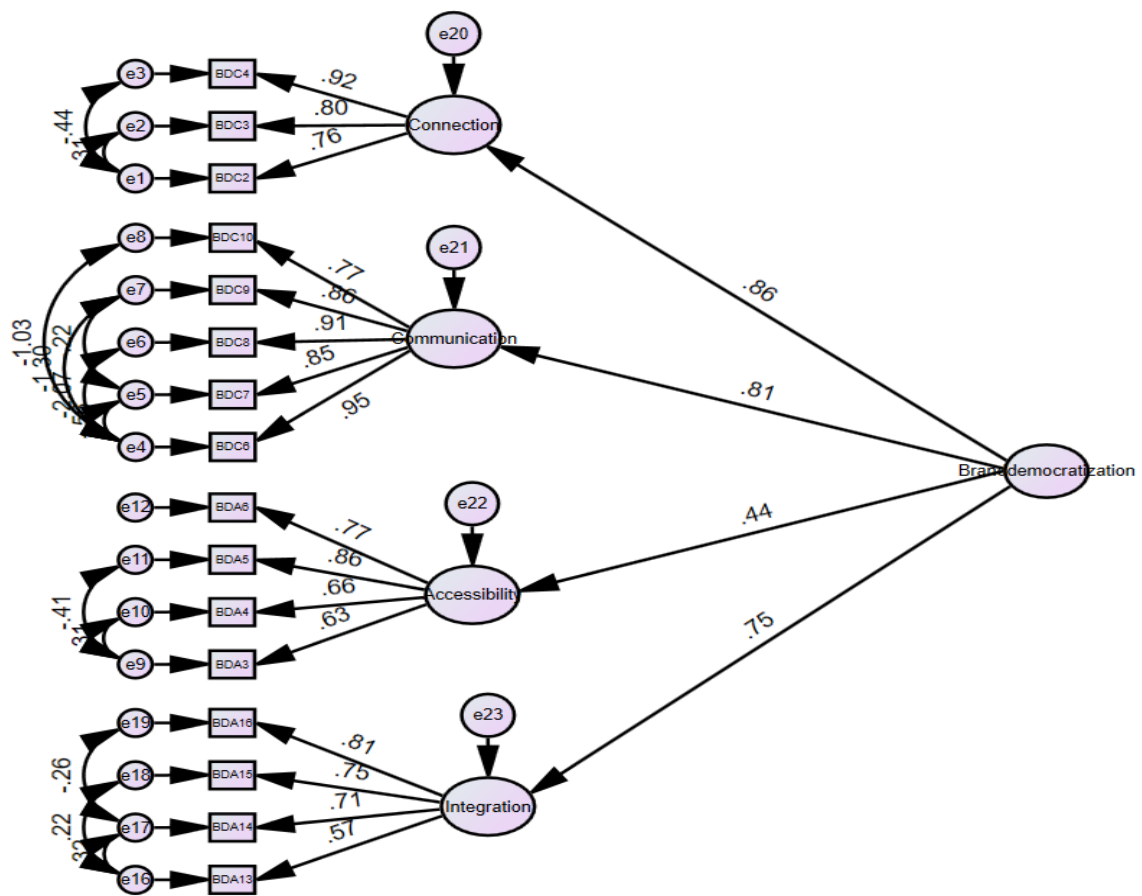
Figure 4: second-order CFA

Second order factor analysis was conducted to observe how the brand democratization and its various dimensions identified through confirmatory factor analysis would perform on a higher order. A higher order is represented by figure 4, which presents standardized estimation results for brand democratization which includes 4 first order factors, indicators and measurement errors when adjusted through modification indices. All five dimensions identified earlier seem

to be loading fairly onto Brand democratization, with accessibility having a factor loading of 0.49, and integration 0.85, and validity statistics presented below in table 13 indicate no validity concerns.

Table 11: Validity statistics for Brand democratization

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	BD
BD	0.817	0.540	0.000	0.863	0.735
*No validity concerns					

3.5. Conclusion

Democratization has completely changed the outlook of luxury industry, this study sought out to capture the true meaning and breadth of brand democratization based on the elements of accessibility and communication within the luxury fashion context. The luxury domain itself has evolved to an extent that challenges the existing/traditional perceptions of luxury fashion brands. Consumers have since perceived luxury brands to hold values of uniqueness and prestige therefore making them more desirable overtime. This evolution and the incorporation of a form of democratic luxury that is accessible to all makes it more challenging to be held together by existing marketing infrastructure let alone reach new markets. Despite the vast amounts of literature already available about luxury fashion brands.

Democratization on the other hand remains a comparatively less explored area for developing theoretical propositions. The main contributions of this research however are based on the specific conceptualization, field/domain, and measurement of the construct of brand democratization. This study sets up key areas/categories stemming from democratic luxury fashion based on the elements of accessibility and communication. This study further establishes brand democratization as a two-way process between the brand and the customer. The components formed as a result are connection between the two stakeholders (brand and its consumers), communication, accessibility, and integration. Thus, enhancing the relationships that the consumers develop with the luxury fashion brands which ultimately give meaning to people's lives.

An added contribution of this study is the development of a measure to capture brand democratization, a unique area on which brands can capitalize to improve existing marketing strategy or build a new one. The brand democratization scale measures the democratic nature of the brand through the lens of a brand being both accessible and communicative. This study

employed accessibility and communication by taking into account the consumer-brand relationship (Fournier, 1998) to integrate the two (accessibility and communication) and define the value and experiences derived by consumers from a luxury fashion brand. As mentioned earlier key result achieved by exploring democratization through the lens of accessibility and communication are the four features: connection, communication, accessibility, and integration.

Connection factor shows that customers show a level of sophistication when responding to if brand has become democratized, which significantly affects building a productive relationship between customer and the brand. Moreover, the two items, 'Brand X expresses itself by sharing its values' and 'Brand X supports social causes that I care about' illustrates a pivotal role of brands in connecting with its customers. The second factor, Communication captures brand democratization dimension through expediting communication with its customers. Items such as 'Brand X encourages its customer to have a voice' shows a fundamental element in supplying encouragement to its customer by having a voice. Items such as 'Brand X allow its customer to meet its designers' showcases brand's willingness to interact and communicate with its customers. Lastly communication factor confirms whether the brand in question promotes social media interactions and or invites social media influencers to promote its customers.

Accessibility dimension captures democratization through brand's ability to ensure easy access to its customers. Item such as 'it is easy for me to have access to information about the fashion brand' and 'I can now easily brand X because of some of its products are affordable to a wider range of customers' showcases brands openness to include wider segment of luxury fashion brand market. This evidence further bolsters previous studies which had advocated for democratization being a facet of mass marketing (Paul, 2015). Lastly integration dimension captures the brand's willingness to integrate customers into its marketing efforts. Items such as 'Brand X allows me to be a part of its community' and items which related to customers having easy access to designers and brand's social media content is pivotal in cultivating a long-lasting engagement with its customers.

Overall, the findings of this study reveal a clear connection between luxury fashion and brand democratization, in particular the brand becoming democratic to attract potential customers. The consumption of luxury fashion brands has become global, luxury brands carry a global status which helps it to spread. This research was conducted in a particular market and context.

The widespread of fashion brands only reinforces the need and relevance for further research in a different culture/context.

3.6. Managerial Implications

There are wide range of managerial implications of brand democratization measure, a core aspect of this research thus showcases that democratization can be assessed through the lens of accessibility and communication. This aspect of democratization can therefore be managed internally, and brands can benefit from doing so. Brand democratization can also support marketing practices which are employed, brand communication and strategies targeted at improving accessibility of its products and services. The proliferation of brands has certainly created challenges, therefore there is a growing need to manage and promote brand in a better rather in the best ways possible. Brand democratization measure can be used in several ways, firstly it shows that luxury fashion brands need to democratize to acquire greater market share and customer base, moreover brands can use democratization measure as tool in guiding and measuring customer responses, along with monitoring existing branding/marketing efforts.

Brand democratization scale also pinpoints key areas in relation to four dimensions of democratization. By creating a favourable environment for its customers, luxury fashion brand would not only be able to reach a wider audience but retain existing customers (integration factor).

3.7. Research limitation and future research

This research is a preliminary investigation into the conceptualization and measuring brand democratization. Although the validation of the scale may require some changes to be made according to the context in which it is to be tested/re-tested. This research has nevertheless proposed a measure that not only capture different dimensions of democratization but also provides insight into how customers rate the democratization process. One limitation of this study is that this research was conducted in the context of luxury fashion industry, although it might have several advantages in terms of highlighting the findings and making further improvements, however it may limit the generalizability to other industry settings and geographical locations. Therefore, a future research agenda could be exploring and applying the measurement scale in another context. Review of the literature for democratization pinpointed BD dimensions from a wide range of settings (e.g., fashion, art, technology) and since the dimensions were tested in luxury fashion context, resulted in greater emphasis on

accessibility and communication. Therefore, the implementation of this measurement scale in other contexts might impact the results. Since democratization has evolved from expediting the shift of power from centralized authority to the people (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), this dimension could be studies under the pretext that customer also view brands having control over their choices. Finally, a further investigation into how brand democratization impacts constructs such as customer engagement is called for (Shukla et al., 2022), to understand when and if customer choose to engage and disengage.

Chapter 4: Study three; Brand democratization and customer-brand engagement

4.1. Introduction

This study examines brand democratization and customer engagement with luxury fashion brand(s), basic grounds for assessing this relationship stems from luxury fashion brands making their products accessible to all, thus starting a downward fashion consumption trend (Jean-Noël Kapferer, 1988). Since study 2 (BD scale development) observed important components of brand democratization (accessibility, communication, connection, and integration), further modelling was warranted to understand the relationship between BD and CBE. Literature has often observed customer role (customer-dominant logic) in choosing the brand (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015), this role has been capitalized on by luxury brands in their processes to understand how exactly customers in their ecosystems engage with different luxury fashion brands (Nallapaneni & Babu, 2018).

This research also emphasizes on not only the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement, but also studies interactional justice's (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2017) mediating role between BD and CBE. This mediation comprises of the interaction between brand's representatives (employees), which signifies how do luxury fashion brand's in Pakistani context behave towards projecting its true image and delivering on its values by ensuring that the interaction between the two parties (brand's employees and customers) is built on just interaction practices (Skiera et al., 2010). This study further identified the potential of customer empowerment (Gary L. Hunter and Ina Garnefeld, 2008) and control (Gong, 2018) to moderate the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement. Since customer is crucial in luxury fashion engagement (Grassi, 2020), This study goes way ahead to observe through literature that when brand's relinquish control customers feel empowered (Brundin, Samuelsson, & Melin, 2014).

Studying the relationship between BD and CBE was the main premise of this research, apart from the measure developed for BD in study 2, we also wanted to build on several independent constructs that may/may not influence brand democratization altogether. On another spectrum literature has also noted that customer's give importance to the connection that they have with their brands, we therefore hypothesized the relationship between Ideal-self (Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009) and brand democratization. This relationship can be explained by the

premise of consumer's individuality which stands for important luxury fashion brands that are viewed as part of consumer's identity. Furthermore we studied whether democratized luxury fashion brands are seen by consumers as congruent with their image, short for self-congruity (Sirgy et al., 1997). Since literature reiterated that democratization is linked with a wider outreach by the brand, therefore we also wanted to observe the element of prestige that is associated with a democratized brand, and assess that impact that a brand marketed as more prestigious through the concept of Mass-prestige (Paul, 2015) can have an impact on brand democratization.

To observe all the relationships hypothesized, this research employed a quantitative research and analysis methodology. First and foremost a structural equation modelling was employed to see if the proposed theoretical model was in fit with the data collected. Despite having sound theoretical grounds for the relationships, structural and measurement models failed to meet minimum requirements of a perfect model fit. Therefore, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyse the hypothesis statements. Ideal self, self-brand congruity and masstige were observed to have positive impacts on brand democratization, consequently brand democratization positively impacted customer-brand engagement, interactional justice between customers and brand's employees positively impacted engagement, interactional justice also mediated the relationship between BD and CBE. Although regression analysis resulted in control failing to moderate the relationship between BD and CBE, customer empowerment did indeed moderate the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement.

4.2. Literature Reviews

To observe the relationships between the constructs, theoretical backgrounds of the construct were identified. From general to specific perspectives helped redefine the construct in luxury fashion context, literature review regarding brand democratization was carried forward from study one (systematic literature review) and study two (scale development). This section reviews literature on customer-brand engagement, interactional justice, control, customer empowerment, ideal-self, self-congruity and masstige.

4.2.1. Customer brand engagement

The concept of customer engagement has its roots in psychology and organizational behavior, while research has focused on the impact engagement can have on exhibiting greater loyalty

towards brands. Increased focus from academics and marketers, customer engagement is thought of as a reflection of customers individual and context specific engagement with brands (Hollebeek, 2011). Historically engagement itself has been up for debate and has been studied across a wide range of subjects, including psychology, political sciences, and organization behavior. Several studies have contributed to the construct and have highlighted that increased engagement may also increase the levels of productivity and profitability, despite drawing clear distinctions that the definition itself is context specific. Customer engagement has its grass roots/theoretical foundations from relationship marketing and service-dominant logic (Islam & Rahman, 2016). Customer engagement has become a key concept in marketing for academic and practitioners alike, being a multi-dimensional concept, it comprises of cognitive, behavioral, and social dimensions even though most of the research conducted on the concept has come from developed countries.

Islam and Rahman, in their 2016 systematic review on customer engagement specify that prior to 2005, customer engagement existed in very few published studies. One reason as to little publications on customer engagement was due to newness of the topic, and ever since research on the topic has gained significant momentum. The orientation and nature of the concept later intensified with a shift from conceptual to quantitative empirical studies, and development of customer-engagement scales. To explore the concept of customer engagement relevant theories are presented in table 14, relationship marketing theory and service-dominant logic have been extensively used. Under the relationship marketing theory and service dominant logic its assumed that customers are not mere passive consumers, rather they contribute actively to customer-brand interactions. Among social behavior theories and studies conducted under their banner, theories such as social exchange theory, social practice theory, and social penetration theory customers/consumers can possess positive thoughts and feelings towards brands only upon initial interaction with the brand leading to gain in initial benefits while conforming to reciprocity theory, table below lists some of theories used to study customer engagement (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020).

