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Factors Influencing Masstige Purchase Intentions in Pakistani Millennials: The Role of Inspiration, FOMO, and Need for Uniqueness

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Abstract

In this era, social media is an important part of everyone's life. Therefore, social media influencers are famous marketing tools for business. Marketers take advantage of influencers' massive following by sharing their content through them. This research aims to explore the relationship between social media celebrities and masstige-purchase intention of their audience or consumers. In addition, this research paper will give insight into the role of Inspiration, FOMO, and CNFU in the Pakistani industry. The data from 402 millennials was collected using online surveys, and structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. Results show social media influencers directly influence masstige-purchase intention of consumers and indirectly via inspiration. This study has practical implications for marketers it will guide businesses to enhance their sales using social media influencers effectively.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer, Inspiration, FoMO, Masstige Consumption

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Abstract

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Introduction

Social media carry numerous opportunities for individuals and businesses (Ballantyne et al., 2010; Leist, 2013; Holttum, 2016). Data shows that 53% population of the world uses social media sites daily (Cheung et al., 2011; Holt, 2016). As per a report from Business Insider, yearly corporate expenditure on influencer marketing will be $15 billion by the year 2022 (Schomer, 2019). This gives power to social media influencers to share their opinions with individuals and groups. Social media influencers emerged as an influential force in shaping people's buying behaviors (Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenthart, 2017; Roth & Zawadzki, 2018; Khamis et al., 2017). Social media influencers are among the critical factors influencing consumption behavior (Akaret al., 2015; Cao et al., 2021). Roth and Zawadzki (2018) define these social media influencers as people using various social media apps to share content and have more

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followers on these apps. They are opinion leaders that can significantly change consumers' consumption patterns (Shephard et al., 2016; Nam and Dan, 2018). Furthermore, consumers form relationships with social media influencers, similar to developing intimacy with media personalities (Alperstein, 1991; Auter, 1992; Stephens et al., 1996). This phenomenon or bond is a "parasocial relationship" (Horton and Wohl, 1956). The parasocial relationship builds a strong connection between consumers and the items promoted by social media influencers (Shen, 2021).

Previous research has delved extensively into social media celebrities and their significant effect on consumer behaviors. Notably, studies have investigated the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements (Chung & Cho, 2017; Wang et al., 2017), SMI credibility in product evaluation (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), and their alignment of self-influencer congruence with brand purchase intent (Shan et al., 2020). Literature has explored the roles of various SMIs in shaping consumption patterns, particularly in the context of celebrity endorsements (Park & Yang, 2012; Knoll & Matthes, 2017; Wang et al., 2021; Jin & Ryu, 2019). Social media influencers increase the masstige purchase intention of consumers (Meng et al., 2021). Furthermore, SMIs offer a dual advantage: easy accessibility (Abidin, 2016) and cost-effectiveness for endorsing masstige products. As a result, brands are partnering with these influencers to increase marketing and sales endeavors (Augustine, 2019). A multitude of researchers has underscored the favorable influence of interactions started by SMI on consumers' purchase intention (Arli, 2017; Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2020; Loureiro & Sarmento, 2019; Ott et al., 2016; Raji et al., 2020).

Despite confirming the economic value of influencers or endorsers (Ayeh, 2015), recently there has been a surge in influencer marketing-related studies (Kim & Song, 2016; Ferchaud et al., 2018; Hwang & Zhang, 2018; de B'erail et al., 2019; Munnukka et al., 2019). However, the role of SMIs, FOMO, and MPI lacks in-depth exploration in several areas. Research in this domain has explored multiple dimensions, including source credibility, source attractiveness, congruence between influencers and products, and the transfer of meaning from influencers to brands. These studies have uncovered influencer-driven changes in attitudes, and purchase intentions, highlighting the intricate influence of SMIs on consumer actions (Hung, 2014; Lim et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2019; Gretzel, 2018; Berne & Marzo, 2020; Shan et al., 2020), but literature has no empirical studies on understanding the work of social media influencer as an opinion leader and its impact on diverse factors such as FOMO, inspiration, and masstige purchase intentions.

Additionally, the impact of family, peers, and opinion leaders on purchase intent has been studied, but not extensively for other social media influencers (Vernette, 2004; Brandao et al., 2019). Limited research contrasts celebrity vs. online star endorsements (Shi et al., 2021). The psychological influence of imitation via SMIs needs more attention (Correa et al., 2020). Understanding FOMO's mediation in customer behavior due to influencer imitation requires further investigation (Dinh and Yoonjae Lee, 2021). Moreover, luxury was traditionally limited to high-value consumers, but in recent years, middle-class consumers have increased their consumption of premium products (Jain, 2019). A comprehensive masstige theory's development and the mechanics of SMIs' impact on consumer judgment need scholarly focus (Kumar & Paul, 2018; Paul, 2018; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003; Ye et al., 2021).

Taking this discussion further, this research explores the contribution of social media influencers in shaping consumers' purchase intention towards masstige products and the underlying psychological mechanisms, such as inspiration and FOMO. Additionally, this study proposes that CNFU could mediate the relationship between social media influencers and masstige purchase intentions. This study suggests several theoretical contributions to the prior literature as it explores the impact of social media influencers on masstige purchase intentions. This will help the business better understand consumer decisions when purchasing masstige products. The existing literature on the sense of imitation triggered by the relationship between SMI and their followers is notable (Corrêa et al., 2020; Yan, Sun & Wang, 2021; Keng-Boon Ooi et al., 2023; Keng-Boon Ooi et al., 2023). This study will provide a new explanation for underlying consumer behavior towards the endorsed masstige products. Moreover, leveraging social media influencers can amplify masstige purchase intention through strategic alliances and message consistency. From a managerial standpoint, comprehending inspiration as a mediator between influencer-masstige purchase relationships guides the adoption of exclusive marketing strategies. Harnessing influencer collaborations to ignite consumer inspiration and link aspirations with masstige products establishes a potent conduit for stimulating purchase intent.

