



I Buy the Ultimate: Engaging Consumers through Ideal Self-Congruency

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The current study investigates an important area of concern for marketers i.e. engaging their customers for favorable emotional, cognitive, and behavioral activities that are fruitful for the brand. It specifically investigates how the ideal self-congruence is effective in gauging various forms of customer brand engagement. The study also measures the direct effect of two ideally desired dimensions of brand personality i.e. sophistication & ruggedness for customer brand engagement. Further, the moderating role of these personality dimensions is measured in the relationship between ideal self-congruence and customer brand engagement. By multi-stage cluster sampling, the survey uses 334 responses for the two personality dimensions. Overall, the study initiated the debate on moderating the role of brand personality dimensions in measuring customer brand engagement. The findings would be helpful for managers in understanding the importance of identifying the personality type of their brand and then designing appropriate strategies for long-term customer-brand engagement and market performance.

Keywords: *customer brand engagement; self-congruence; ideal self; brand personality; brand sophistication; brand ruggedness*

Marketers are continuously striving to engross customers in favorable emotional, cognitive, and behavioral activities for the brands (Kaur et al., 2020; Sameeni & Qadeer, 2015; Vivek et al., 2012). Today's global market has provided customers with many decision choices, so developing strong bonds is a not-so-easy task. Hence *customer brand engagement* has become an important area of concern in the current era. This is because engaged customers tend to perform favorable actions such as recommending the brand to others, willing to give suggestions & ideas for making the brand a more viable and strong option for customers; alternatively, a disengaged customer will never behave in the same way (Grove, 2014; Iqbal,

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2011). Many companies (for example, cosmetics brands) are communicating with their customers for years that consuming their products would make them close to how they ideally desire to look like or achieve in their life (Kim et al., 2019). In other words, ‘*ideal-self*’ seems vital for customers because they like to use brands that do not fit their reality but appear to improve their current state and act as an aspiration for them (Sirgy, 1982). A two-fold question that arises here is that, can consumer-brand engagement be obtained through ideal-self congruency? And does this strategy for engaging consumers useful for brands with some specific personality characteristics?

A key concept for examining this question is the ‘self-congruence’ concept. Consumers prefer brands with a personality similar to their self-concept (Huang & Lin, 2012). Previous studies have investigated the effect of self-congruence on consumer decision choice, emotional engagement attachment, brand preferences, and loyalty (Chan & Li, 2010; Japutra et al., 2019; Malar et al., 2011). Despite multiple studies on self-concept, the two conceptual properties of self, namely, the actual and ideal-self, have been tapped less. While the self-verification motive is fulfilled by actual brand self-congruence, there is a self-enhancement motive behind using brands congruent to the ideal-self of consumers (Malar et al., 2011). Literature states mixed findings related to the effect of actual or ideal self-congruence on consumer-brand outcomes (e.g., Huber et al., 2018, Kim et al., 2019). Some state that actual self-congruence has a better impact on consumers’ emotional attachment (Malar et al., 2011, Zhu et al., 2019). Others state that, compared to the actual self, the ideal self-links more with brand preference & loyalty; an enhanced self-concept is linked with consumer-brand emotional bonds, satisfaction, trust & pride (Bauer et al., 2000; Gilchrist et al., 2019). The current research fills the gap by responding to the call for investigating the role of the self’s conceptual properties in positive consumer attitudes and behaviors (Ahn, 2019; Isaranon, 2019; Zhu et al., 2019). The current study focuses explicitly on ideal self-congruence and its effects on consumer-brand engagement.

Brands are used as relationship partners and possessions by consumers to depict themselves to others; consumers try to match brands’ characteristics with their personality characteristics (Sop & Kozak, 2019). Similar to humans, brands have various types of personalities (Aaker, 1997). ‘Consumer love’ is more remarkable for the brands that are perceived as more hedonic or symbolic (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006); brands with personality types, i.e., *rugged* and *sophisticated* personalities, are evaluated high in hedonic/ symbolic characteristics (Chua et al., 2019). The consumers ideally desire these personality types; the consumer may not necessarily have them at that point in time but wishes to achieve them. To the best of our knowledge, there is scant work on measuring the effect of two ideally desired brand personality dimensions, i.e., brand sophistication and brand ruggedness, on favorable consumer emotions and behaviors. Considering two ideally desired brand personalities for investigating their impact on a long-term relationship-focused variable, i.e., consumer-brand engagement will give useful insights on whether such brands can better engage their consumers.