Theories	Reference(s)
Service Dominant Logic	Do, Rahman, & Robinson, (2019)
Customer Dominant Logic	Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, (2011)
Social Exchange Theory	(Samala & Katkam, 2019)
Social Practice Theory	(Naumann, Bowden, & Gabbott, 2017)
Stimulus Organism Response model	(Lin & Lo, 2016)
Theory of Planned Behavior	(Lu, Zhou, & Wang, 2009)
Social Penetration Theory	Berg, J, (1984)
Reciprocity Theory	Alexy, George, & Salter, (2013)
Regulatory Engagement Theory	(Petrou, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2018)
Resource Exchange Theory	(Pateli & Lioukas, 2011)
Gratification Theory	(Shang, Wu, & Sie, 2017)
Relationship Marketing Theory	(Brodie et al., 2011)
The Affordance Theory	(Sinha & Sheth, 2018)

(Source: Author's own elaboration based on literature review)

Literature on customer engagement has been studied at length, while conducting a systematic literature review, Islam & Rahman, (2016) refer to the inclination and preparedness of customers to engage with the object/brand in context. While the multi-dimensionality of the concept may signal towards emotional, behavioral, and social dimensions. Authors such as Brodie et al., (2013), Hollebeek (2011), Vivek et al., (2012), have all confirmed the multi-dimensions of the concept and how the interaction between brands and customers strengthen the symbiotic relationship. While customer engagement has evolved over the years, it's antecedents and consequences have been detailed in (Islam & Rahman, 2016) and later in (Islam et al., 2019) where the authors signaled the role gender can play in moderating customer engagement, brand experience and patronage intent. Although customer engagement has already been not only defined but also studied at length. Table 15 below highlights some of the widely accepted definitions of the construct.

Table 13: Defining Customer Engagement

Concept	Definition(s)	Reference
Customer engagement	''The readiness of a customer to actively participate and interact with the focal object, which varies in direction and magnitude depending upon the nature of a customer's interaction with various touch points'' (p, 2019)	Islam & Rahman, (2016)
Customer engagement	"A customer's motivationally driven, volitional investment of focal operant resources (including cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social knowledge and kills), and operand resources into brand interactions in service system." (p, 6)	Hollebeek et al. (2016)
Consumer engagement	"The state that reflects consumers' individual dispositions toward engagement foci, which are context specific. Engagement is expressed through varying levels of affective, cognitive and behavioural manifestations that go beyond exchange situations." (p, 409)	Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, (2016)

Online brand community engagement	The compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand community." (p, 979)	Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, (2015)
Customer engagement	"The level of the customer's (or potential customer's) interactions and connections with the brand or firm's offerings or activities, often involving others in the social network created around the brand/ offering/activity'' (p, 406)	Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, (2014)
Customer engagement	''The mechanics of a customer's value addition to the firm, either through direct or indirect contribution'' (p, 2)	V. Kumar & Pansari, (2016)
(Source: Customer engagement definitions adapted from (Do et al., 2019))		

4.2.2 Customer-brand (dis)engagement.

The evolution of customer engagement has come a long way since the differentiating phases used in focusing on targeting audiences of brands. Early research in this area points out towards a shift from transactional to relationship marketing practices (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The sole objective of the whole endeavour evolved into providing the best possible product/brand along with better services. Later research provides a clue into the objective being delivering product/service value in such a way as to gain access to customer loyalty, greater profitability, and long term sustainable competitive advantage. Thus, further evolving the concept from relationship towards engagement practices (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

Earlier researchers have increasingly focused on customer engagement which tends to present a layout of the framework used. The constructs normally studied while measuring customer engagement includes participation, influential power of customers and advocating the product/brand to their peers (Yi & Gong, 2013)(Xie et al., 2008). The word engagement itself has different meanings in the dictionaries of managers and practitioners. For managers engagement is seen as for its contractual purposes, while on the other hand practitioners see engagement as an activity with the stakeholders of the organization. (Pansari & Kumar, 2017) later suggested that engagement evolves from a relationship only when the customer has some emotional values attached to it. This now leads to another dilemma of introducing new ways as to engage customers and reduce customer being unresponsive to any sort of marketing techniques. Therefore emotions come in handy while persuading customers to have long lasting relationship, converting customer indifference into engagement (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

No matter how the brand engages with its customer to make them perfectly loyal towards their objectives, the development and breakdown can be seen as a linear process (Bowden, Gabbott, & Naumann, 2015). The stages of how customer decides to disengage houses certain elements that cannot be overlooked and needs to be rectified. Bowden et al., 2015, in their paper

suggested the customer-brand/service relationship is quite complex and certain pre-existing elements boosts the process which results is various events. Despite the fact that the shift towards relationships had been predicted already as summarized by (Grönroos, 1994). Bowden et al., 2015 defined customer disengagement as being a psychological process as therefore put them in the following words:

''A process by which customer-brand relationship experiences a trauma or disturbance which may lead to relationship termination: which involves a range of trigger based events: which varies in intensity and trajectory: which occurs within a specific set of category conditions and which is dependent on prior levels of customer engagement'' (Bowden et al., 2015 pg 799)

Although there seems to be considerable number of studies trying to conceptualize customer engagement, the concept is seen as a considerable investment made by customers in a product/service. With regards to theory, when looked at the experiential, interactive and value co-creation aspect the concept generally falls under the banners of relationship marketing theory, service dominant logic (S-D logic) and customer dominant logic (Do et al., 2019). Literature stresses the importance of both negative and positive customer engagement and the impact it can have on customer perception and brand performance. Clear evidence has been observed in the form of negative word of mouth, which is compounded by the exponential growth of social media, where often negative engagement proves to be more consequential than positive engagement.

Simply put, negative customer engagement/customer disengagement can be termed as unfavourable customer thoughts and feelings related to the brand which occur during customer brand interactions (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). This further supports the idea that both positive and negative customer engagement are the opposite sides of the same coin or in this case the construct (Do et al., 2019). However, literature offers insights about the above statement about positive and negative customer engagement being the opposites of each other, while refuting that the negative customer engagement and the customer engagement with negative valence can be differentiated based on the events leading up to both constructs. The distinction of a negative valence towards a brand and negative customer engagement is that negative customer engagement or disengagement can cause harm to the brand's product/service while valence does not necessarily cause harm to the brand but can be still an antecedent of value co-creation (Do et al., 2019). Since literature on customer engagement is growing at a rapid pace, authors

are again bound to start somewhere and accept the assumptions of their peers, where one such acceptance to the literature is the study of cognition, behaviour and affection leading up to negative customer engagement or disengagement.

Since customer-brand relationship is often seen as a reciprocity between the two players, the termination of relationship is viewed as a psychological process based on the triggers of negative events. This termination of relationship between customer-brand can be defined as detachment from the product/service being offered by the brand. Since the trauma caused detachment from the brand, consumer may return to the brand or stay disengaged, thus becoming negatively engaged consumers (Chebat, Davidow, & Codjovi, 2005). Typical customer goes through a thought process known as cognitions, which causes a distance towards the affection and behavioural aspect based on the exchange between customer and the brand. This very thought process can further cause emotional and physical disengagement from the brand/service provider (Bowden et al., 2015).

The level of activeness that the customers exert towards a brand/service provider in line with their engagement/negative engagement can be either passive or active. Consumers who have a weak negative orientation while engaging, adopt a passive approach towards the brand, while negatively engaged customers are active in expressing their negative thoughts and feelings. Similarly (Naumann et al., 2017) considered the level of activeness as the key determinant used in distinguishing between engagement and negatively engaged customers towards a brand, based on the fact that both of the constructs points to negative valence of customer engagement. Naumann et al., (2017) view customer disengagement and negative customer engagement as a multi-dimensional concept depicted below in table 16.

Table 14: Negative engagement and disengagement

Customer Disengagement			Negative Customer Engagement		
Affective	Cognitive	Behavioural	Affective	Cognitive	Behavioural
Frustration, Rejection	Distrust	Neglect	Anger	Cynicism	Collective complaining, Value co-destruction

(Source: Naumann et al., (2017))

Factors which logically precede customer engagement/negative customer engagement, literature generally associates such factors with customer valence and how the initiated response curb such customer behaviour. Literary works such as (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014) discussed the factors that correspond to customer perception in response to the brand. The

authors proposed and discussed a conceptual model based on customer's cognitive and affective dimensions, these dimensions take back to the main agenda as to the antecedents leading up to passion, immersion, and activation of customer responses. However other scholarly works such as (Do et al., 2019) argue that poor service/product delivery by the brand may correspond to the original brand promise and the disconfirmation compared to what was promised and what is finally delivered. The factors leading up to customer engagement behaviour, either it be customer engagement or negative customer engagement are rather linked to customer perceptions which effect both customer satisfaction and emotions (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

Although customer satisfaction is considered widely in the literature, dissatisfied customer may complain about the brand and disengage or find themselves negatively engaging with the brand. Moreover, the same disconfirmation discussed above, may also trigger customer's perception of brand to be in discord of their individual rights such as esteem, and justice. When and if the brand disconfirms with its customer, they are bound to reduce dissonance, thus such critical negative events lead to negative engagement practices by customers.

4.2.3. Masstige

Masstige brands, are more commonly recognized as premium but affordable and attainable. Masstige brands are also based on equity and are marketed on their level of likeability, love, and attachment. Masstige marketing strategy (MMS) has been used in the literature to investigate the pervasiveness and popularity of brands, irrespective of the geographic context/cultural differences. Authors (Kapferer, 2014; Paul, 2018, 2019) have also noted that the scale (MMS) itself can become or in this context could serve as a benchmark to investigate the success both premium and local brands.

The markets in which these masstige (mass-prestige) brands are introduced, can be described to function because of demand and supply (Fiske, 2003). Consumers are inclined to fulfil their desires, which occurs because of changes in their individual roles and social orientations. The rise of luxury brands coupled with masstige marketing allows individuals to interact with their desires. Whereas supply side emerged due to new entrepreneurs have greater understanding of the marketplace, global resources have become common. The new consumer in this market houses certain emotional pools, from self-fulfilment to experiences, they strive for individual identity and style (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

Silverstein and Fiske (2003) coined the term 'Masstige', where the authors noted that understanding consumers desires and habits can help brands to access opportunities. Later, in the paper they discussed different types, such as premium. Which forms the basis of brand extensions both upward and downward. Much more importance is exerted to both demand and supply side forces which fuel desires to consume mass prestige (masstige) brands. New consumers look upon themselves while embarking on a quest to fulfil their desires depending on their individual style and along the way make valuable connections with other consumers. Whereas within the luxury industry, the demands are being fulfilled by new entrepreneurs who have the tendency to disrupt demand curve, offer genuine benefit to the consumers, rely on innovation and quality, and position their brands with innovative techniques.

Truong, McColl, & Kitchen, (2009) guided from the masstige brands and the emergence of new luxury brands sought to review the three types of luxury brands that had now surfaced. Due to luxury boom, competition among brands and consumers had risen significantly which further ensures mass availability. Brands therefore need to implement masstige strategy focused on broader appeal with little dilution. The divide between traditional luxury brands, new-luxury brands and middle range brands was tested using unisex brands and compare them across the three types of brand categories based on their positioning strategies. In terms of its prestige, it was noted that new-luxury brands were perceived to be much closer to traditional rather than middle range brands.

Kapferer & Bastien, (2009) moved forward with a well-defined concept of modern marketing, and how the avenue is changing due to competition, the democratization effect portrays brand extensions are marketing with new branding strategies. Branding literature defines luxury which creates social differences among consumers, and on the other hand explain how traditional luxury consumers want to have social stratification, to be differentiated from new-lux and middle range luxury brand consumers (Boisvert & Ashill, 2018). This further alleviates the concept of democratic luxury, of how the luxury itself is divided and considered as a badge, consumers own self, the need for it to appear as something for others while having the core of being democratic in nature as to be consumable by the worthy.

Lloyd & Luk, (2010) advocate that due to the widespread of luxury brands, competitions have certainly increased. Now to gain competitive advantage, brands need to embrace the concept of customer perceived value which allow brands to induce customer loyalty and gain competitive advantage. The authors define luxury to be solely the culmination of pleasure,

perfection, and rarity. This further helps brands by building the brand identity as exclusive, as luxury brands are linked to social stratification, self-expressive nature and fulfilling psychological consumption needs, which all adds up to grandiose consumption patterns. The customer perception value components comprise of utility, perception, value, benefit and sacrifice, monetary/functional value against non-monetary/emotional values. However, the authors argue that although prices of luxury brands do dictate the prestige level, but brand democratization itself has changed this as luxury brands are beginning to lean towards less affluent consumers.

When constructing luxury brands, (Roper et al., 2013) explored the role of culture and its impact on brands. The authors debate that the brand-consumer relationships are socially constructed, and luxury brand meaning is derived from cultural context. Consumers end up both trading up and trading down and the market often orients itself elitist and individual democratic. Similarly marketing and strategies are influenced by cultural trends based on facts and fictions. So often that the relationship between luxury brands and consumers and markets is dynamic. Consumers are influenced by their linguistic orientation and the democratization of luxury is further attributed to the cultural and financial shift in markets, moreover social identities of consumers are also formed through their linguistic orientations. The authors conclude that luxury brands are democratized through cultural values that shape and predict consumer motives and fuel their desires for luxury consumption.

Another perspective of how luxury is being transformed was presented by (Kapferer, 2014) where the author focused on how growth can become challenging for both the entrepreneur and the brand. The growth has been mainly fuelled by globalization where the widespread of resources and easier access to the markets has presented some challenges as well as opportunities for the luxury brands. As far as luxury is concerned, the author presents the view that luxury itself mean abundance and beyond necessity. Furthermore, the luxury brands are being marketed as art rather than just as a mean to fulfil desires. The artification of luxury discussed by (Kapferer, 2014) speak of brands experiencing challenges of growth and how the concept of masstige brands is widespread among masses. The luxury itself is being given the title relating to attainability and excess, however the fact that now masses in developing countries are craving masstige (luxury) brands could mean a loss of exclusivity for brands and its relevant markets. Therefore, the authors speak of multiple ways to keep the brands alive and exclusive through art, hailing artists, and artisans as the true backbone of luxury brands and

eventually turning non-art into art. This further is bolstered by the transformation that cultures experience because of urbanization and a boom in consumption.

Despite all the above advances, it still paves ways for new problems, firstly due to the boom itself, luxury brands must preserve exclusivity and maintain brand appeal, and secondly with the increase in consumer demands for luxury brands, existing market leaders experience a rise in competition. The market has seen a fair share of luxury brands being art, and the use of storytelling to boost brand desire. However certain cases due exist where the democratization of these very luxury brands mean abandoning rarity and falling within mass production. To cope with all the challenges, brands are often seen to renew their brand image through art, by endorsements and affiliations with religion and culture. This way luxury brands have been able to extend their lifecycle and differentiate that the brand has nothing to do with the price. Furthermore, this indoctrination is bolstered through events and social media platforms.

(Paul, 2015), chose to redefine masstige marketing and remapped the concept as a market penetration strategy. This enabled the brands to focus on the fact that masstige marketing can be deployed to gain access to foreign markets through marketing mix. The author developed masstige mean score scale (MMS) to measure prestige value and highlighted that the prestige value of the brand is the key to success, which can also be further used to implement masstige marketing strategy by adopting it to relevant market (cultural context).

Brands in the marketplace, influence their efforts through implementing marketing systems of value creations and boosting brand equity. Since globalization is considered an increasing force in aiding branding efforts. Masstige marketing has been linked in creating brand equity through downward brand extensions (democratization). (A. Kumar & Paul, 2018) looked up IT specifically Laptop brand in India. While comparing Asian with American brands found out that western brands are considered a status symbol based on their expensiveness and exclusiveness. Furthermore, while concluding the authors offered insights as to how competition induces a luxury brand to achieve higher masstige value, while country of origin, bestselling brands, and first mover brands are all linked with higher prestige value.