Review of Literature:

Parasocial Interaction Theory

Parasocial relationships refer to a one-sided connection, in which individuals form a sense of

closeness and attachment with media figures or celebrities without direct personal interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956). According to Hoffner and Bond 2022, relationships are becoming increasingly prevalent today, mainly because of the rise of social media sites. Parasocial relationships can influence and increase the engagement of users toward influencers. In addition, parasocial relationships also increase loyalty for social media influencers, which is a benefit for products or brand influencers promote (Yang et al., 2021). According to Delgado-Ballester and his colleagues (2021), parasocial relationships are a key factor in influencer marketing on Instagram to influence audience or followers. Previous research papers also proved that parasocial relationships lead to influencer marketing. As per Lin and colleagues (2020) findings, parasocial interactions with influencers have the potential to positively predict consumers' purchase intention.

Similarly, Lee and Watkins (2016) argue that parasocial relationships with celebrities can result in positive attitudes of the audience toward the products endorsed. Additionally, a study by Ahn and Kim (2019), examines the effects of parasocial relationships on consumers' purchase intentions and finds out consumer purchase intention is influenced by parasocial relationships with SMIs. The study also found that parasocial relationships can rightly predict the purchase intentions of followers. Kim and Sung (2021) believe that social media influencers inspire their followers and create a bond or parasocial relationships with them.

The study by Delgado-Ballester and colleagues (2021) is valuable research in this regard is explains the impact of parasocial relationships in influencer marketing. This study says that the level of influence of a social media influencer is highly dependent on the intensity of the parasocial relationship they have established with their audience. In addition to this previous research has also supported the significance of parasocial relationships in influencer marketing by highlighting its potential to affect consumers' purchase intention.

SMIs

Social media celebrities share content on their accounts and SMIs have the power to change the attitude of people towards products (Khamis et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2017). SMI's popularity affects consumer buying behavior (De Veirman et al. 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth 2017). SMI marketing is very commonly used by businesses to reach customers and impact their purchase intention. In addition, companies leverage digital influencers as brand ambassadors, to endorse their products and services to their followers (Duffy, 2016; Scott, 2015).

They have become popular as they are seen as authentic, knowledgeable, and experts in their field (Childers et al. 2018; Li & Du 2011; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Moreover, people who see the social media content of any influencer they like, find it more reliable and trustworthy for making purchases (Chu & Kim, 2011) as compared to traditional forms of advertising (Liu & Ma, 2017) for product recommendations (Wang & Chen, 2016) to increase purchase intention. Moreover, in a study by Kim and Lee (2017), SMIs have a significant impact on purchase intention. Koens et al. (2019) also identified a favorable association between social media influencers and the intent to purchase.

SMIs have recently become a business marketing tool (Grier & Rolling, 2018). Influencer marketing takes advantage of the parasocial relationship that an influencer has built with followers to promote products and services (Yang & Sanchi, 2022. Kim & Ko (2012) claimed that social media influencer marketing can notably affect customer purchase intentions. Additionally, in marketing, social media influencers can increase customer purchase intention (Li & Du, 2018). Likewise, influencer marketing is growing in popularity among businesses, with most recognizing its potential to enhance awareness about the product and sales (Kapoor & Verma, 2019). They discover that consumers are more inclined to take influencer recommendations seriously and are more likely to purchase the recommended product. To summarise, digital influencers help companies market their products and services and increase customer engagement (Ananda et al. 2016).

Masstige Consumption

The term "Masstige" was introduced by Silverstein and Fiske in 2003. These authors introduced this term to refer to products that are defined as mid-tier products. Masstige products are those which are between mass-market products and luxury products, masstige products are between both. Masstige is the combination of "mass" and "prestige,". The luxury brands offering more affordable products that are accessible to the masses are masstige (Kumar, Paul, & Unnithan, 2020). As per Silverstein & Fiske's (2003) research Masstige products are accessible to the masses in terms of both price and distribution. Individuals try to expectations of a particular social group in a society which is known as normative influence. Social media platforms have a large number

of users, these users follow social media influencers and impact consumers' purchasing decisions (Kim & Ko, 2012; Muntinga et al., 2011) for masstige products.

Additionally, consumers who keep themselves up to date about product knowledge are more likely to appreciate masstige products (Wu & Chen, 2018). Kim and Kim (2010) find out the positive influence of SMI on consumers' intentions. According to Ahn et al. (2017), consumers may buy a product or avail of any service if a social media influencer promotes it.