Corresponding to our research questions, the current study has three objectives: 1) to measure the effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer-brand engagement 2) to measure the effect of two ideally desired brand personality dimensions, i.e., brand sophistication and brand ruggedness on consumer-brand engagement 3) to measure the moderating role of brand sophistication and brand personality in the relationship between ideal self-congruence and consumer brand engagement.

The current study uses the self-enhancement theory, which argues that people are motivated to enhance their self-esteem and be judged positively in others’ eyes (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). In the marketing context, consumers tend to use brands as a source of their

extended self (ideal self) to project a desirable image of themselves among others and enhance & strengthen their self-esteem (Huber et al., 2018).

This study contributes to the existing knowledge in many ways; considering the importance of consumer-brand engagement in the form of positive emotional, cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Kaur et al., 2020), our findings suggest a strategy to enhance consumer engagement by using an ideal self-congruence strategy. Further, it measures the role of brand personality dimensions in enhancing consumer-brand engagement. For academic scholars, this study has initiated the debate for the moderating role of brand personality dimensions in the relationship between ideal self-congruence and consumer-brand engagement. The findings guide managers in deciding upon relevant marketing and promotional strategies when promoting their brands that have a classy, luxurious, and rugged personality.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Customer Brand Engagement (CBE)

Engagement of consumers with the brand is a signal of positive emotional & attitudinal sharing during consumer-brand interactions and other related activities (Brodie et al., 2011). Customer brand engagement facilitates the consumer decision-making process and helps develop strong customer-based brand equity (Schultz & Block, 2011). It is at the back of consumers' brand-specific favorable behaviors such as repeat purchase, retention & loyalty and creates long-term relationships and attachments (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019; Pervan et al., 2009). Various studies have gauged customer brand engagement through commitment, satisfaction, emotional connection, authorization, trust, involvement, and affection (Gomez et al., 2019; Maehle et al., 2011).

Ideal Self-Congruence

The similarity between the consumer's desired state and the brand personality refers to ideal self-congruence (Sirgy, 1986). Brands are the symbols to exhibit consumers' personal uniqueness; they purchase brands to facilitate their social connections with other people and a source to build, retain, and expand their ideal self-concept (Aaker, 1997; Walker, 2009). Individuals are generally interested in forming a positive and stable self-identity through self-enhancement means; this enables them to display what they desire to be and obtain life satisfaction (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012; Dufner et al., 2019). This is well explained by self-enhancement theory; consumers use objects as a source to portray an enhanced image of themselves and have a positive evaluation, among others (Sedikides & Strube, 1997).

Brand Personality

Brands are positioned to correspond to personality similar to human beings; brand personality lies in any of the five types, indicated by Aaker (1997), namely sincerity, competence, excitement, ruggedness, and sophistication. Consumers usually possess the first three dimensions, while the last two are ideally desired. Brand sophistication indicates that the brand is considered rich and charming (Aaker, 1997). The personality dimension of brand sophistication is concerned with outer or appearance-related elements such as good looking, glamorous, upper class, charming & powerful enough to formulate an emotional bond with the brand for achieving desired value (Park & Lee, 2005). Another ideal personality type is a rugged personality, which exhibits a rough, tough, rugged, outdoorsy, masculine, and adventurous personality (Aaker, 1997).

Hypotheses Development

Ideal Self-Congruence and CBE

In ideal self-congruence, the underlying motive is self-enhancement, which corresponds to consumers' tendency to seek objects that enhance their positive self-worth (Karjaluoto et al., 2016). In brand advertisements, it is a common fact that a charming celebrity is shown (Shimp, 2000), and people get attracted to that personality, develop feelings of unity, and like to get identified with that brand (Helm et al., 2016); thus, exhibiting positive reactions towards the brand (Sheeraz et al., 2018). When consumers realize that a celebrity is depicting an image close to their ideal self-image, they are likely to form favorable associations with celebrity as their endorsement pulls the consumer for the consumption of that particular brand (Choi & Rifon, 2012) and boost their self-worth & pride (Gilchrist et al., 2019). Thus, when a consumer sees his dreams and aspirations embodied in the form of a brand, he is more likely to move closer to that brand for a long time and feel an increase in self-esteem (Isaranon, 2019). Based on this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive association between ideal self-congruence and customer brand engagement.

