IMPACT OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAITS ON PURCHASING INTENTION IN THE LEBANESE AESTHETICS CLINICS: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF BRAND ATTITUDES

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This research explores the impact of consumer psychological traits, including value consciousness, susceptibility to normative influence, and consumer need for uniqueness, on purchasing intention in the Lebanese aesthetics sector. The research also examines the mediating effect of brand attitudes on the relationship between consumer psychological traits and purchasing intention. The research methodology involved a survey of 350 respondents from Lebanese aesthetics clinics. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The findings reveal that consumer psychological traits significantly impact purchasing intention, with value consciousness, consumer needs for uniqueness positively, and susceptibility to normative influence positively affecting it. The research also found that brand attitudes partially mediate the relationship between consumer psychological traits and purchasing intention. This research contributes to the literature by shedding light on the importance of consumer psychological traits in the Lebanese aesthetics sector and the role of brand attitudes in mediating their impact on purchasing intention. The findings provide valuable insights for aesthetics clinics in Lebanon and other similar contexts, allowing them to develop effective marketing strategies that consider consumer psychological traits and brand attitudes.

Keywords: value consciousness; susceptibility to normative influence; consumer need for uniqueness; brand attitudes and purchasing intention

Introduction

Consumer psychological traits play a crucial role in determining purchasing intentions. Three key variables that have been found to significantly impact purchasing decisions

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include value consciousness, susceptibility to normative influence, and the consumer's need for uniqueness.

Value consciousness refers to the extent to which consumers are concerned with getting the best value for their money. Consumers who are highly value conscious are more likely to compare products and prices before making a purchase (Wadsworth et al., 2022). Susceptibility to normative influence refers to the extent to which consumers are influenced by the opinions and actions of others when making purchasing decisions. The need for uniqueness, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which consumers desire to differentiate themselves from others by choosing products that are unique and different.

Understanding these psychological traits can help marketers tailor their offerings and marketing messages to better align with the needs and preferences of their target audience, ultimately leading to increased purchasing intentions (Miao et al., 2020). Value consciousness, susceptibility to normative influence, consumer needs for uniqueness, and purchasing intention are all important factors influencing consumer behavior.

Value consciousness can play a significant role in determining purchasing intention. Consumers who are more aware of the price and quality of products are more likely to make informed purchasing decisions (Miao et al., 2022). This is particularly important for consumers with a limited budget, as they may prioritize value over other factors when deciding what products to buy.

Problem statement

The Lebanese aesthetics sector is a rapidly growing industry that caters to a diverse range of consumers, from those seeking high-end products to those looking for more affordable options. However, understanding the motivations and behaviors of consumers in this sector can be challenging, particularly in relation to factors such as value consciousness, susceptibility to normative influence, consumer needs for uniqueness, and purchasing intention (Becker et al., 2022).

One problem faced by businesses in the Lebanese aesthetics sector is the challenge of appealing to consumers with different levels of value consciousness. Some consumers may prioritize quality and are willing to pay a premium price for high-end products, while others may be more focused on affordability and value for money (Almajali, 2022). Businesses need to understand the different factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions and create product offerings that meet the needs of both types of consumers.

Hypotheses development

Consumers' value consciousness (VC) has been linked to negative outcomes in recent research, including lower levels of brand resonance and shopper loyalty. Brand resonance is defined as the commitment that customers have to a certain brand, which includes their propensity to buy from and recommend that brand to others (Budiarani & Nugroho, 2022; Gundala et al., 2022).

In the same way, shoppers' emotional investment in a brand is seen as an escalator for brand resonance since it emerges from customers' engagement with the brand. Pope et al. (2020) state that brand resonance and consumer commitment are favorably impacted by customers' perceptions of value products, which they describe as value consciousness (VC).
as part of consumers' behavioral qualities. Similarly, studies have shown that customers' VC influences their brand perception and ultimately their purchasing choices.

This is because people place more value on products that give more to them, therefore the more advantages a product offers, the higher its perceived value. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a relationship between consumers’ VC and their attitudes towards purchasing intention

In earlier literature, researchers have recorded the consumer-brand interaction from a variety of theoretical and vantage points: for instance, research by Schade et al. (2016) suggests that customers who are particularly receptive to normative influence tend to have more positive views toward items that provide socially evident advantages such as name recognition, physical beauty, and social status.

Schade et al. (2016) suggests that higher SNI is associated with higher levels of expenditure. In addition, SNI has been shown to affect a variety of consumer actions, including product choice, investment, and ad assessment.

Further, Kapferer & Michaut (2015) looked at individual differences in consumers' susceptibility to normative influence (SNI), which is shown as a central-mediating component in consumers' decision-making when selecting a wine brand. In the end, the researchers say, consumers' SNI is favorably impacted by both customers' individual values and the complexity of their social identities, which in turn influences consumers' choice of brands and the advantages those brands are seen to provide (Gundala et al., 2022). This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a relationship between consumers’ SNI and their attitudes towards purchasing intention

Independently, Memushi (2013) have looked at the connections between the three concepts. The ideas of brand attitude, consumerism, and value consciousness are all interconnected. High-attitude customers place a premium on the brand's status, prestige, and aesthetic appeal, whereas brand-conscious shoppers go for well-known, pricey labels. brands are able to fulfill customers' needs because they are well-known and costly status symbols that stand for plenty, achievement, and social standing (Kumar & Ayodeji, 2021).

While the roots of vanity lie in an exaggerated perception of self and worries about one's own importance, the roots of brand attitudes are in one's social and interpersonal relationships with others, and both may explain purchasing via distinct psychological processes (Eastman & Eastman, 2011). High-vanity customers care a lot about how they seem to others and how they are perceived by them.