Inspiration

According to Kasser and Ryan (1996), inspiration is a human feeling of awe or wonder when they encounter something beautiful, sublime, or transcendent. Inspiration is not a simple concept to explain. It is multi-dimensional and complex. As per Chen et al. (2019), word inspiration is a positive emotional state of a human that arises with an individual's exposure to stimuli. Inspiration means to motivate others to engage in creative, innovative, or goal-directed behavior because of any stimuli (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Hirst et al., 2011). In other words, inspiration is a motivation that appears when individuals see content that stimulates their curiosity, creativity, or desire to explore innovative ideas (Dahlen et al., 2010). In addition, customer inspiration encompasses two elements - "inspired by" and "inspired to." The "inspired by" factor involves acknowledging and integrating a source of inspiration. (Thrash & Elliot, 2004). Innovative ideas or products can be brought to customers' attention through various external sources, including nature, music, literature, or marketing stimuli. (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2000). Marketing stimuli inspire consumers (Bottger et al., 2017). For example, social media influencers sharing their lifestyles and experiences can encourage their followers to adopt similar behaviors (Murray et al., 2020).

Additionally, inspirational content is among the most popular types shared on social media platforms (Coulter et al., 2018) to influence consumer purchase intention. Research indicates that exposure to inspirational content on social media can stimulate customer inspiration and motivate individuals to engage in positive behaviors (Jin et al., 2018). Inspiration has been established as a critical element that shapes consumer purchase behavior. Lee et al. (2021) found that consumers who experienced a sense of inspiration from social media influencers buy masstige products. The significance of customer inspiration in marketing has become increasingly apparent as consumers seek inspiration to embody their desired self and way of life (Rauschnabel et al., 2019). Bottger et al. (2017) proposed customer inspiration theory as a foundation for examining inspiration's significance in marketing. According to Lee et al. (2021), inspiration can play a crucial role in creating this value by offering consumers a sense of exclusivity, authenticity, and social responsibility. A study by Trinh et al. (2021) sees inspiration as one of the key motives behind consumers' will to follow social media influencers on Instagram.

Fear of Missing Out

Herman (2000) first suggested the concept of FOMO to account for the success of limited-edition brands. FOMO is characterized by impulsive behavior, whereby people experience an intense urge to keep track of the activities of others and stay in the loop (Casale & Fioravanti, 2020). FOMO gained popularity in the media to depict a societal mindset prevalent in market economies, where individuals are constantly haunted by the FOMO on an experience enjoyed by others (Hedges, 2014). Individuals who experience FOMO often report feeling left out of enjoyable events or having an overwhelming need to stay connected to others' lives.

Earlier research has indicated a significant relationship between social media usage and FOMO, and its definition is typically characterized by emotional distress, FOMO is a desire to stay continually connected with certain group's activities (Przybylski et al., 2013). Within social media marketing, FOMO is linked to personal and social identities, generating a sense of unease in individuals concerned about missing out on experiences (Zhang et al., 2020). FOMO motivates individuals to buy or consume products (Herman, 2011). To prevent the possibility of missing out on potential rewards or experiences, consumers frequently monitor social networking sites (SNS) platforms.

Kang and colleagues (2019) suggest that FOMO arises when individuals do not stay current with the latest trends, causing them to feel excluded from their social circle and potentially left behind. Besides social comparisons with others, FOMO drives individuals to enhance their social status by buying those products that are endorsed by SMIs (Taylor, 2019). Research conducted on marketing has shown that experiencing FOMO may lead to purchasing various products (Celik et al., 2019; Saleh, 2012). Furthermore, in promoting brands, SMIs are crucial in attracting their followers to buy goods through the content they share (Good & Hyman, 2020). Continuous visibility of these SMIs can lead to comparison with others, which intensifies the FOMO (Buglass et al., 2017) and this FOMO can result in the purchase of mass-prestige items.

Consumer Need for Uniqueness (CNFU)

Uniqueness as an integral element of consumer behavior has been widely studied, shedding light on its multifaceted influence on various consumer choices and attitudes. The 'need for uniqueness' (NFU) phenomenon, as coined by Snyder and Howard (1977), plays a pivotal role in understanding how individuals express their distinctiveness through consumption preferences. Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) delve deeper into this concept, demonstrating a strong link between heightened NFU and the inclination to purchase unique products. Such a propensity for uniqueness impacts consumer choices and influences cognitive and behavioral patterns (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000).

Snyder and Fromkin (1997) offer a precise definition, describing NFU as an individual's initiative-taking inclination to set themselves apart. This drive for distinctiveness often manifests in consumer product consumption, creating interest in the dynamic interplay between NFU and consumption behavior (Tian et al., 2001; Tian & McKenzie, 2001). Vignoles et al. (2000) highlight individuals' desire to establish themselves as unique entities, striving for meaningful self-identification. Snyder and Fromkin (1977b) support this notion through empirical evidence, emphasizing the intrinsic need for people to perceive themselves as unique within their social circles. This sentiment is pronounced among NFU individuals who experience discomfort when detecting similarities and actively seek differentiation (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977).

In luxury marketing, which is known for its exclusivity and scarcity (Janssen et al., 2014; Kim, 2018), NFU has taken center stage in examining the relationship between consumer choices and uniqueness (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Chan et al., 2015; Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2016; Gentina et al., 2016). The allure of luxury products for individuals with high NFU is evident, aligning with their quest for distinction (Lynn, 1991). Snyder (1992) further elaborates on how individuals with high NFU may showcase their uniqueness through extrinsic or intrinsic motivations when purchasing luxury items. Lee, Bae, and Koo (2020) emphasize the pivotal role of NFU in predicting inconspicuous luxury consumption. They suggest that consumers with high cultural capital seek differentiation from the mainstream, gravitating towards brands understood by select in-groups. As highlighted by Lee and Eastin (2020), SMIs wield substantial influence by constructing and conveying symbolic identities through daily content. This influence is further amplified by the social influence theory (Kelman, 1961), where individuals enhance their self-image by adopting behaviors associated with others. Followers of SMIs consume content, emulate behaviors, and integrate inspirational content, leading to enhanced self-image (Corrêa et al., 2020).