Similarly, downward brand extensions can have spill over effects for luxury brands, therefore branding strategies are implemented for extensions. Horizontal and standalone brand extensions are used to reduce negative spill over effects (Boisvert & Ashill, 2018). Masstige marketing, a brand management tool often deployed by luxury brands to position their brands

while penetrating a market (Paul, 2018). Since globalization, the success of the brand is mostly attributed to the share of the market it holds, and the perception and equity built upon using masstige marketing. Therefore, marketing success is attributed to building brand prestige, brand love and equity. However, the country-based brand equity may influence consumer's perception of the brand and that the masstige value creation process heavily relies on the marketing mix (4 p's) used.

4.2.4. Control and Customer Empowerment

Empowerment itself has been used across various disciplines, the word has been a source of influence for the oppressed and has helped them mobilize towards their full potential, whether it be in the areas of social sciences or simply to counter humanitarian crisis. Literature describes the word empower from Oxford English Dictionary as the act of empowering. Thus, illustrating the transition from helplessness to essential components of being empowered. From the literature concerning education, empowerment is defined to be both an individual and a social process. In management literature empowerment plays the role of primarily increase in participation of employees towards decision making (Lincoln, Travers, Ackers, & Wilkinson, 2002). However, marketing literature views consumer empowerment as the shift in power from the producer to the consumers (Shankar et al., 2006). Since the existence of brands and their widespread from production to retail and then a demographic shift, brands have come to dominate the consumption spectrum. Similarly, the growth of brands have aided consumers with provision of wide variety of choices in terms of products and service offerings (Davies & Elliott, 2006).

Similarly Pires, Stanton, & Rita, (2006) explain the increasing use of technology which has shifted the power from market to consumers, despite stressing for a need to regain control over the marketing process. Ever since internet became widespread, the very use itself has turned 'information scarcity into information democracy' (Pires et al., 2006). Nevertheless, literature also contends the use of the information sources to reduce time wastage to make choices. This process thus depends on the exchange process that the consumers go through which makes empowerment dependent on factors such as; 1-value propositions in the market (Fionda & Moore, 2009), 2-consumer knowledge of the brands (Van Ees, Gabrielsson, & Huse, 2009), 3-consumer's internal ability to identify the best possible choice (Jain & Schultz, 2019), and subsequently their ability to make the right choices by employing the previous three factors.

Another aspect of increase in customer control over their decision making which the literature explores is the customer empowerment resulting from the options to customize and personalize their choices. With the increase in brands both local and global consumers now can choose from a wide variety of brands and the products they offer, which makes it more appealing as the products can now be tailored to suit the needs of the customer (Gary L. Hunter and Ina Garnefeld, 2008). The authors proposed the questions of customer empowerment leading to greater customer satisfactions basing it on the foundation of conformation and disconfirmation where the pre-purchase is compared with post-purchase decisions. However, the authors further initiated the investigative agenda by bringing in mediation of consumer involvement and moderation of firm/brand's responsiveness to the customer. The authors further referred involvement to the degree of relevance to the customer and assumed the state of a brand's/ firm's responsiveness as the empowerment of customers. The results proved to be in favour of the whole idea of customer empowerment leading to customer satisfaction.

Customer empowerment can thus be described as 'the subjective state evoked by the feeling of increased control over the production of desired outcomes and the prevention of undesired outcomes related to existing/prior state'(Gary L. Hunter and Ina Garnefeld, 2008). Customers have become active value seekers in the traditional and online markets alike (Gong, 2018), thus generating revenues for the firm, therefore helping it to run for a longer period of time (Chandy, Cunha, & Eric Boyd, 2010). Since customer represent a massive proportion of the brands revenue, customer power comes into play, thus forcing a brand to bend towards a certain direction. Brands which solely rely on personalization tend to depend greatly on customers who contribute towards them the most. This power difference comes in handy when Customers need to get things done, which the brand otherwise might not have done so (Chandy et al., 2010). Due to the shift of focus from transactional to relational and from relational to engagement (Pansari & Kumar, 2017) brands play a relational role. The literature on power distance of customers and organization which in this case (brands) provide value, in-terms of sales revenue. This sales revenue is seen as a valued resource, can be harvested in a longer period as well. (Chandy et al., 2010) defined customer power is the following words:

''We define customer power as the ability of a customer to cause a selling firm to undertake actions, it would not have taken otherwise''.

Power distance explains the societal settings as to the equal distribution of power and what proportion of the society accept the less powerful members (Hofstede, 2011). Society and the

cultures held within societies place customary hierarchies on individuals, which in turn dictates the distribution of power among individuals. High powered customers as a result expect to receive more benefit than low powered customers, as they hold more control over the social status given to them through customs and traditions. Therefore, brand ownership plays a significant role in this area, as high-powered customers are more than willing to take on additional responsibility than low powered customers and brand owners. Customers who are already at a higher status within the hierarchy are therefore less willing to put extra effort in maintaining their status in terms of self-achievement and self-growth. In general customers do tend to believe that consumption of a specific brand is more likely to enhance concept of themselves.

Social order thus is preferred when the power is unequally distributed among individuals in a society by the high-powered customers, as they do not wish to undo it and consider it to be a natural order. Research on this matter offers a very different insight as that high powered customer are not really that interested in relinquishing control and are less interested in availing opportunities offered by brands as they already are in control and the ownership of the said brand category would bring them no less comfort. This implies a very important aspect for this research alone, that power generally would dictate the amount of effort that would be put in to either engage or disengage with the brand/product itself, thereby affecting customer disengagement (Karman, 2001).

The above statement is further explained in the literature as the ability of the customers to influence brands/firm's decision making due to their economic importance which directly impact firm's performance levels. The brand ownership status that comes along with the power difference between customer and the brand. Traditional ownership values which provides satisfaction and the right to bask in (Baumeister, Scherer, & Wangenheim, 2015). Different business models adopted by parent brands such as renting provides easier access to masses, however even after the introduction of a brand and the possibility of customer engagement decisions. Consumer prefer to evaluate the brands in-terms of their interests, importance and overall value (Kuratko, Eshima, Anderson, Kreiser, & Hornsby, 2014). Unlike the service consumption, consumer do not directly obtain the ownership of the brand, rather just the time they spend while consuming it (Baumeister et al., 2015). Similarly, literature also provides cues as with the introduction of sub brands by parent brand, existing owners will associate positively and be more willing to engage. In the case of apparel industry, when coupled with

personalization, brand owners feel at ease due to the exclusivity offered (Baumeister et al., 2015).

Brand trust is another sider of brand value and which literally translates to bonding with the brand (Shin, Casidy, Yoon, & Yoon, 2016). Challenges that spew up from brand delivery and service variability can impact brand trust (Frasquet et al., 2017) and finally customer-brand engagement. This specifically in terms of practices and implications for practitioner raises questions as how to maintain brand trust. The theory of information integration expresses in words how on part of brands new information integration into its strategy results in changes in attitudes and perceptions (Anderson, 2014). Brands therefore have a considerable amount of independence from the customers as to how to implement exposure strategies (Shin et al., 2016). However, there may come times when the brand faces negative publicity due to crisis, in franchising, brands expect customers to think separately when making hasty decision to maintain their trust. This maintenance of trust values is bolstered through separation statements, comparison, and reinforcing customer-brand relationships to limit the chances of disengagement decisions.

Similar to IMC, customers and brands align themselves together to achieve synergy, literature points out towards the integration of all IMC components in such a way that even through the use of multiple channels of communication, customer centricity needs to be maintained and customer experience enhanced all the way (Mortimer & Laurie, 2019). This chronological thinking, and coordination of insight changes brand trust to reduce the power gap between customer and brands. (Srinivasan & Ramani, 2019) addressed the both the internal and external factors affecting power. The role that the marketing department of a brand plays, the focus is therefore on giving back the power to marketing executives to prevent short-sighted spending and revenue management.

4.2.5. Ideal self

Due to traction of much attention from both academics and practitioners, branding literature has often observed customers as value co-creators, along with being value recipients (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). Often the speed of change that occurs within an industry makes it more difficult to undertake branding efforts, just like in the case of branding of fashion goods pointed out by (Fionda & Moore, 2009). The issue of brand engagement in self-concept conceptualized by (Sprott et al., 2009) was argued as an individual variable which differs from consumer to consumer. Literature discusses the term self-concept in two forms: the actual and

the ideal (Nyadzayo, Johnson, & Rossi, 2020). The actual self here refers to the reality and the ideal self is concerned with aspiration; therefore luxury brands consumption enables consumer to become more attractive, desirable, and prestigious which ultimately delivers on the power spectrum and brings them closer to achieving actual/ideal self (Workman & Lee, 2011).

Exploring consumer self-concept deals with a lot of factors which aid consumers in making the right choices to satisfy their needs, therefore luxury brands and fashion has played with emotions and emotional values attached by consumer to the brands. Moreover, luxury brands further the self-concept to enhance the material comfort of consumers. The increased connections with the brands develops into an intimate relationship, often leading to the feeling of happiness and security (Nyadzayo et al., 2020).

4.2.6. Self-Congruity

Like people (consumers), fashion brands and the products/services they offer are recognized by their personal images. These images house the elements/attributes of friendliness, being modern, and traditional etc. (Sirgy et al., 1997). Literature on the subject (image) is crystal clear when it comes to distinguishing between its functional and utilitarian aspects, the latter aspect being tangible costs and benefits (Moon, Javaid, Kiran, Awan, & Farooq, 2018). The personal images that the fashion brands portray are again reflected in the generalization of its users and are determined by marketing and psychological associations. Often self-concept and self-congruity is regarded and referred to as subjective experience generated from customer-brand interactions. Past literature further highlights that research on self-concept/self-congruity is used to define different facets of consumer behaviour such as purchase intentions, engagement, attitudes towards the brands, loyalty and so forth (Shukla, 2012).

The congruence resulting from interactions are thus explained by self-congruity theory, which states that consumer behaviour is determined by a psychological comparison pre-defined consumer-user image by the brand and the consumer's self-concept. This comparison results in high or low congruity with the brand, former being consumers perceive brand to match with his/her self-image, and the latter explaining a lack of consistency with product/brand-user image. The whole idea of explaining brand-user image congruence is of upmost importance for managers and marketing researchers, as managers can use the insights to predict consumer behaviour and further strategize through advertising and marketing efforts (Sirgy et al., 1997). Whereas researchers can observe consumer behaviour through self-congruity's theoretical relevance.

Self-congruity is rooted in perception consumer's self-concept in relation to brand user-image, although different semantic differential scales have been used in the literature, this research employed a tailor made seven-point Likert scale adapted from (Sirgy et al., 1997) to measure fashion brand user self-congruence in accordance with democratic luxury.

4.2.7 Customer-brand Interaction(s)

Consumer journey helps define consumer orientation of the present, past and the future. This help further develop the social construct that are related to the orientation and concerns customer-brand experiences. Since the consumer journey itself holds many obstacles and choosing between different paths, the failures that comes along the way are just part of the journey that both brands and consumers need to overcome (Price, 2019). Consumers take part in many endeavours to achieve goals as a result of available opportunities (Hamilton & Price, 2019). Literature describes the journey as anticipation of expected values received when consuming products/brands, which ultimately leads to experiences either good or bad. Therefore, it is of immense importance that brands understand the customer journey and experiences that are derived from it.

Literature on relationships and how it adds to brand experience dictates that consumer interactions with brands/products have a relationship which when supported by the degree of commitment, autonomy and authority create on of a kind relationships which may fall under positive or negative experiences (Novak & Hoffman, 2019). Previous researchers identify the relationship and customer experience spectrum falls under the umbrella of assemblage theory. Which dictates that the experiences form up of separate and whole parts, the relationship based on customer and objects (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Yet consumers feel the need to be able to relate to objects, thus identifying and evaluating objects as humans generally appeals to the idea of humanizing objects.

Brands in turn do this through anthropomorphising which helps create relationships and brand experiences. Stemming from experiential marketing, the concept of brand experience evolved from being looked at a holistic view towards the holistic consideration of the customers. Brand experience demonstrates all the good/bad experiences of customers with regards to the brand (Khan, Rahman, & Fatma, 2016). Experiences in some contexts have been described to be subjective in nature, conforming to internal cognition and stimuli, thus dictating behaviour response towards brand-related stimuli, ranging from brand's identity to its communication

with environments. The stimuli set in place establishes consumers inner responses and help maintain and influence brand experiences.

Long before globalization and the immensely widespread of international brands, luxury was thought of to be prestigious commodity. The difficulty of obtaining such goods was the requirement of proper knowledge and resources. The aftermath of this event looked like mass marketing where everyone was able to consume the questionable luxury. Personalization even further documented the exclusivity being available to mass consumers whoever can afford it. Nowadays instead of just consuming the mass-produced goods, consumers no longer want to elude the experience and satisfaction derived from consumption (Lloyd & Luk, 2010b). The quality of the brand/product itself and the services offered comes in handy while persuading consumers to take part in the brands endeavours. This personalization and premium lifestyle which is very much in demand is all thanks to democratising brands, which is giving back the power to consumers. The power to choose, adopt, participate and then finally become influencers (Yi & Gong, 2013).

Marketplace enables consumers to constantly experience brands, these are often at proximity to them which is dictated by the branding strategy of different companies. With the advent of social media platforms, consumer interactions have been made easy (Simon & Tossan., 2018), however this interaction is further transformed into engagement. Simon & Tossan's (2018) study shows the construct using four dimensions namely, brand intimacy, brand individual recognition, brand influence and brand belongingness. The results showed that these media driven brand dimensions/variables mediate the impact of brand-consumer value on social media engagement. Furthermore, current literature supports the fact that brands have acquired a nag and capacity to provide support activities for its customers using multiple communication channels, to provide services such as customer service, product information and other types of entertainments. This engagement is then bolstered by value creation activities undertaken by the customers and then uplifted by the brands to live up to expectations of the customers (Schembri & Latimer., 2016).

As discussed earlier, social media has a major impact on how products and brands are being marketed to date, this again has enabled consumer to seek and explore various means of information outlets, they now are increasingly relying on electronic word of mouth to compare products, services and brands for comparison and consumption purposes (Djkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom., 2014). Initially communication was defined as a dialogue between two or more

individuals, but with technological advances it has transformed significantly. Communication according to consumer behaviour researches play a role in shaping consumer-brand relationships, because every part of this interaction works on quality and quantity to facilitate satisfaction (Warren et al., 2018) This communication is addressed by increasing the number of occurrences and opportunities that are available for consumers to be exposed to in order to turn it into engagement. Therefore, consumers can use visible space to communicate their ideas and feelings towards the brands out in the open (Schamari & Schaefers, 2015). This consumer engagement can be either positive or negative, in order to reduce negativity brands often try to reinforce positivity by influencing right behaviour to right target audiences (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014).