Brand Personality Dimensions and CBE

In this era of self-definitional requirements, brands are considered relationship partners to help individuals express their personalities (Fournier, 1998). A match between the brand and the target consumer leads to positive brand-related activities, events, and develops preferences for the brand (Aggrawal & McGill, 2012; Maheshwari, 2009). Goldsmith (2011) suggested that personality-directed brand development leads to brand prestige (Choi et al., 2017), passion (Ahn, 2019), and long-term relationships. Brand Sophistication is the charming personality trait that consumers receive when he/she uses the product; because traits are sustainable, consumers anticipate consuming those traits when they use such brands (Sung & Kim, 2010). Brand ruggedness is a trait that forces consumers to share their fun with others in a third place outside their homes (Karababa & Guliz, 2011). In other words, charming, luxurious or masculine personality traits stimulate sensory pleasure, and lead to intrinsic satisfaction, thus enabling consumers to achieve hedonic value by using the brand (Walsh et al., 2014, Amatulli et al., 2020), accordingly we assume these dimensions to be effective in engaging consumers with the brand. The following hypotheses are developed:

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive association between brand sophistication and customer brand engagement.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive association between brand ruggedness and customer brand engagement.

Moderation of Brand Personality Dimensions

People usually desire to have high-class or rugged appearances, and sometimes they might have achieved through their abilities or accomplishments (Park & Lee, 2005). Having a sense of belonging to a charming brand and matching with consumers' ideal-self leads to favorable consumer behaviors such as brand preference and affection (Alexandris et al., 2016; Maheshwari, 2009; Malar et al., 2011). Generally, it is stated that a brand's personality is the reference point for self-congruence and provides the basis for positive consumer behaviors by animating or humanizing the brand (Fournier, 1998; Sop & Kozak, 2019). Distinctive brand

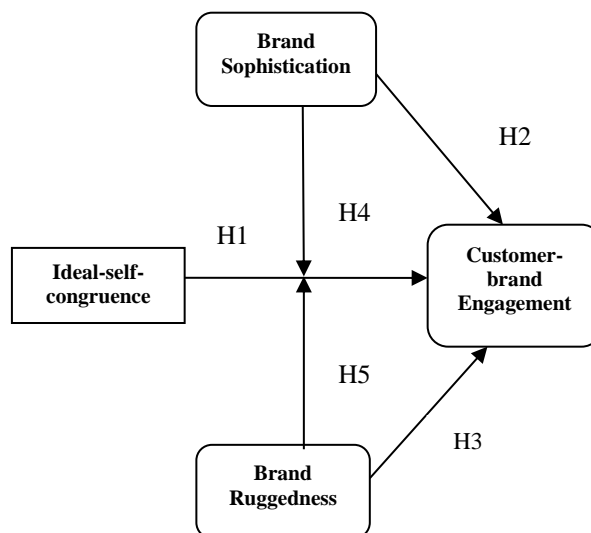
personality (such as a rugged man), when portraying an ideal self, can help individuals improve their self-concept and gain satisfaction & positive actions (Bauer et al., 2000; Grove, 2014). This foundation is answered from advertisements that are created for classic stylish brands such as Chanel, Revlon, and Mercedes.

Similarly, ads for rugged brands such as Marlboro, Harley-Davidson, and Ford depict an ideal, strong, tough, and male-dominated personality. These brands show inspirational personality associations (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013) and help develop brand prestige and passion (Ahn, 2019; Choi et al., 2017), which further leads to many positive outcomes. It may be assumed that depending on product type, and marketers are using ideal self-congruence in the promotion & marketing of rugged and sophisticated brands for engaging their target audience; however, there is less empirical evidence on the moderating role of these two desired personality types in the relationship between ideal self-congruence and engagement. Hence it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 4: Brand sophistication has a moderating role in the direct relationship of ideal self-congruence with customer brand engagement in a way that this relationship will be stronger for brands scoring high on sophistication than for those scoring low on sophistication.