Hypothesis Development:

SMI and FOMO

Social media sites are one of the biggest sources of information nowadays. People are habitual of comparing their lifestyle with those, who have an online presence. According to a study, more than 70% of Instagram follow at least one Instagram blogger account (Influencer Co, 2021). Lin et al. (2016) believe that SMIs are the key actors in enhancing FOMO in the audience. Previous literature has supported this argument that social media celebrities or bloggers play a key role in creating the FOMO. For example, Andrews and Drennan (2023,) found out in their research that social media users who follow any influencer experience FOMO as compared to those who do not have an online presence. Likewise, Yap et al. (2018), argued the followers of bloggers or influencers, who have social media presence compare available information on social media and as a result, they feel FOMO. Kim and Lee (2018) share their viewpoint about the positive impact of SMI in creating FOMO among their followers. In addition to this, Van Der Schyff (2019) believes that social media influencers are perceived as individuals who are always "in the know" and "in the loop," leading their followers to feel like they are missing out on important information or experiences if they are not following their guidelines.

Furthermore, FOMO can heighten customer concerns and prompt them to purchase (Kang et al., 2019). Comparison with others, mainly social media influencers, will likely trigger FOMO (Buglass et al., 2017). In addition, based on the conceptual framework suggested by Kim and Ko (2020), SMIs have the capacity to address the inadequacies felt by consumers who experience FOMO. According to Kim and Ko (2020) by following social media influencers and following their lifestyle by purchasing the products they use or endorse, the social media users relate themselves to that influencer, and these followers feel a connection with that follower. Moreover, in the recent past, there has been a change in consumer behavior towards products with an increasing desire for experiences. In 2018, research conducted by Expedia and the Center for Generational Kinetics stated that 74% of Americans

rely on acquiring experiences rather than having material possessions (Expedia & Center for Generational Kinetics, 2018).

Social media has further reinforced this trend as consumers are exposed to diverse experiences and activities that intensify the feeling of FOMO (Hodkinson, 2016). Overall, across several market economies, the number of product options has increased, making it difficult for consumers to exhaust all available offerings. FOMO has been identified as a potential consumer motivation (Herman, 2019). Moreover, social media influencers have the great potential to create a perception of exclusivity for products or services through their engaging content and this results in an increased likeability for individuals to stay connected to that engaging content (Yousaf et al., 2021) and up to date (Hsu & Lin, 2018) and this leads to FOMO. Moreover, a study by Abedin & Alam (2019) says that followers of SMIs tend to experience FOMO. A survey by Adelaar et al. (2021), is also in favor of social media influencers in leading to FOMO, among social media followers. We proposed the following hypothesis:

H1: SMIs significantly affect the FOMO.

SMI & Inspiration

Social media influencers are famous for creating appealing and inspiring content for their followers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Li et al. (2021) said SMIs are a powerful tool for inspiring consumers. Social media influencers share inspiring, informative, and entertaining content with the public and inspire them. A study conducted by Lee, Park, and Kim (2022), investigated the effect of SMIs on inspiration find that social media influencers have a positive impact on inspiration. Influencers often share stories and posts about their outfits, makeup routines, and travel experiences, food, and their followers get unique ideas for their lifestyles (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017).

Babin and Attaway (2000) find out in their research consumers who get inspire by any product, they buy it. Kim and Ko (2012) believe that social media users are inspired by engaging, visually appealing, and relevant social media content. Similarly, Li et al. (2018) believe that those social media influencers who shared inspiring content were most followed as people find them inspiring. Users who were inspired were discovered to have a higher likelihood of interacting with social media content, sharing it with others, and cultivating a sense of community with fellow users (Wang et al., 2023). As content creators, social media influencers inspire their online audience (Jin et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). According to Yang and Lim (2021), social media influencers can potentially inspire their followers' purchasing behavior by fulfilling their needs. Chen and Huang (2018) argue that social media celebrities inspire their followers, and they adopt certain behaviors and attitudes.

Seeing the content shared by social media influencers related to their lifestyle and experiences inspires their followers to change their behavior and act similarly to them (Murray et al., 2020). Influencers often show a desirable and perfect lifestyle that consumers aspire to have. Consumers adopt the behaviors and preferences of the social group they observe to gain acceptance and belonging (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Consumers adopt the style, dressing and all other stuff shared by influencers to fit in with their social group (Jin & Phua, 2014).

As per Lee et al. (2021), words, social media influencers are role models to their followers as their content is often inspiring for the followers. A study finds that many consumers more precisely 48% of customers showed their interest in the purchase of those products that were recommended by influencers (Graeff & Harmon, 2021). Bottger et al. (2017) contend that marketing offers customers novel ideas or insights into products that can inspire them. Similarly, Jin et al. (2019) propose that being exposed to inspirational content on social media has the potential to elicit inspiration in customers, which can prompt them to engage in positive actions. As a result, we posit the following hypothesis:

H2: Social media influencers have a significant positive effect on inspiration.

SMI and Masstige Purchase Intention.