Adopting benchmarking strategies towards local cultures has become a benchmark throughout brand management (Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010). Literature offers evidence of brands playing an important role in building relationships and regulating. Brands which are global can not only achieve economies of scale in a short period of time (Agarwal & Rao, 1996), but also take part in research activities. Activities which are then directed towards improving customer-brand relationships to enhance brand experience through trust and commitment. However, literature also takes on board certain views that brands ought to consider norms and values of local customers to deter negative reactions (Cayla and Arnould 2008). Prior research also talks about how people choose certain brands solely based on their self-image, which in turn gives them a reason to commitment and relationship (Chaplin and John, 2005). Customers are likely to consider brands, which keep in mind the interests of customers and focus on providing new innovative solutions to customer needs. Therefore, customers are more likely to relate to the brand in a much positive and friendlier manner. If a brand can consider the needs of customer while making marketing efforts, customers are more likely to be committed and engaged.

Set of characteristics developed over time that are unique and gives room to differentiate on brand from the other, specifically from that of competitors. A brand is more commonly known as the image that the consumer/customer have in mind related to the product/service (Aaker et al., 2004). Literature has defined brand in terms of the symbolic and representative value it carries to be identifiable. The identifiable differences may be in terms of function, rational and/or emotional value for the market(s). Therefore, brand managers pay a great deal of attention towards maintaining the brand, and when it comes to delivering true value to customers, brands are made sure to represent what it stands for. Brands thereby conforms to

consumers perception and choices, so that brand perception, characteristics, brand image and brand equity are all implemented in accordance with consumers.

Maintaining a well-balanced approach towards customer, has become the epi-centre of attention for service and non-service brands alike, throughout this time marketing research has had a significant impact on customer-brand relationships (Khan et al., 2016). Similarly, the rise of social networking websites has made it possible for brands to stay connected with customers, and maintain a symbiotic relationship (Hinson, Boateng, Renner, & Kosiba, 2019). Among the most popular social media platforms, Facebook has enabled brands to establish presence through brand pages to stay connected with consumers and potential customers, this signifies the relationship which has emerged through now considered a mainstream channel of communication. Although multiple researchers have shown that for this relationship (through online social media platforms) to exist, consumers need to be attached with the brand in some manner, which then evolves onto identity attachment with the brand. The attachment theory itself elaborates an individual's sense of balance of distance from key people from his/her life, the balance is often dictated by the social structures of society in which the individual thrives (Hinson et al., 2019).

In efforts to maintain healthy relationships with customers, brands use customer data to enrich their services and better provide for customers. The value of this data is therefore recognised through the benefits customers receive which include both monetary and non-monetary (Malthouse et al., 2019). This effort in turn creates a symbiotic relationship between customers and the brand. Marketing communication with the aid of digital content marketing has enabled brands to publish content and reach out/engage with consumers and prospected customers. The focus of the concept has evolved from addressing relevant characteristics needed to engage with customers using digital content marketing as the creation and dissemination of relevant content to build relationships with customers in the most compelling and timely manner (Taiminen & Ranaweera, 2019).

Although brand is a mixture of several attributes relation to its functionality and experiences, customer do tend to value experiential aspect quite rigidly (Singh, Bajpai, & Kulshreshtha, 2020). The holistic view, formed by the customer ends up a long way from where the brand introduced its initial offering, which is later enforced by brands attributes and the experience which it offers to its customers. The fact that customers develop important long last relationships with the brands based on the theories of love, engagement and relationships,

customer are also able to establish emotional and passionate connections with the brand. Further literature on brand love and relationships point out to the triangular theory components which fulfils the interpersonal love and affection for the brand (R. J. Sternberg, 1986). (Singh et al., 2020) defined the aspects of triangular theory in their paper and established brand love as a significant feature that a brand has or develops with which customer/consumers builds desires to use the brand in context.

Brands remain the primary decision makers when it comes to selection of products to be circulated in the market, consumers exert emotional responses towards these very brands. Consumers consume brands in such ways to express their individual identities, and brands therefore facilitate this expression through both rational and non-rational consumption options and choices (Davies & Elliott, 2006).

4.2.8. Hypotheses Development:

In this section we propose the direct effect of each variable, mediating role of customer brand interactions and moderating effect of customer empowerment and control between brand democratization and customer brand engagement.

As highlighted earlier, luxury brands and luxury fashion brands in particular have become more desirable, therefore the attention that is being paid to customer participation differs from consumer to consumer (Sprott et al., 2009). The actual and the ideal self (Nyadzayo et al., 2020) are conceptualized as the two forms of self-concept, and based on brand democratization, how consumers relate to luxury fashion brands dictates consumer's bond with the entity. Since one of the core directives of this research is to understand the impact of brand democratizations on engagement, this impact can also be viewed through the perspective of customer ideal self. Brand democratization would ultimately dictate by consuming the luxury fashion brand, how well a consumer defines his/herself in light of attractiveness, and desirability in order to achieve actual/ideal self (Workman & Lee, 2011). Therefore, we hypothesize that.

> H1: Ideal self positively affects brand democratization

The subjective experience derived from luxury fashion consumption is highlighted in terms of different facets of consumer behaviour, such that self-concept and the congruity between brand and the customer is pre-determined even before the interaction (Shukla, 2012). Due to brand's exclusivity and outreach and through the democratization process, from a customer's point of view provides insights whether despite being a democratized brand in terms of accessibility

and availability might not be in congruence with the customer's self. Therefore, multitude of psychological benefit which were otherwise attainable and could had allowed customers to express their self-identities by consuming luxury fashion are lost (Moon et al,, 2018). Therefore, self-congruity is rooted into brand-user image, and the consumer belief which are reflected in the brand in terms of image, likeability, ability to relate with fellow users and whether the luxury fashion brand in question is consistent with its user (Sirgy et al., 1997).

H2: Self-congruity positively affects brand democratization

Brand democratization process has widened the access of luxury fashion to masses, previously the brand which was only reserved for selected few (Fiske, 2003). For one widely available and easier to access luxury fashion brands makes it easier to reach mass consumers, however the brand must be perceived as premium, popular and prestigious (Kapferer, 2014; Paul, 2018, 2019). Therefore, mass prestige can have a positive impact/effect on brand democratization.

H3: Mass-prestige positively affects brand democratization

Originating from philosophy and linked to democracy, this construct has witnessed significant attention from researchers and auctioneers alike (Fiske, 2003). The luxury industry 's proliferation has been partly due to the expansion of global luxury fashion industry, democratization itself is linked to consumer's choice of freedom, availability and accessibility (Shukla et al., 2022). Although there stays a potential for figuring out the differentiating between a democratic and non-democratic luxury. Still its scope in this research context is based on connection, communication, accessibility, and integration (shown in study 2). Furthermore, with brand democratization sought after using these four dimensions, consumer perception can impact engagement with the luxury fashion brand as stated in H4.

H4: Brand democratization positively impacts customer-brand engagement

Customer-brand experiences begin with interactions, and the interaction between customer and the brand are part of a journey which ultimately reflects the experience and benefits derived from interacting with luxury fashion brands (Price, 2019). The concept is rooted into interaction justice where the customer/consumer seeks fair treatments when interacting with the brand (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, (2017). Similarly, luxury brand takes into consideration the opinions of the customer, shows interest into the choice made and find and satisfy the needs of the customer. All these orderly simulated are hypothesized in H5 to have a positive impact on customer brand engagement. Moreover, the interaction between the customer and the brand,

further mediates the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement as stated in H6.

H5: Interaction positively affects customer-brand engagement

H6: Interaction mediates the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement

The hypothesized relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement stems from the very basics of greater control of customers over the brand, greater control in terms of choices, and decision making (Lincoln et al., 2002). This shift in power from the producer to the consumer is also assumed to empower consumers (Shankar et al., 2006) and moderate the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement.

H7: Control moderates the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement

H8: Customer empowerment moderates the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement

4.2.9. Theoretical Framework
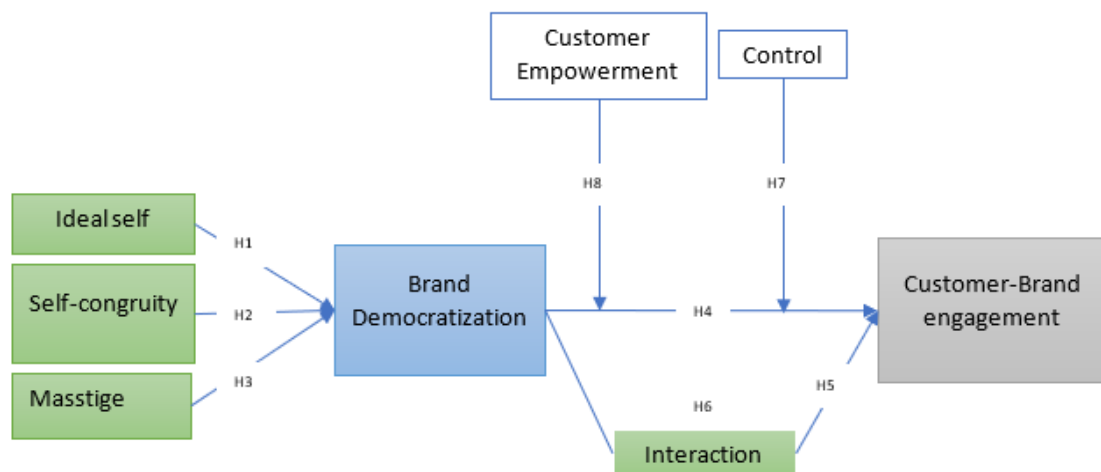
Figure 5: Theoretical framework

4.3. Methodology

This study aimed to identify the role that brand democratization plays in impacting customer brand engagement, by adopting a predominantly quantitative approach to data collection and analysis of results. Data was collected from 536 luxury fashion consumers in Pakistan, based on the brand democratization scale developed (study 2), and scales adapted to test the hypotheses statements. Literature review helped define the independent variables, including moderation and mediation effects.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses statements, since the theoretical framework highlights complex relationship between dependent and independent variables, therefore multiple regression was seen fit to explore the relationships between independent and dependent variables (brand democratization and customer brand engagement). The main goal of this statistical technique is to use the independent variables to predict dependent variable. Each of the independent variables is weighted by regression analysis to predict variation in the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2014). Since the technique itself is often referred to as a dependence technique therefore it is of key importance to identify and categorize the variables in the study. It also helps to identify which dependent variable is related to which independent variable and helps to form a relationship among them (Helm & Mark, 2012). The strength of variables and their relationship amongst themselves can also be determined through a regression analysis (Sekaran, 2000), which can further help in predicting and forecasting.

Correlation helps in identifying how much the variable will be related with each other, it aims to bring to light the relationships between dependent and independent variables. Pearson's correlation can aid in identifying the strength of such relationships. Furthermore correlation coefficient, also known as 'r' is the result of correlation, the defined range is between -1.00 to +1.00 (Hair et al., 2014). A positive 'r' means that the variables move in the same direction, as one increases so does the other. A negative 'r' means that there is an inverse relationship among the variables, as one increases the other decreases and vice versa. Table 17 below categorizes constructs into dependent, independent, mediating, and moderating variables

Table 15: Categorization of variables

Dependent variable	Customer brand engagement
Independent variable(s)	Brand democratization Ideal self Self-congruity Masstige
Moderating variable (s)	Control

	Customer empowerment
Mediating variable	Interaction

The above table 17 categorizes variables and constructs developed in this study, constructs brand democratization, ideal self, self-congruity, and masstige are independent variable in this study, control and customer empowerment are considered to have moderating effects on the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement whereas interaction is set to mediate the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement. Customer brand engagement scale in table 18 below was adapted from (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014), the construct CBE is considered as a dependent variable and that independent variable have an impact on CBE.

Table 16: Customer brand engagement scale

Customer brand engagement	Using BRAND X gets me to think about BRAND X.
	I think about BRAND X a lot when I am using it.
	Using BRAND X stimulates my interest to learn more about BRAND X.
	I feel very positive when I use BRAND X.
	Using BRAND X makes me happy.
	I feel good when I use BRAND X.
	I am proud to use BRAND X.
	Compared to other brands, I buy BRAND X most of the time.
	Whenever I buy luxury brands, I usually buy BRAND X.
	BRAND X is one of the brands I usually buy when I shop for luxury fashion brands.
(Source: (Hollebeek et al., 2014: p, 320))	

Brand democratization scale shown in table 19 below was developed and tested in study two, upon testing and further analysis the items revealed to house four components which make up the scale: connection, communication, accessibility, and integration. Brand democratization is considered as the main independent variable which presumably has a positive impact of customer brand engagement.

Table 17: Brand democratization scale

Dimensions	Items
Connection	Overall, BRAND X has now become a democratized exclusive brand
	BRAND X expresses itself by sharing its values
	BRAND X supports social causes that I care about
Communication	BRAND X encourages its customers to have a voice
	BRAND X allows me to book an appointment with the designer
	BRAND X gives me the opportunity to meet the designer
	BRAND X invites social media influencers to promote its products who I can easily relate to.

	I follow BRAND X over social media
Accessibility	I can easily find where to buy products of BRAND X
	I can buy BRAND X's products easily
	I can now buy BRAND X because some of its product items are affordable to a wider range of consumers
	BRAND X designs its products keeping in mind diverse customers
Integration	Buying BRAND X allows me to be a part of its community
	I have access to BRAND X's designers on social media
	I have a good idea about the price of BRAND X's products
	BRAND X allows me to design an exclusive product just for myself

Self-congruity in table 20 is set reflect on the consumers self-image when compared with the brand's overall appeal, consumers reflect on their brand of choice being consistent, reflecting, and like consumers own self which provides as a basis for its inclusion into the democratic luxury context. The scale was adapted from (Sirgy et al., 1997).

Table 18: Self-congruity with the brand scale

Construct	Items
Self-congruity	BRAND X is consistent with how I see myself.
	BRAND X reflects who I am.
	BRAND X is a mirror image of me.
	BRAND X is very much like me.
	People like me wear BRAND X.
(Source: (Sirgy et al., 1997))	

Customers engage with the brand due to the whole ideal self-set-up provided below in table 21, concerning the ideal situation for the consumers to buy the luxury fashion brand. The scale was adapted from (Sprott et al., 2009) to test the importance of luxury fashion brands in people's lives, and further examine any links between customer self and brand democratization.

Table 19: Ideal self-scale

Construct	Items adapted from
Ideal self	I have a special bond with the brand.
	I consider the brand to be a part of myself.
	I feel as if I have a close personal connection with brand X.
	Part of me is defined by important luxury brands in my life.
	I can identify with the important luxury brand that I prefer and how I view myself.
	There are links between the luxury brand that I prefer and how I view myself.
	My favourite luxury brands are an important indication of who I am.
	I can identify with brand X
((Source: Sprott et al., 2009))	

The theoretical framework and hypotheses are further tested by incorporating the mediating role of interaction scale presented in table 22 adapted from (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2017), empowerment scale presented in table 23, and control scale (table 24) which seeks to test the weather interaction mediates the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement.