Hypothesis 5: Brand ruggedness has a moderating role in the direct relationship of ideal self-congruence with customer brand engagement in a way that this relationship will be stronger for brands scoring high on ruggedness than for those scoring low on ruggedness.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

Stage 1- Focus Group

The focus of this study requires responses specific to sophisticated and rugged brands used by consumers. Therefore, stage 1 of the study was initiated to bifurcate brands used in Pakistan with rugged and sophisticated personality types to engage these brands in the survey further. In this regard, a focus group study has been carried out by conveniently selecting ten participants (senior business students) and two faculty members. The participants were introduced to the study topic and objectives of the focus group discussion, and a list of pre-selected twenty popular brands for both personality types (i.e., ten sophisticated and ten rugged brands) was shown to them. This list of brands was prepared by using classification, categories, and product types provided in various empirical studies on these brand personality dimensions (Aaker, 1997; Das et al., 2010; Sung & Kim, 2010). The participants categorized and rated each brand for the two personality types, and later a detailed discussion session among participants was carried out. Finally, eight brands, i.e., four sophisticated brands (Mercedes, Cambridge, Apple & L'Oreal Paris) and four rugged brands (Marlboro, Hilux, Denim & Gillette) were mutually selected to be further engaged in the study.

Stage 2- Survey

This is a descriptive study, and the type of investigation is co-relational. The time horizon is cross-sectional and the individual consumer is the unit of analysis. The study population comprises all the consumers in Lahore who are either users or familiar with the brands included in the study. The study sample was selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. In stage 1, out of thirty-one-degree awarding institutes of Lahore, five institutes were randomly selected. In stage 2, the list of all programs being offered in the Business Administration departments of the selected five institutes was obtained, which gave a total of sixteen programs. Following the cluster sampling further, nine clusters were selected from the twenty-six final-year classes in these sixteen programs.

Two separate self-administered questionnaires were used for sophisticated and rugged brands. These questionnaires were randomly distributed in students' lecture rooms, each having only one type of questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. In the first section, the respondents were required to select one brand out of the mentioned 6 brands with the most familiarity. Then they indicated the extent to which their selected brand has sophisticated or rugged personality characteristics. Next, the respondents were required to think about their selected brand in terms of human beings and associate human-like personality characteristics with it. Next, they must think about themselves in their desired or ideal personality state & associate personality traits they want to see in their ideal personality. After this thought process, the respondents were required to match the similarities between their ideal self and brand personality and indicate the extent to which the brand's personality matches or differs from their personality.

In the second section, the respondents responded to the questions regarding their engagement with the brand. These questions covered the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of consumer-brand engagement. Finally, in the last section, the respondents answered the general demographic questions. A total of 354 usable responses were obtained, including 180 responses for sophisticated brands & 174 responses for rugged brands.

The scale items for variables of the study are adopted as customer-brand engagement (Cheung et al., 2011) using 18 items measured on five points Likert Scale (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree), brand sophistication, and brand ruggedness (Aaker, 1997) using 4 items for each variable measured on five points Likert scale (1= not at all descriptive

and 5 = extremely descriptive). Ideal-self congruence is measured by a two-step approach developed by Sirgy et al. (1997).

Data Analysis and Results

Brand Familiarity & Demographics

Out of the four sophisticated brands, most of the respondents (81%) indicated their familiarity with L'Oreal Paris. The most familiar brand indicated by respondents (54%) turned out to be Denim for rugged brands.

Most respondents of the brand sophistication study (2a) were females (about 66%), with the majority belonging to the age group of 21-30 years (about 70%) and were under-graduates or in the completion phase of graduation (about 77%). However, in the brand ruggedness study (2b), most of the respondents were males (about 58%), the majority falling in the age category of 21-25 years (about 64%) and were undergraduates (about 71%).