SMIs significantly impact their followers' buying behavior. Previous literature shows that social media positively impacts consumer purchase intention. Masstige means those products that are available for mass or luxury that are affordable for mass groups (Xue & Chawdhary, 2023). Kim and Lee (2017) prove through their research there is a strong relationship between SMIs and purchase intention. Moreover, the study by Wang and Sung (2021) demonstrates that social media influencers' endorsement of products can significantly impact purchasing intentions. Therefore, individuals exposed to social media influencers promoting masstige products or services are more likely to have a stronger will to purchase such products or services. Online celebrities or online personas have a great tendency to influence the buying behavior and attitude of the online audience (Yuan & Lou, 2020). The endorsement by influencers or social media celebrities can change their followers'

attitudes (Zhang, Chao, Chiong, Hasan, Aljaroodi, & Tian, 2023). Research has shown that SMIs significantly affect consumers' purchase decisions, particularly in luxury and masstige products (Larsen & von Wallpach, 2020). Social media influencers use social media platforms to promote certain products and services and create a sense of urgency that makes their followers buy certain products (Al Menayes et al., 2016). Therefore, the existing body of literature proved that social media influencers can positively impact consumers' purchase intentions of social media followers for masstige products.

Therefore:

H3: SMIs have a positive impact on masstige purchase intentions.

FOMO and Purchase Intentions

FOMO or fear of missing out can be defined as the anxiety that people feel when they think or feel others are having rewarding experiences, but they are missing (Przybylski et al., 2013). Social media influencers have had considerable influence over consumer purchase behavior in recent years, particularly in luxury and masstige products. According to Herman (2011), FOMO positively affects social media use, as social media followers are in the habit of checking social media accounts to avoid the feeling of being left out of potential rewards or experiences. A study by Kim and Sung (2020) proves that FOMO and consumers' purchase intentions have a positive relationship. A study by Kim et al., (2018) agrees with prior literature that FOMO affects individuals while they make up their minds to buy and product. As per a study by Adhitya et al. (2021), consumers buy masstige products out of FOMO. Prior research has shown that people buy products and avail services out of FOMO (Herman, 2011). Taylor (2019) also believes that FOMO is one of the factors people have. Additionally, according to the study conducted by Yoo and Park (2019), there is a positive correlation between FOMO and purchase intention.

Yoo and Park (2019) found that customers who experience FOMO can have a higher purchase intention for unique products. Furthermore, seeing influencers often on social media makes people compare themselves to those influencers and feel that others have better things and experiences. This Heightened fear of missing out on all those things that can provide acceptance in society (Buglass et al., 2017). In addition to this, Tahir et al. (2021) conducted research to find out the relationship between FOMO and purchase intention. These researchers found that fear of missing out has a significant positive impact on purchase intention. Moreover, Kim et al. (2021) argue that FOMO mediates the relationship between social media usage and purchase intention. Therefore,

H4: The FOMO has a significant positive impact on purchase intention.

Inspiration and Purchase Intentions

Customer inspiration is a state of mind where a person is highly motivated to act based on any stimuli or information received from different sources such as social media (Kumar et al., 2019). Inspiration has a positive impact on consumers' behaviors when they make up their minds and go to purchase masstige products. Inspiration plays a key role in predicting purchase intention (Kim & Ko, 2021, p. 235). Moreover, inspiration can work as a stimulus or driver for buying behavior (Yang et al., 2021). Exposure to inspirational content from social media sites shared by SMIs predicts consumers' buying behaviors toward the purchase of luxury products (Khamitov & Cho, 2021; Ohanian, 1990). As per the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), consumers may buy luxury products to add uniqueness to their social status and identity. Therefore, exposure to inspirational content from social media influencers may convince consumers to see luxury products as more desirable as a result this influences their purchase intentions.

Lee et al. (2021) say that consumers who experienced a sense of inspiration from social media influencers were more likely to buy masstige products. A study by Jones and Smith (2020) says that inspiration has a vital role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions. In addition, Bottger et al. (2017) developed the customer inspiration theory that highlights the importance of inspiration. This theory suggests inspiration is critical in shaping buying behavior. Moreover, consumers inspired by a product are more likely to evaluate it positively and purchase it (Babin and Attaway, 2000). Therefore, it can be concluded that FOMO positively correlates with purchase intention and that influencer marketing can effectively trigger and increase consumer purchase intention. Consequently, we suggest that:

H5: There is a significant positive relationship between inspiration and purchase intention.

Mediating Role of FOMO

Fear of missing out is the emerging concept in marketing means the anxiety of individuals especially social media when they think that other people are enjoying more rewarding experiences as compared to

them. Marketers are aware of the importance of this factor, and they are using FOMO in their marketing to make the audience increase the use of social media to make purchases (Zhang, Jiménez, & Cicala, 2020). Li et al. (2021) state that "consumers who experience FOMO because of social media content shared by SMIs can change their buying behavior. Therefore, when social media influencers promote time-limited scarcity promotions for masstige products, consumers feel FOMO and buy masstige products. According to Widyaningtyas et al. (2021), FOMO mediates the relationship between social media celebrities and masstige purchase intention. This study by Widyaningtyas et al. (2021), found that FOMO significantly impacts masstige purchase intention. Furthermore, according to Koch and Heim (2021), FOMO triggers consumers' desire for social belonging and acceptance, which motivates them to imitate the behavior of SMIs and purchase the same products. Moreover, this study indicates that FOMO has a positive effect on buying intention for products endorsed by social media influencers. Therefore, we suggest that FOMO acts as a mediator between SMIs and masstige purchase intention. Based on prior literature, we hypothesized that.

H6: FOMO mediates the relationship between SMIs and masstige purchase intention.

