

## MASSTIGE MARKETING: AN ANALYSIS ON BRAND DEMOCRATIZATION AND CUSTOMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT

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### **Abstract**

The process of Brand Democratization (BD) is primarily responsible for the increased marketing of luxury brands that were formerly only available to the upper echelons of society. Nonetheless, there is a dearth of scholarly investigation into the effects of democratization and how they affect consumer brand involvement. Advocates for a deeper knowledge of brand democratization point to the literature and the preliminary conceptual model as means of exploring the emphasized assumptions of brand democratization and customer-brand engagement. This research, which concurrently conducted three studies, uses primarily quantitative techniques for gathering data to look at the fundamental ideas of a more democratic brand. In the first study, brand democratization was investigated through a methodical literature analysis, and many dimensions that contribute to a deeper comprehension of the concept were found. In order to help luxury businesses create a cogent long-term strategy to handle particular issues, this academic empirical investigation on brand democratization offers various theoretical advances. The online survey form was made on the Google podium and sent to urban Bengaluru residents using the snowball sampling technique. In the end, we had 130 insightful responses. Further research on the mediating effect of customer-brand interactions is warranted, as the results demonstrated a beneficial influence of brand democratization on customer brand engagement. When looking for a moderating effect on the link between BD and CBE, the control and empowerment that consumers and customers of luxury brands want to have over brands were taken into account.

**Keywords:** Brand Democratization, Customer Brand Engagement, Customer Brand Power.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study was conducted in the luxury fashion sector of the Bengaluru metropolitan area at Yelahanka in order to better understand brand democratization and customer-brand engagement from the customer's perspective. Because it is mainly focused on luxury fashion brands within the luxury fashion setting, this research focuses on the identification of brand democratization, defining its criteria through systematic literature reviews and scale development. (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004)

The study further created a theoretical framework that looked at and addressed brand democratization as well as its relationships to other relevant variables like customer-brand interactions and the moderating role of power (control and consumer empowerment). (Agarwal & Rao, 1996)

This research thesis not only demonstrated brand democratization and its composition within the overall luxury context, but it also examined the relationships between luxury fashion brands and customer self-congruence with ideal self, as well as the underlying premise that mass-prestige (Masstige) focused luxury fashion brands also have an impact on brand democratization.

In essence, brand relationships benefit customers and individuals in deeper ways. They provide solace, security, and purpose to people's lives. (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2019) This offering of meanings has the power to alter one's perspective of oneself and to broaden into other areas like brand loyalty and brand trust, which were previously impacted by one's perception of the brand itself. Various theories, like brand personality and brand connection theory, contend that the type of brand-consumer collaboration is what ultimately makes associations stand out. When a brand offers personalized goods and services, it can base them on significant personal traits that the individual possesses, allowing the person's spirit to reside in the brand and giving the inanimate, lifeless object a personality and association of its own. Furthermore, past branding research provides a thorough anthropomorphizing of the brand itself, emphasizing a total absorption of humanistic qualities so that the items being discussed would function as a frame of reference. As the population grows, a significant number of consumers with distinct personal traits have also been drawn in, and they now correlate various human-like attributes with consumer goods.

According to literature, one of a brand's ultimate goals is to achieve brand commitment. Authors have also noted that when a brand is passionate, consumers don't care about its ethical standards, which removes any potential for power struggles or distance between the brand and the consumer. Similar to this, in the apparel sector, negative perceptions of a brand are frequently countered by growing brand value in consumers' eyes, which lowers disengagement. Similarly, the key to understanding various shopping behaviors is cognitive dissonance. Since brand loyalty has a positive influence on brand attachment and trust, it can be assumed that it has no effect on consumers' perceptions of power distance. In terms of competing customer and brand interests, brands frequently project a societal image that eliminates disputes inside the apparel sector. Additionally, improvements in brand equity have a significant impact on preserving brand salience.

## **OBJECTIVE**

- I. To investigate and pinpoint elements of engagement that impede luxury brand experiences for customers.
- II. To determine whether democratization of premium brands affects consumer involvement with the brand.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Prior research on "masstige" (also known as "prestige for the masses") or "affordable luxury" can be categorized into three areas: (1) masstige conceptualization (2) consumer perception of

masstige brands and (3) ties between consumers and brands in masstige. (Baber, Kaurav, Upadhyay, & Baber, 2020) In the first study stream, which focuses on the definition of "masstige," "affordable luxury," or "luxury for masses," academics have developed scales to operationalize and quantify the value of masstige companies, as well as to define "affordable luxuries."