Stage 2- Survey

(a) Brand Sophistication

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations: Table 1 exhibits the descriptive statistics, alpha values & bi-variate correlations for the study variables. T-test was applied to compare respondents' demographics concerning study variables. It was observed that there was no significant change in gender and economic class ($p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$). However, comparison by occupation gives a significant value ($p < 0.05$) for customer-brand engagement, which indicates that consumer engagement with the brand will be influenced by his or her employment status.

Table 1
Descriptive Stats, Reliability & Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3
1. Ideal-self Congruence	3.21	1.04	0.75	1		
2. Brand Sophistication	3.80	0.58	0.70	0.21**	1	
3. Customer-brand Engagement	3.22	0.81	0.90	0.44**	0.38**	1

Note: n = 180 ** $p < 0.01$

Regression Analysis: Employment status is controlled in step 1 (Table 2) because it gave a significant p-value in group comparisons; the model depicts a significant value ($\gamma = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$). Subsequently, in Step 2, the independent variable ideal self-congruence is measured on the dependent variable, customer brand engagement. The result is significantly positive ($\gamma = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$) H_1 is supported for sophisticated brands. Next, in step 3, the effect of brand sophistication is measured on customer brand engagement, which indicates a significant positive association ($\gamma = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$); hence H_2 is supported. Finally, in step 4, the moderating role of brand sophistication is measured on the direct effect of ideal self-congruence on customer brand engagement. The resultant value is insignificant, so H_4 is not accepted.

Table 2
Regression: Customer Brand Engagement

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
<i>Control Variable</i>				
Employment status	0.17*	0.15*	0.14*	0.14*
<i>Independent Variable</i>				
Ideal self-congruence (ISC)		0.44**	0.39**	-0.21
<i>Moderating Variable</i>				
Brand Sophistication (BS)			0.30**	0.07
<i>Moderation: Two-way Interaction</i>				
ISC x BS				0.59
R2	0.03	0.21	0.30	0.30
ΔR^2		0.19	0.09	0.00

Note: n = 180, ** p < 0.01

(b) Brand Ruggedness

The mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, and correlation statistics are given in Table 3. Ideal self-congruence positively correlates with customer brand engagement ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$) and brand ruggedness & customer-brand engagement ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). However, there is no correlation found between ideal self-congruence & brand ruggedness.

Table 3
Descriptive Stats, Reliability & Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3
1. Ideal-self Congruence	3.26	0.90	0.71	1		
2. Brand Ruggedness	3.81	0.67	0.70	0.08	1	
3. Customer-brand Engagement	3.26	0.59	0.81	0.40**	0.33**	1

Note: n = 174, ** p < 0.01

Regression Analysis: Employment status is controlled in step 1 (Table 4) because it gave a significant p-value in group comparisons; the model depicts an insignificant value. Subsequently, in Step 2, the independent variable ideal self-congruence effect is measured on the dependent variable, customer brand engagement. The result is significantly positive ($\gamma = 0.41$, $P < 0.01$) H_1 is supported for rugged brands. Next, in step 3, the effect of brand ruggedness is measured on customer brand engagement, which indicates a significant positive association ($\gamma = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$); hence H_3 is supported. Finally, in step 4, brand ruggedness's moderating role is measured on the direct effect of ideal self-congruence on customer brand engagement; the resultant value is insignificant; therefore, H_5 is not accepted.

Table 4
Regression: Customer Brand Engagement

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
<i>Control Variable</i>				
Economic Class	-0.08	-0.06	-0.01	-0.07
<i>Independent Variable</i>				
Ideal self-congruence (ISC)		0.41**	0.39**	0.32
<i>Moderating Variable</i>				
Brand Ruggedness (BR)			0.31**	0.27
<i>Moderation: Two-way Interaction</i>				
ISC x BR				0.09
R2	0.01	0.16	0.25	0.25
ΔR^2		0.15	0.09	0

Note: n = 174, ** p < 0.01

Discussion

The current study aims to empirically investigate the impact of ideal self-congruence on customer-brand engagement. The study also includes two other variables: personality dimensions, i.e., brand sophistication and brand ruggedness. The direct and moderating effect of brand sophistication and brand ruggedness is measured for engaging customers in brand-related activities. There are five crucial results of the study. The ideal self-congruence positively associates with customer brand engagement. Brand sophistication and brand ruggedness also exhibit a positive association with customer brand engagement. There is no support for the moderating role of brand sophistication and brand ruggedness in the relationship between ideal self-congruence and customer brand engagement.