Mediating Role of Inspiration

Inspiration is a key factor that can make customers choose certain brands and products. Inspiration is when any external or internal stimuli make people do certain things (Wissen & Anatan, 2023). Trinh et al. (2021) found that creative social media content inspires consumers to buy various products. Lee et al. (2021), argue that customers buy masstige products because they get inspiration from the uniqueness of masstige products. Consumers satisfy their NFU to be different from the rest of society and to be unique in their own way and the best way consumers satisfy their NFU is by having material possessions (Ruvio, 2008) so they choose to buy unique products. Ruvio, (2008) also argues that consumers who look for consumers need uniqueness always prefer to buy unique items and avoid similar products as others.

Moreover, inspirational content on social media sites makes individuals buy certain luxury products (Jin et al., 2018). According to a study by Jones and Smith (2020), inspiration has a major role in shaping consumers' buying behavior. Additionally, consumers depend highly on SMIs for guidance while making any purchasing decisions and they are also inspired by this guidance (Hajli, 2018). A study by Hong & Cho (2019) shows that inspiring content positively influences purchase intention, and this effect is stronger and more visible when social media influencers endorse the content on social media. Prior literature shows that consumers tend to buy more masstige products if they are inspired by the influencers' posts, stories, or recommendations.

H7: Inspiration is a strong mediator between social media influencers and masstige purchase intention.

Moderating the Role of Consumer Need for Uniqueness

Consumers buy those items which makes them different from other people. Consumers adopt this buying behavior because they want to satisfy their need for uniqueness (Latter, Phau, & Marchegiani, 2010). Consumers with high CNFU prefer to buy products that are unconventional and unique to look different from others (Lee, Ho, & Wu, 2018).

According to Snyder and Fromkin (1997), the NFU can be defined as an individual's proactive effort to be different from others. The relationship between luxury consumption and the CNFU is of immense importance that it has been researched by many scholars in numerous studies (Latter et al., 2010; Zhan & He, 2012; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Chan et al., 2015; Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2016; Gentina et al., 2016; Wu, Lu, Wu, & Fu, 2011). This research not only explains the definition of consumer need for uniqueness but also explores the scarcity of luxury goods (Janssen et al., 2014; Kim, 2018) and people's strong need for uniqueness to have luxury products (Lynn, 1991). Moreover, while buying luxury items people looking for high uniqueness desire to showcase their uniqueness both externally or internally (Snyder, 1992), shaping consumer stance on luxury (Bian and Forsythe, 2012). The famous luxury brand designs consumers to showcase their core beliefs (Park et al., 2008; Wilcox et al., 2009). Additionally, the extrinsic motivation to adopt luxury goods holds particular significance (Bearden and Etzel, 1982; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014).

Moreover, people are now more interested in buying luxury products to show themselves as distinct from other individuals (Li et al., 2012; Berger and Ward, 2010), this proves that there is a link between luxury item consumption and a desire to stand out (Tian et al., 2001). Additionally, CNFU positively correlates with luxury products consumption (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2018; Gentina et al., 2016), as individuals aim to achieve uniqueness by purchasing distinct products and favoring unique products (Snyder, 1992). Furthermore, the perception

of a product's uniqueness is generally associated with its price (Groth & McDaniel, 1993). This statement is also supported by Amaldoss and Jain (2005) when it comes to competitive contexts. This phenomenon can be explained using the theory of social comparison (Festinger, 1954), which explains that consumer need for uniqueness influences product choices. Based on existing literature, we propose that:

H8: Consumer need for uniqueness moderates the effects between SMI and MPI.

Research Methodology:

Data Collection and Sampling

This research entails an online survey targeting individuals actively involved in social media usage and residing in urban areas of Pakistan. The online survey method is chosen due to its inherent advantages, such as enhanced participant engagement, heightened data collection flexibility, and cost efficiency (Graham, 2023). Moreover, online surveys facilitate easier fact-checking by respondents, contributing to more precise insights into their knowledge levels (Clifford and Jerit 2014; Liu and Wang 2014; Strabac and Aalberg 2011; Shulman and Boster 2014).

This study's research design is quantitative, as it involves collecting numerical data using a Likert scale questionnaire. Smith and Davis (2010) have emphasized that structured and validated instruments enhance the quality of quantitative data collection. Thirdly, hypotheses and theories are being evaluated by using statistical data analysis.

For this research data is collected from those who have access plus knowledge of social media, and they are following any influencers on social media. In a nutshell, the target population consists of millennials. This target population of millennials includes individuals of different genders as male and female respondents, people of various occupations, and with different qualification backgrounds. This research collected a sample of 402 millennials, out of which 219 were females and 183 were males. While 272 respondents of this study were single and 130 were married. Most of the respondents in this research are below the age of 25 years whereas very few more precisely only 15 respondents are above the age of 46 years of age. For the education of the respondents,' the major portion contains a bachelor's degree, comprising 206 respondents. The second largest group of respondents are those with a master's degree, representing 43% (171) of the total respondents. The smallest group held an MPhil/Ph.D. qualification, comprising 6.0% (25) of the respondents. Respondents between the age group of 26 and 30 are the second largest 117 respondents or 29% of the total number.

Measuring Instruments

Scale items used to measure influencer attributes, such as attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness in the context of SMIs, have been developed by different researchers. Homophily items were developed by Lou and Kim (2019), and physical and social attractiveness were initially developed by (Duran and Kelly, 1988). Although these items developed in different contexts, they have been adapted and used in the context of SMIs to assess relevant constructs.