Table 20: Interaction scale

Construct	Items
Interactional justice	The employee(s) of this brand treated me in a courteous manner.
	The employee of this brand showed a real interest in me.
	The employee of this brand tried to hear me out to identify my needs.
	The brand was concerned to take my opinion
(Source: Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, (2017))	

Table 21: Empowerment scale

Construct	Items
Empowerment	In my dealings with this brand, I feel I am in control.
	The ability to influence the goods and services of this brand is beneficial for me.
	I feel good because of my ability to influence the choice set offered to me by this brand.
	My influence over this brand has increased relative to the past.
(Source: Gary L. Hunter and Ina Garnefeld, (2008))	

Table 22: Control scale

Construct	Items
Control	Brands should make most decisions by consulting its customers.
	Brands should frequently ask the opinions of its customers.
	Brands should agree with the decisions of the customers
(Source: Gong, (2018))	

4.3. Data analysis and results

The data collected yielded 536 valid responses which further propelled for implementation of different analytic techniques to make assumptions. First the data was analysed through structural equation modelling, to see whether the measurement and structural models would be sufficient in explaining direct and indirect effects. However, the SEM model fit remained a major concern due to low model fit indices for both measurement and structural model, presented in section 4.3.1. therefore, the analysis was carried forward to include multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesis statements.

4.3.1. Structural equation modelling:
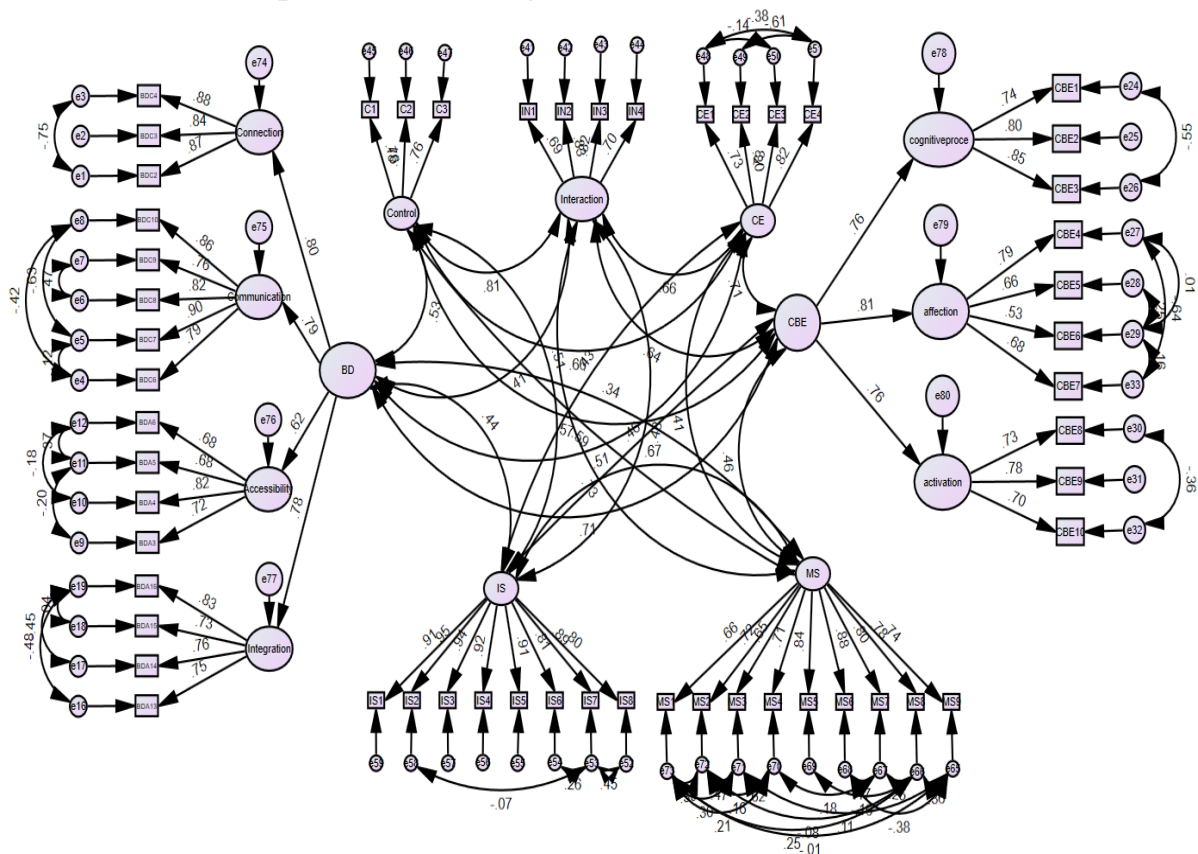
Figure 6: Measurement model for BD-CBE

The measurement model presented above in figure 6 shows a chi-square of 9296.078, with degrees of freedom 1310 at a p-value of less than .05, although the measurement model appears to be significant however fit indices shows that the model does not indicate model fitness. Since The fundamental concern is that how well the model fits the data, model fit compares the theory to true data (reality), the values of goodness of fit measures the results from a mathematical point of view (Hair et al., 2014). Chi-square is key is assessing goodness of fit, and it statistically tests the differences between matrices in structural equation modelling. Furthermore, degrees of freedom represent the mathematical estimation of parameters of model in question. Therefore, the degrees of freedom in a structural equation modelling are based on size of covariance matrix as well. The absolute fit indices presented in table 25 below represent how well the specified model fits the data, which does not necessarily mean that the specified model needs to be in line with the goodness of fit index (Hair et al., 2014), as each model is being evaluated independently of any other possible models.

Table 23: Fit indices for measurement model

Fit Indices	Recommended value	Results
CMIN/DF	< 5.0	7.096
GFI	>0.90	0.634
CFI	>0.90	0.713
NFI	>0.90	0.682
IFI	>0.90	0.714
TLI	>0.90	0.686
AGFI	>0.90	0.586

The measurement model was constructed and tested to adhere to the guidelines established in the literature, brand democratization and the impact it has on customer-brand engagement was set to a state which also reflected other constructs in the analysis. As assessing the measurement model separately for each individual construct is not advised (Hair et al., 2014), therefore the goodness of fit indices was used to assess the whole mode, which revealed a poor model fit. Even though reliability statistics presented in table 26 ensured that the average variance extracted, and MSV were all within acceptable range (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 24: Reliability statistics for measurement model

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	CBE	BD	Con	CE	Int	IS	MMS
CBE	0.821	0.604	0.510	0.823	0.777						
BD	0.833	0.558	0.488	0.848	0.698***	0.747					
Con	0.874	0.698	0.451	0.885	0.524***	0.473***	0.836				
CE	0.853	0.591	0.510	0.854	0.714***	0.519***	0.666***	0.769			
Int	0.906	0.708	0.494	0.915	0.562***	0.375***	0.671***	0.592***	0.842		
IS	0.972	0.813	0.441	0.976	0.454***	0.428***	0.436***	0.423***	0.477***	0.902	
MS	0.923	0.572	0.494	0.932	0.456***	0.336***	0.535***	0.418***	0.703***	0.664***	0.756

*CBE: Customer-brand engagement
*BD: Brand democratization
*Con: Control
*CE: Customer empowerment
*Int: Interaction
*IS: Ideal self
*MS: Masstige

The structural model presented In figure 7 shows a chi-square of 944.196, with degrees of freedom of 26, at a probability level of less than 0.05 (0.000), this shows the structural model itself to be significant (Hair et al., 2014).
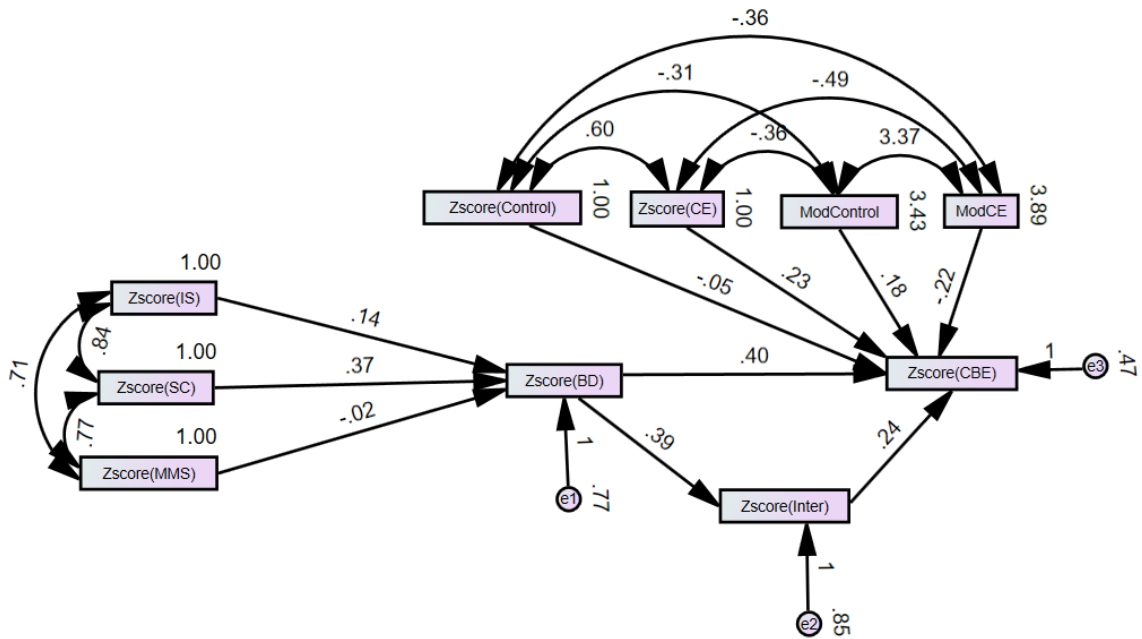
Figure 7: Structural model

With the measurement model signifying a poor fit, all was left was to assess whether the structural model would reveal any significant differences. The fit indices for structural model also reveal a poor fit, as all possible fit indicator results are less than recommended values.

Table 25: Fit indices for Structural model

Fit Indices	Recommended value	Results
CMIN/DF	< 5.0	36.315
GFI	>0.90	0.774
CFI	>0.90	0.770
NFI	>0.90	0.766
IFI	>0.90	0.771
TLI	>0.90	0.601
AGFI	>0.90	0.522

The regression weights for the structural model are shown in table 28, the table depicts the relationship between the variables used to study structural model for this research. The relationship between Ideal self and brand democratization appears to have an insignificant p-value (0.051) with estimate (.139) S.E. (.071) and CR (1.955). The relationship between self-congruity and brand democratization is significant at P<0.05 (.000), estimate of (.371), S.E. (0.079) and CR (4.713). SEM also suggested that mass-prestige has an insignificant relationship with brand democratization at a p>0.05 (.689). Brand democratization has a significant relationship with interaction p<0.05 (.000), interaction and customer-brand

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engagement have a significant positive relationship at p<0.05 (.000). similarly, brand democratization also has a significant relationship with customer-brand engagement. Control and CBE are insignificant at p>0.05 (.154), however control does seem to moderate the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement at p<0.05 (.000).

Table 26: Regression weights for Structural model

Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R	P-value
IS→BD	.139	.071	1.955	.051
SC→BD	.371	.079	4.713	***
MMS→BD	-.024	.061	-.400	.689
BD→Int	.391	.040	9.822	***
Int→CBE	.240	.032	7.462	***
BD→CBE	.400	.032	12.398	***
Control→CBE	-.053	.037	-1.427	.154
CE→CBE	.228	.038	6.023	***
ModC→CBE	.177	.042	4.207	***
ModCE→CBE	-.216	.040	-5.414	***

4.3.2. Multiple Regression Analysis and hypotheses testing

Table 29 highlight descriptive statistics for all the constructs used in the multiple regression analysis, BD, CBE, interaction, control, CE, IS, SC, and MMS all have valid 536 number of observations with no missing values. The means of the variables range from 4.192 to 4.944, standard deviations range from (0.73 to 1.2), with variances ranging from 0.54 to 1.449. The data negatively skewed, and Kurtosis is positive for all variables which shows that the data is normally distributed.

Table 27: Descriptive statistics for regression analysis

	BD	CBE	Interaction	Control	CE	IS	SC	MMS
N-Valid	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
N-Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.944	4.905	4.729	4.795	4.821	4.192	4.415	4.512
SD	0.8021	0.7368	0.9903	1.0297	0.9561	1.2037	1.1482	1.0244
Variance	0.643	0.543	0.981	1.060	0.914	1.449	1.318	1.049
Skewness	-1.141	-.960	-.144	-.186	-.384	-.196	-.207	-.192
Std. Error	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106
Kurtosis	4.328	5.695	1.122	0.930	1.428	0.407	0.342	0.672
Std. Error	0.211	0.211	0.211	0.211	0.211	0.211	0.211	0.211

Table 30 highlights reliability statistics (Cronbach's Alpha) for the variables and respective items used in the research. BD has 16 items with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.914 which indicates highly reliable scale, similarly CBE has 10 items and 0.850, control has three items with 0.817, CE has four items with 0.808, interaction has four items with 0.830, masstige has

nine items with 0.929, IS has eight items with 0.969 and self-congruity has five items with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.922.

Table 28: Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand democratization (BD)	16	0.914
CBE	10	0.850
Control	3	0.817
Customer empowerment (CE)	4	0.808
Interaction	4	0.830
Masstige (MMS)	9	0.929
Ideal self (IS)	8	0.969
Self-congruity (SC)	5	0.922

Histogram presented in figure 8 below appear to be bell shaped which fulfils the assumption of the regression of a normal distribution of errors (Hair et al., 2014).
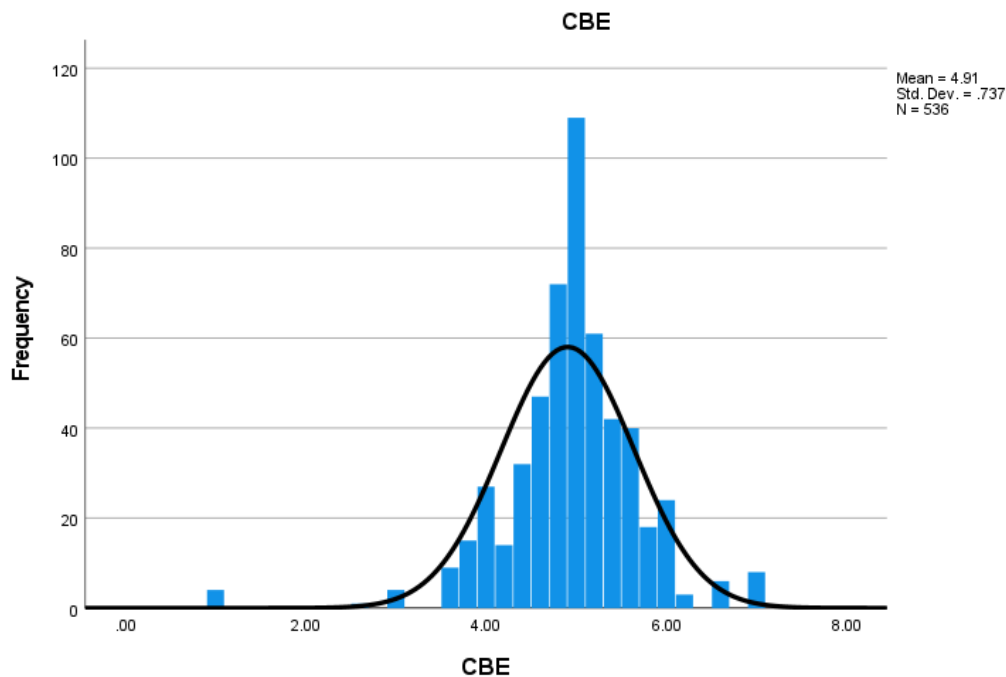
Figure 8: Normal distribution of errors

Similarly figure 9 below measures the homoscedasticity of the data for customer brand engagement and shows few residuals which further proves (fulfils) the regression assumption.