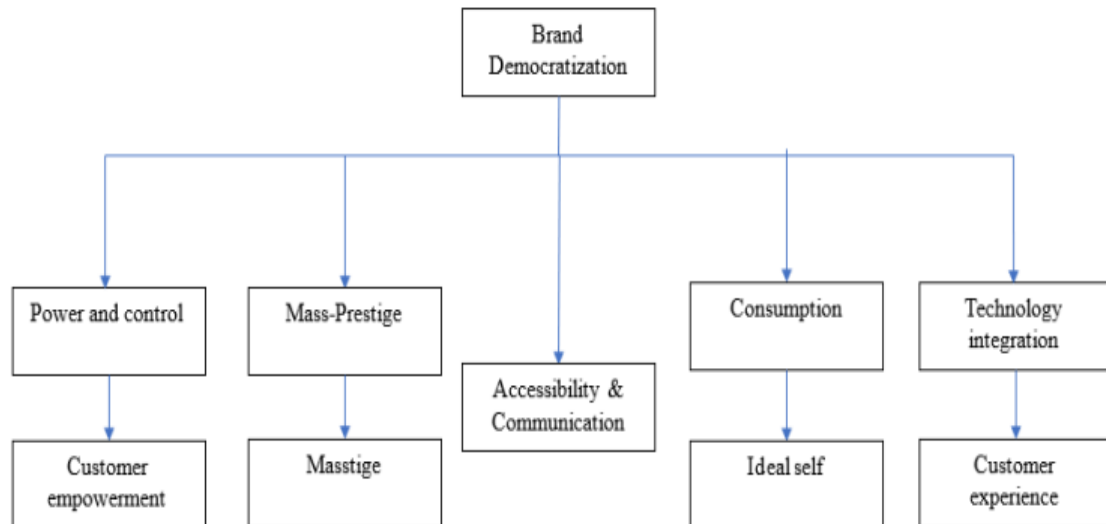
(Christodoulides, Cadogan, & Veloutsou, 2015) The motivation and value that consumers gain from masstige brands are examined in the second research stream. The corpus indicates that consumers' propensity to engage in masstige consumption is influenced differently by several aspects of the perceived value of masstige brands. For example, it was discovered that masstige consumption is significantly influenced by the values of utilitarian, experiential, and symbolic consumption in the context of fashion companies. According to (Das & Jebarajakirthy, 2022) vanity value and functional value are important factors in consumer electronics masstige brand consumption. The consumer-brand connection hypothesis serves as the foundation for the third study stream, which explores topics including brand evangelism, brand love, brand happiness, and brand loyalty.

When the word "brand equity" was first used in the 1980s, it had a strong connection to financial matters. A brand's equity is determined by the incremental cash flows and asset values that it has amassed. But in the 1990s, brand equity becomes an even more valuable intangible asset for a business, one that managers should continue to focus on optimizing and improving. (Eastman & Liu, 2012) in light of these presumptions, brand equity is a multifaceted, customer-centered idea. "The assets and liabilities associated with a particular brand, such as its identity, knowledge, and associations" is how one would define consumer-based brand equity. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) We chose to use Yoo's one-dimensional definition of consumer-based brand equity in this study, despite the fact that it is frequently thought of as a multidimensional phenomenon. All things considered, Yoo and define consumers' varying total." A study by preferred the one-dimensional to the multidimensional conception of consumer-based brand equity because of issues with Aaker's brand equity model's discriminant validity.

### **System in Masstige**

A group of related entities working together to resolve a crisis and achieve shared objectives. A new idea can only be beneficial if it becomes a part of the societal structure. When people fail to acknowledge it, an innovation fades from existence. The ability to force someone to do something that is important for one or more reasons. Engagement is therefore distinct from exchange-based engagement. Goals are related to the types of motivation and attitudes that influence behavior, even in the absence of intrinsic motivation or a positive outlook. Desire-based add-ons to the organization are referred to as affective add-ons (Employees are drawn to the company because they feel compelled to) Employees believe they should hold cost-based relationships with the association in order to be employed; this is known as going concern (i.e., Workers remain with companies because they need them.). Finally, bonds based on duties organization are referred to as normative liability.

## Conceptual Model



## Theory of Planned Behavior

The idea of set conduct is an extension of the idea of intended action, which was established crucially by the early models and limits the range of behaviors over which people have little volitional control. The goal of the person is to play away assured behavior, according to the first theory of imagined doings, which is a key element in the hypothesis of arranged manner. Expectations are made in order to identify the persuasive factors that compel people to behave in a certain way. These factors demonstrate the amount of effort people are willing to put forth and the amount of labor they can do to carry out the desired behavior. Undoubtedly, the more ingrained the expectation of engaging in a particular behavior, the more likely it is to be presented in that way. It is imperative to clarify that even while a behavior goal can follow a style of expression, it can only do so if the method in question is voluntary.