Zhang and Kim (2013) developed a masstige scale to measure consumers' perception of masstige products in an emerging market context. Furthermore, the mediator FOMO scale that we use is based on the Przybylski et al. (2013) scale used in the article by Zhang, Jiménez, and Cicala (2020) and consists of 10 items. Böttger and Thomas Rudolph developed the mediator inspiration scale mentioned in this study. Finally, the scale used for measuring Consumer Need for Uniqueness (CNFU) was created by Kelly Tepper Tian, William O. Bearden, and Gary L. Hunter. It focuses on visual cues in product design and aligns with marketing models concerning consumer responses to product uniqueness.

Analysis

In this Research, statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 25, a widely utilized software package renowned for its capabilities in data analysis on both mainframe and personal computers (SPSS, 2006). Furthermore, AMOS 22 was employed for conducting CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) to assess the model fit, and structural equation modeling was used for hypotheses testing.

Results

Measurement Model

The first step of data analysis is to confirm the reliability and validity of the results. We run confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 22 using five variables – social media influencer, FOMO, inspiration, masstige purchase intentions, and CNFU. The results indicate that two items, each from masstige purchase intentions, inspiration, and CNFU, have low factor loading; hence, they were deleted from the model. Other CFA after deleting these items and got satisfactory fit indices χ^2/df is 3.713, CFI is

0.89, SRMR is 0.058, and RMSEA is 0.078. The data's average variance extraction and composite reliability, and the results are shown in Table 1. Also, HTMT values (Table 2) are within the maximum threshold value of 0.90, confirming discriminant validity (Henseler et al. 2015).

Table 1

Reliability & Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	1	2	3	4	5
1. SocMe	0.933	0.581	0.514	0.951	0.762				
2. MasPI	0.815	0.717	0.145	1.216	0.348***	0.847			
3. Inspi	0.896	0.530	0.706	0.926	0.717***	0.381***	0.728		
4. FOMO	0.906	0.554	0.656	0.919	0.586***	0.319***	0.737***	0.744	
5. CNFU	0.814	0.687	0.706	0.818	0.639***	0.358***	0.840***	0.810***	0.829

SocME = social media influencer; MasPI = masstige purchase intentions; Inspi = inspiration, FOMO = fear of missing out, CNFU = customer need for uniqueness

Table 2

HTMT Results

	1	2	3	4	5
1. SocMe					
2. MasPI	0.356				
3. Inspi	0.731	0.443			
4. FOMO	0.590	0.405	0.754		
5. CNFU	0.637	0.431	0.871	0.818	

Structural Model s

This research used structural equation modeling to assess all eight hypotheses. The results show that inspiration influences SMI strongly which is clear from values of Inspiration beta is 0.635, p is 0.001, FOMO values beta = 0.283, p = 0.001, and masstige purchase intentions values beta = 0.180 and p = 0.05. These values show that the relationship between inspiration and MPI is positive as the values of beta and p are 0.303 and 0.001 respectively. However, beta = 0.19 and p = 0.186 show there is no relationship between FOMO and masstige purchase intentions. For mediations it is found that the value of beta is 0.155 and p is 0.01 and LLCI – ULCI = 0.057 – 0.335 means that inspiration mediates the relationship between SMI and MPI. While the beta (0.04), p (0.34), and LLCI – ULCI = -0.041 – 0.156) indicate that FOMO does not act as a mediator. Lastly, the moderating role of CNFU results showed that CNFU is a positive moderator in the relationship because the beta value is 0.118 p value stands at 0.01, and LLCI – ULCI is 0.032 – 0.208. The graph showing the interaction of moderator CNFU between SMI and MPI is shown in Figure 1, and Table 3 shows all summarized results.

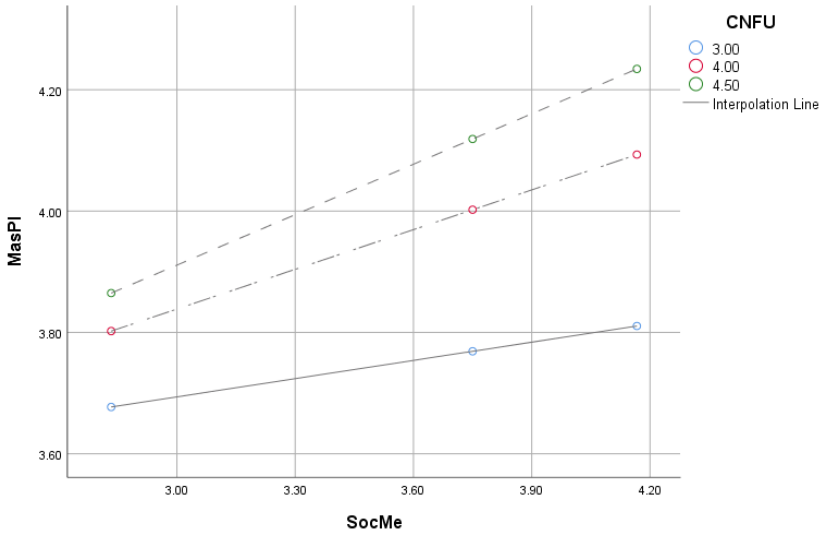
Table 3

Hypotheses Testing

Path	β	Sig	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Hypotheses				
SocMe → Inspi	.635	***	-	-
SocMe → FOMO	.283	***	-	-
SocMe → MasPI	.180	0.048	-	-
Insp → MasPI	.303	0.001	-	-
FOMO → MasPI	.193	0.186	-	-
Indirect Hypotheses				
SocMe → Inspi → MasPI	0.155	*	0.057	0.335
SocMe → FOMO → MasPI	0.044	NS	-0.041	0.156
Moderating Hypotheses				
SocMe x CNFU → MasPI	0.118	*	0.032	0.208

Figure 1

Interaction of CNFU between SMI and MPI.