Normal Q-Q Plot of CBE
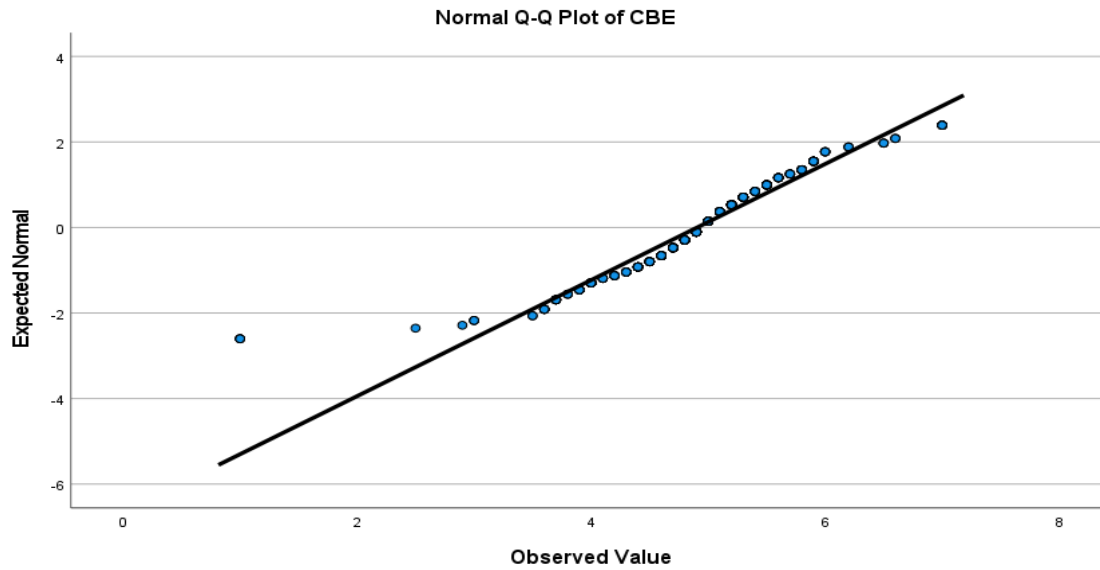
Figure 9: homoscedasticity of data

Table 31 below showcases the correlation analysis of variables, results clearly explain that a linear relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables, and the correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed) (Hair et al., 2014). Brand democratization has a high correlation with customer-brand engagement at 0.595, Interaction too has a positive correlation with brand democratization (.391) and CBE (.538).

Table 29: Correlation analysis of variables

		BD	CBE	Interaction	Control	CE	IS	SC	MMS
BD	Pearson Correlation	1	.595**	.391**	.464**	.495**	.433**	.469**	.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
CBE	Pearson Correlation	.595**	1	.538**	.463**	.579**	.418**	.407**	.420**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
Interaction	Pearson Correlation	.391**	.538**	1	.706**	.599**	.491**	.561**	.675**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
Control	Pearson Correlation	.464**	.463**	.706**	1	.599**	.468**	.474**	.566**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
CE	Pearson Correlation	.495**	.579**	.599**	.599**	1	.420**	.411**	.404**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
IS	Pearson Correlation	.433**	.418**	.491**	.468**	.420**	1	.839**	.707**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
SC	Pearson Correlation	.469**	.407**	.561**	.474**	.411**	.839**	1	.769**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
MMS	Pearson Correlation	.359**	.420**	.675**	.566**	.404**	.707**	.769**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	536	536	536	536	536	536	536	536
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									

H1: IS-BD: IS positively affects Brand democratization:

The descriptive statistics in table 32 below is presented for hypotheses (H1) which highlights the means, standard deviations and sample size for brand democratization and ideal self. Brand democratization has a mean of 4.9444, standard deviation of .80209 and sample size of 536 respondents. Ideal self on the other hand has a mean of 4.1924, standard deviation of 1.204 and a similar sample size of 536 respondents to that of brand democratization.

Table 30: Descriptive statistics for H1

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
BD	4.9444	.80209	536
IS	4.1924	1.20374	536

Table 33 depicts correlation between ideal self and brand democratization and explains the linear relationship between the two which is significant at .000 confidence level. Ideal self has a moderate correlation with brand democratization as it suggests that a one-unit change in ideal self-scale brings about .433 change in brand democratization of luxury fashion brands in Pakistan.

Table 31: Correlations for H1

		BD	IS
BD	Pearson Correlation	1	.433**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	536	536
IS	Pearson Correlation	.433**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	536	536
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 33 shows the model of ideal self-predicting brand democratization, to see the impact that ideal self has on BD, the values of R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate. Correlation of coefficient (R) is .433 which shows that the predictor ideal self has a

strong positive relationship with the dependent variable (brand democratization). R square shows a value of .187 which means that the independent variable in this model (IS) accounts for 18.7% change in brand democratization.

Table 32: Regression analysis model summary for H1

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.433	.187	.186	.72368
a. Predictors: (Constant), IS				
b. Dependent Variable: BD				

Analysis of variance in table 35 below depicts the fitness of the model with the two variables ideal-self and brand democratization. The relationship depicted in the model shows a significant value of .000 which is less than that of .05 level of confidence interval allowing for a fit model. The value of f-statistics shows a value of 123.203 which explains that the mode has enough fit to explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variable in this model.

Table 33: ANOVA for H1

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	64.524	1	64.524	123.203	.000
	Residual	279.666	534	.524		
	Total	344.189	535			
a. Dependent variable: BD						
b. Predictors: (Constant), IS						

The coefficients table (table 36) shows the beta values for brand democratization and ideal self. The beta coefficients also explain the nature of the impact considering the size and sign of coefficient (positive/negative). The beta value further highlights the direction of the effect for each variable, for both dependent (BD) and independent (IS). Beta value (B) shows the variation in the constant (BD) due to the independent variable (IS). Variables brand democratization and ideal self-have a significance value of .000 which is less than .05 confidence interval. T value for both variables resulted in a value of greater than 2. The regression coefficient and standardized coefficients reflect the change in the dependent variable due to a unit change in the independent variable.

The comparisons between the coefficients allows for a relative assessment of the two variables in the model. The relationship between IS and BD can be further elaborated as significant as R

square is .187, F is 123.023, beta is for independent variable is 0.433. This hypothesis sought out to test the relationship between ideal self and brand democratization. The results show a positive relationship between ideal self and brand democratization in the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan. Therefore, the relationship can be interpreted as IS has a positive impact on brand democratization, and that there is a positive relationship between ideal self and brand democratization.

Table 34: Coefficients for H1

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	3.735	.113		32.946	.000
IS	.289	.026	.433	11.100	.000
a. Dependent Variable: BD					

H2: Self-congruity positively affects Brand democratization.

The descriptive statistics presented in table 37 for hypotheses H2 highlight the means, standard deviations, and sample size for brand democratization (dependent variable) and self-congruity (independent variable). Brand democratization has a mean of 4.9444, standard deviation of .80209 and sample size of 536 respondents. Self-congruity on the other hand has a mean of 4.4146, standard deviation of 1.14817 and a similar sample size of 536 respondents to that of brand democratization.

Table 35: Descriptive statistics for H2

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
BD	4.9444	.80209	536
SC	4.4146	1.14817	536

Table 38 below depicts correlation between self-congruity and brand democratization and explains the linear relationship between the two which is significant at .000 confidence level. Self-congruity has a moderate correlation with brand democratization as it suggests that a one-unit change in ideal self-scale brings about .469 change in brand democratization of luxury fashion brands in Pakistan.

Table 36: Correlations for H2

		BD	SC
BD	Pearson Correlation	1	.469**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	536	536
SC	Pearson Correlation	.469**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

	N	536	536
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Model summary for self-congruity and brand democratization is presented in table 39. To see the impact that self-congruity has on BD, the values of R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate are presented. Correlation of coefficient (R) is .469 which shows that the predictor self-congruity has a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable (brand democratization). R square shows a value of .220 which means that the independent variable in this model (IS) accounts for 18.7% change in brand democratization. Adjusted R square has a value of .218 and the model also indicates standard error of the estimate at 0.70918.

Table 37: Model summary for H2

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.469	.220	.218	.70918
a. Predictors: (Constant), SC				
b. Dependent Variable: BD				

Analysis of variance in table 40 below depicts the fitness of the model with the two variables self-congruity and brand democratization. The relationship depicted in the model shows a significant value of .000 which is less than that of .05 level of confidence interval allowing for a fit model. The value of f-statistics shows a value of 150.365 which explains that the model has enough fit to explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variable.

Table 38: ANOVA for H2

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	75.623	1	75.623	150.365	.000[b]
	Residual	268.566	534	.503		
	Total	344.189	535			
a. Dependent Variable: BD						
b. Predictors: (Constant), SC						

The coefficients table 41 shows the beta values for brand democratization and self-congruity. The beta coefficients also explain the nature of the impact considering the size and sign of coefficient (positive/negative). The beta value highlights the direction of the effect for each variable, for both dependent (BD) and independent (SC). Beta value (B) shows the variation in the constant (BD) due to the independent variable (SC). Variables brand democratization and ideal self-have a significance value of .000 which is less than .05 confidence interval. T value for both variables resulted in a value of greater than 2. The regression coefficient and

standardized coefficients reflect the change in the dependent variable due to a unit change in the independent variable. The relationship between SC and BD can be further interpreted as significant because R square is .220, F is 150.365, beta is for independent variable is 0.469. This hypothesis tested for the relationship between self-congruity and brand democratization. The results show a positive relationship between self-congruity and brand democratization in the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan. Therefore, the relationship can be interpreted as SC having positive impact on brand democratization, and that there is a positive relationship between self-congruity and brand democratization.

Table 39: Coefficients for H2

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	3.499	.122		28.726	.000
SC	.327	.027	.469	12.262	.000
a. Dependent Variable: BD					

H3: Masstige (MMS) positively affects Brand democratization

The descriptive statistics for hypotheses H3 in table 42 highlight the means, standard deviations, and sample size for brand democratization and Masstige mean score (MMS). Brand democratization has a mean of 4.9444, standard deviation of .80209 and sample size of 536 respondents. Masstige mean scale on the other hand has a mean of 4.5120, standard deviation of 1.02442 and a similar sample size of 536 respondents to that of brand democratization.

Table 40: Descriptive statistics for H3

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
BD	4.9444	.80209	536
MMS	4.5120	1.02442	536

Table 43 above depicts correlation between Masstige mean score and brand democratization and explains the linear relationship between the two which is significant at .000 confidence level. Masstige has a moderate correlation with brand democratization as it suggests that a one-unit change in Masstige brings about .359 change in brand democratization of luxury fashion brands in Pakistan. This further signifies that mass-prestige does influence brand democratization.

Table 41: Correlations for H3

	BD	MMS

BD	Pearson Correlation	1	.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	536	536
MMS	Pearson Correlation	.359**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	536	536
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Model summary for masstige and brand democratization is presented in table 44. To observe the impact that masstige has on brand democratization, the values of R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate are presented. Correlation of coefficient (R) is .359 which shows that the predictor masstige (mass-prestige/MMS) has a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable (brand democratization). R square shows a value of .129 which means that the independent variable in this model (MMS) accounts for 12.9% change in brand democratization. Adjusted R square has a value of .127 and the model also indicates standard error of the estimate at 0.74923

Table 42: Model summary for H3

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.359	.129	.127	.74923
a. Predictors: (Constant), MMS				
b. Dependent Variable: BD				

Analysis of variance table 45 above depicts the fitness of the model with the two variables masstige and brand democratization. The relationship depicted in the model shows a significant value of .000 which is less than that of .05 level of confidence interval allowing for a fit model. The value of f-statistics shows a value of 79.154 which explains that the model has enough fit to explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variable

Table 43: ANOVA for H3

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	44.432	1	44.432	79.154	.000[b]
	Residual	299.757	534	.561		
	Total	344.189	535			
a. Dependent Variable: BD						
b. Predictors: (Constant), MMS						

The coefficients table 46 shows the beta values for brand democratization and masstige. The beta coefficients also explain the nature of the impact considering the size and sign of coefficient (positive/negative). The beta value highlights the direction of the effect for each variable, for both dependent (BD) and independent (MMS). Beta value (B) shows the variation in the constant (BD) due to the independent variable (MMS). Variables brand democratization

and masstige have a significance value of .000 which is less than .05 confidence interval. T value for both variables resulted in a value of greater than 2. The regression coefficient and standardized coefficients reflect the change in the dependent variable due to a unit change in the independent variable. The relationship between MMS and BD can be further interpreted as significant because R square is 0.129, F is 79.154, beta is for independent variable is 0.359. This hypothesis tested for the relationship between masstige and brand democratization. The results show a positive relationship between self-congruity and brand democratization in the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan. Therefore, the relationship can be interpreted as SC having positive impact on brand democratization, and that there is a positive relationship between masstige and brand democratization.

Table 44: Coefficients for H3

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	3.675	.146		25.121	.000
MMS	.281	.032	.359	8.897	.000
a. Dependent Variable: BD					

H4: Brand democratization positively affects customer brand engagement

The descriptive statistics for hypotheses H4 (table 47) highlights the means, standard deviations, and sample size for brand democratization and customer-brand engagement (CBE). Brand democratization has a mean of 4.9444, standard deviation of .80209 and sample size of 536 respondents. Customer brand engagement on the other hand has a mean of 4.9050, standard deviation of 0.73680 and a similar sample size of 536 respondents to that of brand democratization.