## Theory of Recent Behaviour

Human behavior is determined by a variety of considerations, including convictions regarding the reasonableness of the behavior, convictions regarding the governing presumptions for other individuals (regularizing convictions), and convictions regarding the existence of elements that have the ability to support or obstruct the behavior (control convictions).

Convictions related to behavior result in a positive or menacing mindset that is similar to how one should behave; convictions related to standardizing lead to an apparent pervasive perspective of conduct control directs the influence of attitude toward the manner in which one behaves as well as emotional standards on expectations.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to evaluate brand democratization within the luxury apparel sector, a questionnaire was created and evaluated for this research study. The online survey questionnaire was created on the Google platform and distributed to urban dwellers of Bengaluru. The inquiry began with an invitation for the respondent to select a luxury fashion or apparel brand from a selection of popular companies. IBM SPSS AMOS was used to further verify that the data collection had no missing values.

**Table 1: Outline of the respondents**

Variable	Respondents
<u>Gender</u> : Male	72
Female	58
Age: 20-25	26
26-30	33
31-35	38
36-40	18
41& above	15
Monthly Income:	
Rs 15,000 -25,000	32
Rs 25,001-50,000	56
Rs 50,001 & above	42
Occupation:	
Student	18
Employed	44
Self employed	48
Technical expert	20

The demographics statistics shows that 55% of the sample population were males and 45% were females. 29% of the respondents were between the ages of 31-35 years.

**Table 2: 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

Bartlett's test of sphericity was used to confirm the factorability of the data and, moreover, to assess the sample's adequacy. The KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity results are displayed in the table above. The scale's MSA score of 0.879 indicates that the data are suitable for exploratory factor analysis, and the test of sphericity's results revealed statistically significant results with a p-value of less than 0.001.

## Limitations

There are obstacles to every investigation. The survey was conducted with customers in Bengaluru, an Indian urban area. If a comprehensive overview had been led, there would have been diversity in the results. The evidence set is limited to a single, well known masstige brand, to start. The second issue has to do with the dimensionality of the important variables that were employed in this research to determine whether consumers intended to buy a masstige brand. Future research that catches various aspects It is good to see luxury value perceptions and masstige brand equity together. are multifaceted structures. Because of the previously mentioned explanation, conjecture regarding the Indian Bengaluru urban market is a little bit inadequate.

## Further Research

Three study avenues were identified for future investigation under the heading of "Brand Democratization":

1. Brands face difficulties and opportunities from technology. It is necessary to identify (non) standardized implementation mechanisms in order to properly comprehend and expedite the implementation of democratization initiatives. While this might entail improving and altering the luxury companies' current tactics, a deeper understanding of the processes involved might also direct the creation of new brands that expand their target markets.
2. Stakeholder participation in co-creation is reflected in the brand democratization construct, which also supports the processes of overall brand development and administration. A change may be affected by this setting because of the democratization-related influence and control stakeholders may have over brands. Further investigation is necessary to completely comprehend the role and influence of customers in brand democratization management procedures, specifically in the context of premium businesses.
3. As luxury brands continue to expand into new areas and reach large audiences, further research should analyze consumer opinions in great detail. There are still issues with some cultural contexts (such as European versus Asian) when it comes to the development of democratizing brands. This may be the result of a fear of losing authenticity and control over the brand. Such dynamics should be studied.

## CONCLUSION

The main focus of this study was how prevalent the idea of "Brand Democratization" was in the literature. Over time, reappeared in a number of research. Early mass production possibilities democratized brands and made luxury labels accessible to a wider audience. Though the primary drivers of democratization are globalization, technical advancements, and competition, consumers also have considerable influence over consumption patterns. Brand democratization thus plays a significant role in the literature that deals with the study of customers and their perceptions and pleasure.



Stakeholder(s) orientation with regard to goods and services has long been incorporated into brand management; this is demonstrated by how ubiquitous brand democratization has become. In addition to recognizing brand democratization in relation to the strategic perspective of the global/local brand, writers have also observed and recognized methods for quickening this process. Systems, technology integrations, and ongoing governance have received a lot of attention. Luxurious products project a calm exterior and strong financial standing. The luxury sector has prospered in developing attractions to broaden the target market as a result of ongoing technical advancements. Managers have triumphed over complex obstacles including cultural and economic contexts over the years. In such a setting, there are new obstacles to overcome and customers to please. Customers that strive to fit things with their unique identities as a result of social influence are known as socially inaccurate consumers, and they aim to link luxury goods with necessities.

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