The *first result* indicates the significant confirmation of the association of ideal self-congruence with customer-brand engagement. This means that after marketers understand what consumers ideally desire to be, they should try to develop congruence between the brand's personality and the consumer's personality, ultimately engaging consumers in various activities in favor of the brand. The findings are consistent with the previous studies (Dufner et al., 2019; Isaranon, 2019; Sheeraz et al., 2020). Consumers prefer and form favorable connections with those brands that relate to their ideal selves and fulfill their desired psychological and inspirational needs (Gilchrist et al., 2019). Research states that self-image congruence affects customers' brand preferences, creates positive behavior and attitude toward brands, builds long-term consumer-brand relationships, and increases overall profitability (Huber et al., 2018), which is the ultimate objective of every organization. Thus, a better fit of the brand's image with the consumer's ideal image will develop a sense of congruency, ultimately leading to customer-brand engagement.

The *second result* indicates a significant positive association of brand sophistication with customer-brand engagement. This finding matches with previous ones. There will be an increase in brand trust when they have personality traits like honest, reliable, and charming (Ahn, 2019; Hieronimus, 2003). Consumers desire to impress others, and customers use sophisticated brands that depict elegance to impress their peers (Amatulli et al., 2020). Marketers promote many of their brands by adding elegance and beauty, such as 'when you smell it, you will feel the smooth aroma. It's strongly feminine, I feel different when I use

deodorant as to when I use a fragrance like Chanel as she (mother) uses it (Chanel), maybe this feeling of femininity comes from her mother; smoothness, comfortable and charming feeling (Maehle et al., 2011). This type of personality is usually admired and desired by consumers. They are more likely to engage in certain behaviors that help them in enhancing their level of sophistication. Therefore, the more the brand sophistication is, the more likely the consumer will engage in brand-related activities.

The *third result* shows that there is a significant association between brand ruggedness with customer-brand engagement. Brand personality helps consumers express his/her personality or some part of their personality (Sop & Kozak, 2019). Consumers desire to look tough and strong; for fulfilling this aspect, many brands are symbolized as rugged brands, and marketers use such types of brand ambassadors who have a rugged, outdoorsy, and strong personalities. This is how they engage consumers in favorable behaviors (Chua et al., 2019). For example, take Harley Davidson, the brand personality of Harley Davidson is positioned as a freedom-seeking, macho man suggesting the brand is powerful, strong, and liberating (Aaker, 1997). Therefore, a person who is looking for freedom would like to perform positive behaviors for such brands. The more the brand is rugged, the more the customer can be engaged in brand-related activities.

The *fourth result* finds no support for brand sophistication's moderating effect on the relationship between ideal self-congruence and customer-brand engagement. There is no significant work done on finding the moderation role of brand sophistication in the relationship between variables of interest. The current findings are contrary to a few findings (e.g. Zhu et al., 2019), which are available and somewhat related to this study's variables of interest. Customers use brands to achieve their ideal self-concept and to satisfy their emotional aspirations. This process in which the brand's functional benefits are presented is called information chunking (Hieronimus, 2003). People usually possess high-class and sophisticated characteristics together, developed based on their ability and after achieving success (Park & Lee, 2005), or the desire to have such characteristics (Kim et al., 2019). For example, a woman may use Maybelline, not because of its quality but because her ideal self matches that endorsed a celebrity's personality. Therefore, marketers depict the right brand personality for engaging customers in various activities in favor of the brand. The current investigation finds no support for brand sophistication's moderating role in ideal-self congruence and customer-brand engagement relationships. There may be many reasons for no support for the moderation impact of brand sophistication. One of the probable reasons is that the respondents of this study are youth, and sophistication is a personality aspect that consumers possess, in the age that is little after the youth's age. Moreover, youth in our country is quite emotional and rational in decision-making; they usually use brands for copying others. It may also involve the reflection on their education/background. Further, brands in our society do not pursue specific promotional efforts for inculcating the image of their brand as 'sophisticated' in the eyes and minds of customers. Therefore, maybe this is why consumers' ideal self-congruence with the brand is high, but the brand's personality aspect of being sophisticated does not have any additional impact on consumer brand engagement.