Table 45: Descriptive statistics for H4

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CBE	4.9050	.73680	536
BD	4.9444	.80209	536

Table 48 below depicts correlation between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement and explains the linear relationship between the two which is significant at .000 confidence level. Brand democratization has a moderate correlation with brand democratization as it suggests that a one-unit change in brand democratization brings about .595 change in customer brand engagement of luxury fashion brands in Pakistan. This further signifies that BD does influence CBE

Table 46: Correlations for H4

		CBE	BD
Pearson Correlation	CBE	1.000	.595
	BD	.595	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	CBE	.	.000
	BD	.000	.
N	CBE	536	536
	BD	536	536

Model summary for brand democratization and customer brand engagement is presented in table 49. To observe the impact that of brand democratization on customer brand engagement, the values of R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate are presented. Correlation of coefficient (R) is .595 which shows that the predictor brand democratization has a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable (CBE). R square shows a value of 0.355 which means that the independent variable in this model (BD) accounts for 35.5% change in customer brand engagement. Adjusted R square has a value of 0.353 and the model also indicates standard error of the estimate at 0.59250

Table 47: Model summary for H4

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.595	.355	.353	.59250
a. Predictor: (Constant), BD				
b. Dependent variables: CBE				

Analysis of variance table 50 below depicts the fitness of the model with the two variables brand democratization and customer brand engagement. The relationship depicted in the model shows a significant value of .000 which is less than that of .05 level of confidence interval allowing for a fit model. The value of f-statistics shows a value of 293.332 which explains that the model has enough fit to explain the relationship between the independent (BD) and dependent variable (CBE)

Table 48: ANOVA for H4

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	102.975	1	102.975	293.332	.000[b]
	Residual	187.462	534	.351		
	Total	290.436	535			
a. Dependent Variable: CBE						
b. Predictors: (Constant), BD						

The coefficients table 51 shows the beta values for brand democratization and customer brand engagement. The beta coefficients also explain the nature of the impact considering the size and sign of coefficient (positive/negative). The beta value highlights the direction of the effect for each variable, for both dependent (BD) and independent (CBE). Beta value (B) shows the variation in the constant (CBE) due to the independent variable (BD). Variables brand democratization and customer brand engagement have a significance value of .000 which is less than .05 confidence interval. T value for both variables resulted in a value of greater than 2, for constant the value is 13.757 and for independent variable the value is 17.127.

The regression coefficient and standardized coefficients reflect the change in the dependent variable due to a unit change in the independent variable. The relationship between BD and CBE can be further interpreted as significant because R square is 0.595, F is 293.332, beta for independent variable is 0.595. Thus, hypothesis tested for the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement. The results show a positive relationship between BD and CBE in the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan. Therefore, the relationship can be interpreted as BD having positive impact on customer brand engagement (CBE), and that there is a positive relationship between BD and CBE.

Table 49: Coefficients for H4

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	2.201	.160		13.757	.000
BD	.547	.032	.595	17.127	.000
a. Dependent Variable: CBE					

H5: Interactional Justice positively affects Customer-brand engagement

The descriptive statistics for hypotheses H5 in (table 52) highlight the means, standard deviations, and sample size for interaction and customer-brand engagement (CBE). Interaction has a mean of 4.7290, standard deviation of .99033 and sample size of 536 respondents. Customer brand engagement on the other hand has a mean of 4.9050, standard deviation of 0.73680 and a similar sample size of 536 respondents to that of brand democratization.

Table 50: Descriptive statistics for H5

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CBE	4.9050	.73680	536
Interaction	4.7290	.99033	536

Table 53 below depicts correlation between interaction and customer-brand engagement and explains the linear relationship between the two which is significant at .000 confidence level. interaction has a correlation with CBE as it suggests that a one-unit change in brand democratization brings about .538 change in customer brand engagement of luxury fashion brands in Pakistan. This further signifies that interaction does impact customer brand engagement.

Table 51: Correlations for H5

		CBE	Interaction
Pearson Correlation	CBE	1.000	.538
	Interaction	.538	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	CBE	.	.000
	Interaction	.000	.
N	CBE	536	536
	Interaction	536	536

Model summary for interaction and customer brand engagement is presented in table 54. To observe the impact that of interaction on customer brand engagement, the values of R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate are presented. Correlation of coefficient (R) is .538 which shows that the predictor interaction has a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable (CBE). R square shows a value of 0.289 which means that the independent variable in this model (interaction) accounts for 28.9% change in customer brand engagement. Adjusted R square has a value of 0.288 and the model also indicates standard error of the estimate at 0.62171

Table 52: Model summary for H5

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.538	.289	.288	.62171
a. Predictor: (Constant), Interaction				
b. Dependent variables: CBE				

Analysis of variance table 55 below depicts the fitness of the model with the two variables interaction and customer brand engagement. The relationship depicted in the model shows a significant value of .000 which is less than that of .05 level of confidence interval allowing for a fit model. The value of f-statistics shows a value of 217.408 which explains that the model has enough fit to explain the relationship between the independent (interaction) and dependent variable (CBE)

Table 53: ANOVA for H5

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	84.033	1	84.033	217.408	.000[b]
	Residual	206.403	534	.387		
	Total	290.436	535			
a. Dependent Variable: CBE						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction						

The coefficients table 56 below shows the beta values for interaction and customer brand engagement. The beta coefficients also explain the nature of the impact considering the size and sign of coefficient (positive/negative). The beta value highlights the direction of the effect for each variable, for both dependent (CBE) and independent (interaction). Beta value (B) shows the variation in the constant (CBE) due to the independent variable (interaction). Variable's interaction and customer brand engagement have a significance value of .000 which is less than .05 confidence interval. T value for both variables resulted in a value of greater than 2, for constant the value is 22.973 and for independent variable the value is 14.745. The regression coefficient and standardized coefficients reflect the change in the dependent variable due to a unit change in the independent variable.

The relationship between interaction and CBE can be further interpreted as significant because R is 0.538 and R square is 0.289, F is 217.408, beta for independent variable is 0.538. Thus, hypothesis tested for the relationship between interaction and customer brand engagement. The results show a positive relationship between interaction and CBE in the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan. Therefore, the relationship can be interpreted as interaction has a positive impact on customer brand engagement (CBE), and that there is a positive relationship between interaction and CBE

Table 54: Coefficients for H5

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant (CBE)	3.013	.131		22.973	.000
Interaction	.400	.027	.538	14.745	.000
a. Dependent Variable: CBE					

H6: Mediation: customer brand interaction mediates the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement.

The table 57 below highlights the regression analysis summary for the mediating effects on brand democratization, interaction, and customer brand engagement. The mediation analysis was carried out in four steps. Step one depicts the impact of brand democratization on customer brand engagement, which reveals correlation coefficient of .595, change in R square of .355, with an f value of 293.332, t value of 13.757 and beta coefficient of .595 with a p value of 0.000 (p<0.05), thus resulting in a significant relationship between BD and CBE. Step two sought to explore the relationship between brand democratization and interaction. This revealed a correlation coefficient of .391, change in R square of .153, f value of 96.299, t value of 9.813, with a beta coefficient of .391 with a highly significant p value (P<0.05). Similarly step three shows the relationship between interaction and customer brand engagement while revealing correlation coefficient of .538, change R square .289, f value of 217.408, t value of 14.745, beta coefficient of .538 with a highly significant p value (p<0.05). Last step tests the mediation effect of interaction on brand democratization and customer brand engagement. Which reveals a highly Signiant value of p<0.05, thus signifying the mediating role of interaction between Brand democratization and customer brand engagement, and that interaction mediates the relationship between BD and CBE.

Table 55: Mediation analysis for H6

Steps	Variables	R	Change R square	F	T	B	p
1	BD-CBE	.595	.355	293.332	13.757	.595	.000
2	BD-Int	.391	.153	96.299	9.813	.391	.000
3	Int-CBE	.538	.289	217.408	14.745	.538	.000
4	BD-Int-CBE	.682	4.64	231.132	9.972	.455	.000

H7: Control moderates the relationship between BD and CBE

Model summary for moderation effect of control on the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement is presented in table 58. To observe the impact that of control has on the relationship between BD and CBE, the values of R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate are presented. Correlation of coefficient (R) is .635 which shows that the moderation has a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable (CBE). R square shows a value of 0.403 which means that the independent variable in this model (control) accounts for 40.3% change in customer brand engagement.

Adjusted R square has a value of .399 and the model also indicates standard error of the estimate at 0.57099

Table 56: Model summary for H7

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.635a	.403	.399	.57099
a. Predictors: moderation, BD, control				
b. Dependent variable: CBE				

Analysis of variance table 59 below depicts the fitness of the model with the three variables brand democratization, control, and moderating variable (Cmod). The relationship depicted in the model shows a significant value of .000 which is less than that of .05 level of confidence interval allowing for a fit model. The value of f-statistics shows a value of 119.611, sum of squares 116.990, degrees of freedom of 3 and mean square of 38.997, which explains that the model has enough fit to explain the relationship between the independent variable (control) and dependent variable (CBE) while considering the moderating impact of control on CBE

Table 57: ANOVA for H7

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	116.990	3	38.997	119.611	.000b
	Residual	173.447	532	.326		
	Total	290.436	535			
a. Dependent Variable: CBE						
b. Predictors: Cmod, BD, Control						

The coefficients table 60 shows the beta values for moderating impact of control on brand democratization and customer brand engagement. The beta coefficients also explain the nature of the impact considering the size and sign of coefficient (positive/negative). The beta value highlights the direction of the effect for each variable, for both dependent (CBE) and independent (control) and moderating impact of (Cmod) on BD and CBE. Beta value (B) shows the variation in the constant (CBE) due to the independent variable(s) (control). Variable's control and customer brand engagement and brand democratization have a significant p value of .000 which is less than .05 confidence interval. T value for CBE is 3.276 is positive, BD 7.309, control 3.650 and for moderating effect the value is negative (-1.849), the standard error of estimate is provided, the standardized coefficient beta value is positive for CBE, BD, and control, however for the moderating effect the value is negative (-.321).

The regression coefficient and standardized coefficients reflect the change in the dependent variable due to a unit change in the independent variable. The relationship between control, BD, and moderating impact and CBE can be further interpreted through the significance levels. Control, BD and CBE on individual level has a p value of less than 0.05, However for the moderating impact of control on the relationship between BD and CBE the p value is insignificant (p>0.05) Thus, hypothesis tested for the moderating impact of control on the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement signifies that control does not moderate the relationship between control and CBE.

Table 58: Coefficients for H7

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant (CBE)	1.248	.381		3.276	.001
BD	.577	.079	.628	7.309	.000
Control	.330	.090	.461	3.650	.000
Cmod	-.032	.017	-.321	-1.849	.065
a. Dependent Variable: CBE					

H8: Customer empowerment moderates the relationship between BD and CBE

Model summary for moderation effect of customer empowerment on the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement is presented in table 61. To observe the impact that customer empowerment has on the relationship between BD and CBE, the values of R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate are presented. Correlation of coefficient (R) is .691 which shows that the customer empowerment has a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable (CBE). R square shows a value of 0.477 which means that the independent variable in this model (control) accounts for 47.7% change in customer brand engagement. Adjusted R square has a value of .474 and the model also indicates standard error of the estimate at .53421

Table 59: Model summary for H8

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.691a	.477	.474	.53421
a. Predictors: (constant), CEmod, BD, CE				
b. Dependent variable: CBE				

Analysis of variance table 62 below depicts the fitness of the model with the three variables brand democratization, customer empowerment, and moderating variable (CEmod). The relationship depicted in the model shows a significant value of .000 which is less than that of .05 level of confidence interval allowing for a fit model. The value of f-statistics shows a value of 161.909, sum of squares 138.616, degrees of freedom of 3 and mean square of 46.205, which explains that the model has enough fit to explain the relationship between the independent variable (control) and dependent variable (CBE) while considering the moderating impact of customer empowerment on CBE

Table 60: ANOVA for H8

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	138.616	3	46.205	161.909	.000[b]
	Residual	151.821	532	.285		
	Total	290.436	535			
a. Dependent Variable: CBE						
b. Predictors: (Constant), CEmod, BD, CE						

The coefficients table 63 shows the beta values for moderating impact of customer empowerment on brand democratization and customer brand engagement. The beta coefficients also explain the nature of the impact considering the size and sign of coefficient(positive/negative). The beta value highlights the direction of the effect for each variable, for both dependent (CBE) and independent (customer empowerment) and moderating impact of (CEmod) on BD and CBE. Beta value (B) shows the variation in the constant (CBE) due to the independent variable(s) (CE). The constant has an unstandardized beta value of .345, standard error of estimate .360, a positive t value of .959 and the impact is insignificant at p value of .338 Variable's customer empowerment and brand democratization have a significant p value of .000 which is less than .05 confidence interval. T value for BD is 8.457, customer empowerment (CE) 7.306 and for moderating effect the value is negative (-3.999), the standard error of estimate is provided, the standardized coefficient beta value is positive for CBE, BD, and customer empowerment, however for the moderating effect the value is negative (-.624).

The regression coefficient and standardized coefficients reflect the change in the dependent variable due to a unit change in the independent variable. The relationship between customer empowerment, BD, and moderating impact and CBE can be further interpreted through the significance levels. CE, BD and moderating impact of CE on BD and CBE on individual levels

have a p value of less than 0.05, However for the moderating impact of control on the relationship between BD and CBE the p value is insignificant (p>0.05) Thus, hypothesis tested for the moderating impact of control on the relationship between brand democratization and customer brand engagement signifies that control negatively moderates the relationship between CE and CBE, thus allowing for the hypothesis to be accepted that customer empowerment does moderate the relationship between BD and CBE.

Table 61: Coefficients for H8

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	.345	.360		.959	.338
BD	.656	.078	.714	8.457	.000
CE	.598	.082	.776	7.306	.000
CEmod	-.065	.016	-.624	-3.999	.000
a. Dependent Variable: CBE					

4.4. Discussion and conclusion for study 3

This study delved deeper into understanding relationships between the constructs, specifically brand democratization and customer-brand engagement. Highlighted as several findings, the primary objective of this study was to test hypothesis statements which were developed considering the extant literature. Furthermore, the theoretical framework developed for this study has not only addressed research objectives but also provided insights to direct future research. The relevance of this study is unquestionable, particularly for Pakistani fashion brands, and luxury fashion brands operating in international markets, as the findings of this research are yet to be matched by coherence of body of knowledge. The theoretical framework was developed from specific research background and luxury fashion context. Existing research on luxury fashion brands in Pakistan and South Asia has often concluded that fashion consumption and engagement are linked to certain key drivers such as pleasure, challenges and learnings (Junaid et al., 2019). Similarly, this study also confirmed the presence of possible links between key elements that impact customer-brand engagement in the luxury fashion industry of Pakistan. The key feature being the presence of democratized fashion and its polarization aiding interactions between the brand and its stakeholders.

Although the literature points out that the possibility of consumer's eliciting justice perceptions is hight due to individual consumers being treated differently (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan,

2017). To this date few studies have attempted to develop complex relationships between the mediating impact of interaction between customer and brand's employees on BD and CBE in Pakistani Luxury fashion context. Kashif et al., (2018) elaborated on luxury fashion brands and the willingness of consumer to buy counterfeit substitutes, the authors revealed that the willingness to buy counterfeit was determined by the user readiness and availability. This research also asserts that democratized fashion brands need to possess elements of mass availability. Furthermore, this study reaffirms the existence of the impact of prestige in influencing democratization, such that Sulehri, Malik, Qureshi, & Anjum, (2011) note consumers do value prestige of luxury brands while making decision to purchase/engage with the brand. This particular status consumption behaviour can be explained by the consumer's perception of luxury, value, needs and status symbol (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2019).

Another perspective that was highlighted in this study was the moderating impact(s) of control and customer empowerment, since this study's premise in assessing control and empowerment was based on how well luxury fashion consumer in Pakistan can identify, question and experience empowerment and control (Gary L. Hunter and Ina Garnefeld, 2008). By assessing the two concepts in moderation, we conclude that where consumers of luxury fashion brands in Pakistan do perceive empowerment to aid in engagement, control does not. Literature also confirms this notion of customer empowerment in a way that empowered consumer are more persistent in their consumption patterns and they even tend to have more confidence in their decision making (Labrecque, vor dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak, & Hofacker, 2013).