Implications & Conclusion

Implications

The current research identifies how SMI characteristics increase MPI, inspiration, FOMO as mediator, and CNFU as moderator. The results indicate that SMIs directly impact MPIs and indirectly influence them via inspiration. Surprisingly, we found no support for FOMO as a mediator between SMI and masstige purchase intentions. Lastly, CNFU is a moderator between SMIs and MPI. These results confirm the recent research articles of Khan et al. (2024), Paul et al. (2024), and Ishaq et al. (2023). The theoretical implications of this study are significant in several ways. Firstly, the research establishes a robust conceptual framework that connects SMIs, MPI, FOMO, inspiration, and CNFU. This framework adds to the existing body of knowledge by providing an understanding of the interrelationships between these variables and their impact on consumer behavior. Secondly, the study validates the positive influence of SMI on MPI, aligning with previous research. This finding confirms the importance of using SMIs in

marketing strategies to increase consumer purchase intentions.

Managerial Implications

Digital influencers are the most trending marketing tools at this time. This paper provides an in-depth understanding of the use of this tool and how it can affect consumer buying behavior. This research will assist marketers and brand managers to get benefits by using SMIs to endorse and market their services and products to masstige purchase intention among consumers. Companies can efficiently and effectively reach their target audience by joining hands with relevant influencers. These social media influencers from various social media platforms can help marketers, brands, and businesses to engage their customers and, they can influence customers' purchase intention by sharing their message through the most liked influencer. Understanding the impact of SMIs on consumers' inspiration can couch marketers for making compelling content that could appeal to their audience and inspire them to make purchases of masstige products. From a practical perspective, this study offers practical implications for businesses. This will also help them develop successful marketing strategies for masstige products. The findings are helpful for both existing and newly launched luxury brands, guiding how to introduce new luxury brands to a broader consumer base and generate additional revenue.

Limitations & Future Directions

This research focuses on participants solely from Pakistan and introduces the possibility of sampling bias. The findings may not adequately capture other countries' attitudes, behaviors, or cultural variations. Furthermore, time constraints are one of the limitations of this study that can affect the depth of the research. There is also the potential for self-report bias in the available data because social desirability or other biases might have influenced the participants of this study's responses. Despite these limitations, this research paper provides valuable insights into the study's boundaries and suggests potential avenues for future researchers for example, replication studies with more extensive and diverse samples recommended to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Collecting data from different countries and diverse cultures would give a comprehensive understanding of the influence of SMI on MPI. In addition, longitudinal studies can be productive in understanding consumer behavior and the long-term impacts of social media influencer marketing. Moreover, other research methods including in-depth interviews or focus groups, can provide more reliable insight into consumer behavior towards masstige products. Comparative analysis across different product categories or industries can help identify specific factors influencing masstige purchase intention. Experimental designs allow for causal inferences and a deeper understanding of causal relationships. Further exploration of mediation and moderation mechanisms, such as additional mediating factors or other individual differences, can enhance our understanding of the underlying processes.

Conclusion

This research revealed that social media influencers significantly influence masstige purchase intentions among consumers. This finding aligns with prior research highlighting the crucial role of influencers in shaping consumer buying decisions in the luxury market. While FOMO does not act as a strong mediator that means FOMO can’t make consumers buy things. Moreover, the results demonstrated that CNFU moderates the relationship between SMIs and masstige purchase intentions. Interestingly, the study found no significant relationship between FOMO and masstige purchase intentions. This result contrasts prior literature, suggesting that inspiration mediates between social media influencers and purchase intention.

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Appendix

Abbreviation List	
FOMO	Fear of Missing Out
SMI	Social Media Influencers
CNFU	Consumer Need for Uniqueness
MPI	Masstige Purchase Intention

Scale Items of Variables

Social Media Influencer

Attitude Homophily

This social media influencer and I have a lot in common.
This social media influencer and I are a lot alike.
This social media influencer thinks like me.
This social media influencer shares my values.

Physical attractiveness

I think this social media influencer is handsome/ pretty.
This social media influencer is somewhat attractive.
I have a better relationship with this social media influencer than other social media influencers.
I find this social media influencer very attractive physically.

Social attractiveness

I think this social media influencer could be my friend.
I want to have a friendly chat with this social media influencer.
We could be able to establish a personal friendship with each other.
This social media influencer would be pleasant to be with.

Masstige Purchase Intentions

I intend to buy a masstige luxury product within six months.
I have very high purchase interest for masstige brands.
I will probably buy a masstige luxury brand within six months.
I will definitely buy a masstige luxury brand in the next six months.

Consumer Need for Uniquness

I prefer to own products that are different from what others have.
I enjoy standing out in a crowd with unique items.
I feel that owning distinctive products enhances my identity.
I actively seek out rare or uncommon products.

Inspire

Inspired by

My imagination was stimulated.
I was intrigued by a new idea
I unexpectedly and spontaneously got new ideas.

My horizon was broadened.
I discovered something new.

Inspired to

I was inspired to buy something.
I felt a desire to buy something.
My interest to buy something was increased.
I was motivated to buy something.
I felt an urge to buy something.