The *fifth result* specifies no support for brand ruggedness's moderating role in the relationship between ideal self-congruence and customer brand engagement. Less significant work is done on variables of interest. A brand with a certain personality that supports or enhances an individual's self-concept is likely to increase satisfaction, and this is done on the emotional ground (Gilchrist et al., 2019). The buying or consumption process is expected to carry associated feelings, which may be a consumer's desire to give high value to the quest for an outdoorsy and rugged brand (Hieronimus, 2003). Examples may include a companion for an outdoor adventure, an athletic, rugged, and outdoorsy personalities such as Nike or a

brand with a very masculine and rough tough type of personality like Marlboro which depicts that it is not merely used for only smoking but also exhibits a personality of a tough and masculine man. The current investigation finds no support for the hypothesis. This means that ruggedness does not play a significant role in engaging consumers in brand-related activities through ideal self-congruency for a brand. There may be many reasons involved. Youth in our society is transforming. Girls and boys copy each other's habits; girls are wearing jeans, have short hair, smoke sheesha, and cigarettes, ride horses, and boys have long hair, speak in a delicate tone, and wear bright colors. The aspect of ruggedness is usually associated with boys; the survey sample involves both girls and boys. It is seen that gender has put no significant difference in the ideal self-congruence for rugged brands. This may be said that the consumer's ideal self-congruence with the brand is so strong that it does not matter to them whether the brand is rugged or not; they are engaged with the brand in favorable activities.

The current study has many contributions. Firstly, as most of the previous work has studied self-concept to gauge consumer behaviors, the current investigation adds to existing knowledge by investigating one of the dual aspects of self-concept, i.e., the ideal self. Second, the study empirically demonstrates the prediction role of ideal self-congruence for engaging customers in brand-related activities. Third, the current investigation has opened up the debate of moderation of brand personality dimensions among variables of interest.

Theoretical and managerial implications

The study has important implications both for the research scholars and for the managers. For the theoretical implications, this study improves knowledge of how ideal self-congruence can be used to engage customers in favorable brand-related activities. Further, it provides knowledgeable insights into the impact of two ideally desired personality dimensions on customer-brand engagement. Moreover, the academic debate on the moderating role of brand personality in the variables mentioned above has been initiated.

The study is essential for managers too, in many ways. It will help managers understand that a personality type or brand ambassador who possesses the above-mentioned traits in his personality should be used for charming and stylish brands. Firms and managers can use the knowledge to understand that developing ideal self-congruence between their consumers and brand is so important that it can forgo everything else. This investigation will help managers design their strategies to tap their target consumers' brains by depicting their ideal-self personalities. This will ultimately encourage the consumers to perform better in brand-related activities, and firms will grow in their reputation and market share.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has some limitations, which lead to future research direction. First, due to time and resources limitations, collection of large, widespread data could not be done, the future study can be conducted on a large scale with a large representative sample of the country by including various types of respondents, i.e., married, experienced, mixed age groups and real-time consumers who are not only familiar but also the actual users of the sophisticated and rugged brands. Second, in this study, one of the dual properties of 'self' has been explored in relation to customer brand engagement, further study can be done for investigating the other property of self, i.e., actual self and its impact on various behavioral, cognitive, and emotional consumer-brand activities. Third, only two personality dimensions have been explored, i.e., brand sophistication and brand ruggedness. According to Aaker (1997), there are five basic personality dimensions. Future research should include other dimensions of personality, i.e., excitement, competence, and sincerity. And try to find which

dimension of brand personality relates more with the ideal or actual self and can be used to better engagement between the brand and the customer. And lastly, future research must be undertaken to explore the underlying psychological process through which marketers engage consumers in various brand-related activities; this could be done with reference to other congruity theories that will give insights for improving relationship quality with the customer.

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