4.5. Implication and future research directions for Study 3

Theoretically, this empirical work makes significant contributions to the literature/body of knowledge, by incorporating customer-brand engagement thus explicating how a democratized luxury fashion and its dimension (communication, accessibility, connection, and integration) impacts customer-brand engagement. Second by incorporating interactional justice as mediation between brand democratization and customer brand engagement, this study shows that luxury fashion consumers in Pakistan do value how well they are treated by the brand (Jung & Seock, 2017). Thirdly, this study presents attempts to uncover whether luxury fashion consumers in Pakistan feel empowered and in control while interacting/engaging with luxury fashion brands.

Luxury fashion industry has too gone through radical changes, consumer is much more informed and actively seek better fashion products. Therefore, this research is important for brands and its managers, as it might help managers to better understand the luxury fashion market they operate in and the consumer's they serve and to help enhance customer experiences and devise better engagement strategies. Brand's aiming to enhance customer experience and retain customers may intensify their efforts by introducing challenges which help customer learn more about the brands they engage with and the products that they consume. This integration strategy would enhance the overall customer experience and offer a point of differentiation from its competitors.

Like all studies, this study does have its own limitations, generalizability might be impacted due to the context and unit of analysis. Future research might hold better explanation into luxury consumption if another model is identified which focuses developing models to be tested in other product categories and contexts. Second, this study measures customer engagement through a questionnaire aimed at applying quantitative data analysis, therefore, future research should incorporate in-depth interviews to overcome this limitation. Future research can though the application of experimental designs authenticates the model developed in this study to understand before and aftereffects of brands relinquishing control, which may prove to moderate the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement.

Chapter 5: Discussions and conclusion

The theoretical framework accessed in this research; the three studies were aimed at uncovering the complex set of relationship between the variables proposed. The last chapter ventured into explaining the relationship between brand democratization, customer brand engagement, mediating and moderating variables. In this section, the findings from all three studies will be discussed, linkages, similarities and differences will be identified with extant literature. The main research problem, we originally looked to answer was within the domain of democratization and customer brand engagement within luxury fashion context. This study's main research problem was to define brand democratization, develop a scale which captures the construct, and expand on the linkages between brand democratization and customer brand engagement. This research bases its argument as 'Brand democratization has a direct positive impact on customer-brand engagement, the more democratized a brand is within it four main dimensions (communication, connection, accessibility and integration) the more engaged customers will be with the brand'. This research therefore highlights (table 64) main themes/sub-themes of the study with research questions and objectives.

Table 62: Themes and corresponding research questions and objectives

Main theme/sub themes	Research questions addressed	Research objectives addressed
Brand democratization a) *Connection* b) *Communication* c) *Accessibility* d) *integration*	What are the components of brand democratization?	To identify the factors that can foster or hinder brand democratization
Customer-brand engagement	What are the consequences of customer-brand engagement	To examine and identify customer engagement in luxury fashion context of Pakistan
Power distance a) *control* b) *customer empowerment*	What is the moderating impact of control and customer empowerment	To examine if power distance exists, and if control and empowerment moderate the relationship between BD and CBE
Customer-brand interactions	What is the mediating impact of interaction?	To identify whether interaction mediates the relationship between Brand democratization and Customer-brand engagement

(Source: Authors own elaboration based on findings)

The focus of this study thus revolves around democratic luxury and its ability to engage/disengage customer in the luxury fashion context. It is therefore anchored around brand democratization based on the sub themes of connection, communication, accessibility, and integration. Luxury fashion customer identified with the four dimension of brand democratization and asserted the propensity to engage with the brand. Initially this research

defined brand democratization from the perspective of a brand being both accessible and communicative to its customer (target market), however upon decrypting the scale, four main components emerged which supported democratization as a process which could help brands build better marketing efforts and support brand engagement.

Luxury fashion brands in Pakistan in particular has also seen its fair share of changing luxury dynamics (Gilal et al., 2019). The very notion of luxury fashion has evolved to being meant for lucky few (A. Kumar & Paul, 2018) to the point when the brand is accessible to all hence being democratized. Marketing frameworks also assert on the role that accessibility plays in creating brand awareness since brands become more accessible, acceptable, and affordable (Sinha & Sheth, 2018). For some instances accessibility itself is considered to moderate the relationship between brands and emerging markets, hence increasing the scope with which the component(s) can function (Sinha & Sheth, 2018).

Another sub-category of brand democratization which emerged sheds light on communication efforts of luxury fashion brands which goes back to the core values originating from local context, culture and communication (Jain & Schultz, 2019). The connection formed between the brand and the customer plays a pivotal role in outlining future relationships between the two. Relevance to this component can be derived from online engagement platforms upon which luxury fashion brand builds its strategies as consumers stay connected through communication channels. Hence as reiterated by Jain & Schultz, (2019) luxury brand's communication strategies are critical for capitalizing on consumer touch points. Problems may arise which directly relates to communication between brand and the consumer/customer. (Preiholt, 2012) showcased the power of communication when brands use its brand attributes to communicate garment appeal to its target market by creating distinctions between the brand and its competitor's offering. Similarly connection plays a vital role in strengthening brand democratization, connection alone is the bond between the customer and the brand through which customer interacts, connects and engages with the fashion brand (Junaid et al., 2019).

Ideal self, self-congruity and mass-prestige measurement scales helped redefine the impact they can have on democratization, mass-prestige is thought to be associated with products that are accepted by masses (Paul, 2018) as brands that are prestigious (Paul, 2015). Consequently, this research discussed mass-consumed luxury fashion brands such as HSY, Junaid Jamshed and RiciMelion among others. Major difference among the perception of consumers regards how well they perceived the brand to be ideal for them, and how congruent the customer

thought the brands were to be for them (customers). Later the hypotheses statements also were accepted based on multiple regression, that the three constructs (IS, SC, and MMS) were positively impacting brand democratization thus reaffirming that they can have a significant impact for brands and consumers (Paul, 2019).

Table 63: Summary of hypotheses statements

Hypotheses	Description	Result (Accepted/Rejected)
H1	Ideal self positively impacts brand democratization	Accepted
H2	Self-congruity positively impacts brand democratization	Accepted
H3	Mass-prestige positively impacts brand democratization	Accepted
H4	Brand democratization positively impacts customer-brand engagement	Accepted
H5	Interaction positively impacts customer-brand engagement	Accepted
H6	Interaction mediates the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement	Accepted
H7	Control moderates the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement	Rejected
H8	Customer empowerment moderates the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement	Accepted

Chapter 6: Limitations and future research

This research suggests some future avenues of research built on the limitations, any further analysis and exploration of the phenomenon of brand democratization is an amalgamation of several decision taken by the investigator (researcher). The basic belief of an objectivistic and quantitative approach and nature of this study shaped by opinions of multiple scholars and research works, the interpretations offered by this study constitute a perspective and it is only fair to acknowledge philosophical and methodological limitations that may provide cue for future research directions. First and foremost, this research is built upon a limited and sampled amount of literature, philosophy and method all centred at the luxury fashion industry in Pakistan. Although during the stages of defining brand democratization and instrument development all relevant literature was considered, however the enormous literature about engagement and disengagement the literature this study incorporated is just a fraction of the entire. A further study which seeks to explore the constructs using other literature, and methodology may yield certain results which could help extend and add to existing literature. The fact that a predominantly quantitative method was adopted to investigate the constructs, including instrument development and hypotheses testing, use of a mixed methodology may help add novelty to the literature.

Secondly, the focus on brand democratization solely through the lens of communication and accessibility from the customer's perspective, customer-brand engagement and perceptions tells part of the story. Further research should include multitude of factors which helps explain democratic brands through the perspective of brands to build on a more holistic narrative, and other dimensions of brand democratization such as technology integration. This research was indicative of the democratization of Pakistani luxury fashion brands, further research is needed on other luxury fashion brands to help understand the generalizability of the instrument. This research has brought to light the prowess of fashion consumers to call for control and empowerment that further enriches customer-brand engagement/disengagement. Our study revealed that customer empowerment moderates the relationship between brand democratization and customer-brand engagement.

Thirdly, although South Asia, Pakistan and luxury fashion brands are relevant places to explore brand democratization and customer-brand engagement, future research needs to focus on a qualitative approach to analyse deeper consumers' perceptions about the luxury fashion set up

in the region. This would further improve generalizability of research results thereby creating much more vibrant literature in the process. Fourthly this research focused on brand democratization in understanding customer-brand engagement, thereby limiting to the extent to which existing literature can be added to. Future research ought to consider brand democratization as a source of value co-creation and value addition to the brand.

Moreover, this study relied heavily on researching local luxury fashion brands, which although has filled a gap in the literature, but the scale developed needs to be tested using western luxury fashion brands. This would provide a unique perspective by exploring what the western luxury brand democratization adds to the scale, and a possibility to observe how the instruments reacts when presented to consumer of luxury fashion brands let's say in Europe. Based on all the analysis and results, the research instrument developed in this study, the original research argument that brand democratization impacts customer-brand engagement with mediating effect of interaction and moderating effect of customer empowerment holds true and was duly observed.

Regarding implications of the theory of customer engagement considering the effects of brand democratization, this thesis has contributed significantly to the development of and better understanding on how to not only research the complex relationship underlying customer engagement/disengagement and brand democratization, but also on how to develop an instrument that best explains the constructs. First and foremost, systematic literature review helped in understanding the constructs, later this process was carried on developing the instrument, which was then paired with other relevant construct to better understand the relationship between BD, CBE, interaction, and moderation effects of control and customer empowerment. Future research can benefit from this approach to challenge and improve on the account for a more precise decision making.

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Brand democratization and customer-brand engagement: understanding customer-brand power gap.

This questionnaire is part of a research study being conducted on luxury fashion brands; the intention is to collect data on luxury fashion consumption. The questionnaire consists of introductory questions about you and questions related to a specific brand of your choice. The questionnaire is anonymous, and it will not be possible to trace down individual respondents.

Please tick the box provided, to show your consent to be part of this research. ☐

Please select your gender
Gender   Male ☐   Female ☐

Please indicate your age in years
☐ 18-20   ☐ 31-40   ☐ 51-60   ☐ More than 70
☐ 21-30   ☐ 41-50   ☐ 61-70

Please select your level of education
☐ High school and below   ☐ College degree   ☐ Doctorate
☐ 10+2/Intermediate   ☐ Post graduate degree

In terms of your current occupation, how would you characterize yourself?
☐ Student   ☐ Employed   ☐ Self-employed   ☐ Technical expert
☐ Sr. professional   ☐ Other_____

Please indicate your approximate monthly income in (Pakistani Rupees)
☐ Below 50,000   ☐ 51,000-100,000   ☐ 101,000-200,000
☐ 201,000-500,000   ☐ Above 500,000

From the list below, please choose **ONE** luxury fashion brand that you like and that you have bought over the last 6 months. Preference for one of your preferred brands

Brand(s)	Brand of choice	Brand(s)	Brand of choice
HSY	☐	Zainab Chottani	☐
Maheen Khan	☐	Karma	☐
Junaid Jamshed	☐	Kayseria	☐
Fashion and Design (FAD)	☐	Unbeatable	☐
Elan	☐	Rici Melion	☐

We will name the brand you selected BRAND X, how familiar are you with BRAND X?

Level of Familiarity

1	2	3	4	5
Never heard of it	Not Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Familiar	Very Familiar
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

For how long you have been regularly buying BRAND X?

☐ < 1 year   ☐ 1-2 years   ☐ 2-3 years
☐ 3-4 years   ☐ 4-5 years   ☐ > 5 years

Considering BRAND X, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale below:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Part of me is defined by important luxury fashion brands in my life							
I can identify with important luxury fashion brands that I prefer and how I view myself							
There are links between the luxury brands that I prefer and how I view myself							
My favourite luxury fashion brands are an important indication of who I am							
I can identify with BRAND X							
I consider BRAND X to be a part of myself							
I have a special bond with BRAND X							
I feel as if I have a close personal connection with BRAND X							
BRAND X is consistent with how I see myself							
BRAND X reflects who I am							
BRAND X is a mirror image of me							
BRAND X is very much like me							
People like me wear BRAND X							
I believe BRAND X is known for its high quality							
I love to buy BRAND X regardless of high price							
I believe that people in my country perceive BRAND X as prestigious							
I believe BRAND X to be of international standard							
I tend to pay high price for BRAND X							
I consider BRAND X as a 'top' brand in my country							
Nothing is more exciting than BRAND X							
I like BRAND X because of prestige							

I like to buy BRAND X because of prestige							
The employee(s) of BRAND X treat me in a courteous manner							
The employee of BRAND X show a real interest in me							
The employee of BRAND X try to hear me out to identify my needs							
BRAND X is concerned to take my opinion							
BRAND X should make most decisions by consulting its customers							
BRAND X should frequently ask the opinions of its customers							
BRAND X should agree with the decisions of the customers							
In my dealings with BRAND X, I feel I am in control							
Influence over BRAND X is beneficial for me							
I feel good because of my ability to influence the choice set offered to me by BRAND X							
My influence over BRAND X has increased relative to the past							
Using BRAND X gets me to think about BRAND X							
I think about BRAND X a lot when I am using it							
Using BRAND X stimulates my interest to learn more about BRAND X							
I feel very positive when I use BRAND X							
Using BRAND X makes me happy							
I feel good when I use BRAND X							
I am proud to use BRAND X							
Compared to other brands, I buy BRAND X most of the time							
Whenever I buy luxury brands, I usually buy BRAND X							
BRAND X is one of the brands I usually buy when I shop for luxury fashion brands							
BRAND X has product items that I can easily wear on a day-to-day basis							
It is easy for me to have access to information about BRAND X							
I can easily find where to buy products of BRAND X							
I can buy BRAND X's products easily							
I can now buy BRAND X because some of its product items are affordable to a wider range of consumers							
BRAND X designs its products keeping in mind diverse customers							
I can easily buy BRAND X's products online							
BRAND X's products can be easily bought by anyone who can afford it							
BRAND X has now emerged from being reachable to few to be reachable to more							
BRAND X is now available at more stores in my city, than it used to be							
BRAND X provides latest trends in fashion							
BRAND X has evolved to include more diversity in style and sizes							
Buying BRAND X allows me to be a part of its community							
I have access to BRAND X's designers on social media							
I have a good idea about the price of BRAND X's products							
BRAND X allows me to design an exclusive product just for myself							
I can now easily communicate with BRAND X							
Overall, BRAND X has now become a democratized exclusive brand							
BRAND X expresses itself by sharing its values							
BRAND X supports social causes that I care about							
BRAND X promotes customer's well-being through its products							
BRAND X encourages its customers to have a voice							

BRAND X allows me to book an appointment with the designer							
BRAND X gives me the opportunity to meet the designer							
BRAND X invites social media influencers to promote its products who I can easily relate to							
I follow BRAND X over social media							