Thus, their brand-conscious decision-making approach will be reflected in their preference for high-end labels. The authors reason that because brand perceptions may mediate the connection, they should. It can be concluded that brand attitudes have a mediating role in the relationship between value consciousness and purchasing intention (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022). The desire for and perspective on purchasing opulence had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H3: Brand attitudes mediates the relationship between value consciousness and purchasing intention
Susceptibility to normative influences is defined by Lavuri et al. (2022) as the pressure to act in line with societal norms. Purchasing intention experiences, according to the research, are heavily impacted and modified by the consumer's social context and interactions with others. Studies have shown that customers' purchasing decisions change when they are in the company of others.

This line of thinking is expanded by Ratnasari et al. (2022) who discover that people seek out more diversity in order to seem interesting and engaging to others around them. Improving one's reputation in the eyes of one's significant other is a common goal, and one common means of doing so is via the purchasing intention of recognizable consumer goods (Budiarani & Nugroho, 2022).

Customers who can afford to purchase products convey several signals to their social networks, transforming them into desirable role models. Aspiring customers without the financial means to purchase such goods may be encouraged to do so anyhow in order to meet the expectations of the social group to which they aspire. This had led to the development of the following hypothesis:

H4: Brand attitudes mediates the relationship between susceptibility for normative influence and purchasing intention

Methodology

In 2022, the research team in the targeted Lebanese aesthetic medicine clinics was expected to be 210,000 respondents. The study group included all Lebanese aesthetic clinics. Employees, managers and clients with various academic degrees, including bachelor's, master's, doctoral and Ph.D. degrees, were recruited for the study. The clinics were selected for this study because of their ability to provide high quality, internationally competitive studies. The Cochran formula is considered to be particularly suitable in situations with large populations. The formula is \(n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{210,000}{1 + 210,000(0.05)^2} = 350\). The resulting study sample size was 350 clients.

Demographic variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 350 respondents included 166 females, or 47.4 percent of the whole sample, and 184 men, or 52.6 percent of the total sample, according to this research.
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Table 2 - Descriptive statistics on age
(compiled by the author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 less than 24 years old</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 less than 34 years old</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 less than 44 years old</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 less than 54 years old</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 less than 64 years old</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 less than 74 years old</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the descriptive data indicated that 33 respondents constitute 10.7 percent of the sample, 95 respondents constitute 23.2 percent of the sample, and 158 respondents constitute 44.6 percent of the sample addressed, all of whom were between the ages of 25 and 44. In addition, there were 84 respondents, or 18.8%, who were aged 45 to 54, and 12 respondents, or 2.7%, who were aged 55 to 64.

**Pearson Correlations**

Table 3 - Pearson correlations
(compiled by the author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation Matrix</th>
<th>Value Consciousness</th>
<th>Susceptibility to Normative Influence</th>
<th>Purchasing intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value Consciousness</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1 .423** .376**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000 .000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>350 350</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptibility to Normative Influence</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.423** 1 .320**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>350 350</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Purchasing intention| Pearson Correlation | .376** .320** 1 | |
| Sig. (2-tailed)    | .000 | .000 | |
| N                  | 350 350 | 350 | |

The Pearson Correlation Test measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. In the matrix, each variable is correlated with purchasing intention, which can be interpreted as follows:

- **Value Consciousness**: The Pearson correlation coefficient for value consciousness and purchasing intention is .376 (** indicates statistical significance at the .05 level). This means that there is a moderate positive correlation between these two variables, meaning that as Value Consciousness increases, purchasing intention is also likely to increase.

- **Susceptibility to normative influence**: the Pearson correlation coefficient for susceptibility to normative influence and purchasing intention is .320 (** indicates statistical significance at the .05 level).
This means that there is a moderate positive correlation between these two variables, meaning that as susceptibility to normative influence increases, purchasing intention is also likely to increase.

The results of the Pearson correlation test indicate that there are moderate positive correlations between purchasing intention and all three variables studied (value consciousness, and susceptibility to normative influence). This suggests that these variables may have some influence on purchasing intention, but further analysis would be necessary to understand the nature of these relationships.

**Mediation analysis**

In this part, the researcher will illustrate the mediator role of brand attitudes. In this regard, the below table shows direct beta without mediation, direct beta with mediation, and indirect effect with 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (CI). After checking the direct impact of VC, SNI, and CNFU on PI.

The results revealed are in Tab. 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis Model</th>
<th>Beta (β)</th>
<th>Direct Effects</th>
<th>Indirect Effects</th>
<th>Total Effect</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VC → BA</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>0.512</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNI → BA</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA → PI</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC → BA → PI</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td>0.413</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>Partial Mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNI → BA → PI</td>
<td>0.543</td>
<td>0.532</td>
<td>0.562</td>
<td>1.094</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>Partial Mediation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Tab. 4 shows the results of a hypothesis testing, examining the relationship between independent variables (VC, SNI) and dependent variable (PI), through the mediating role of the brand attitudes (BA). Each row represents a hypothesis model where the relationship between independent variables (IV) and dependent variable (DV) is tested, with the mediating role of BA.

The key measures for each hypothesis model are:

- Beta (β): Represents the strength of the relationship between the IV and DV, the higher the beta the stronger the relationship.
- Direct Effects: Represents the direct relationship between the IV and DV, without considering the mediating role of BA.
- Indirect Effects: Represents the indirect relationship between the IV and DV, through the mediating role of BA.
- Total Effect: Represents the total relationship between the IV and DV, including both direct and indirect effects.
- P-Value: Represents the significance level of the hypothesis test, the lower the p-value the stronger the evidence that supports the hypothesis.
- Result: Represents the conclusion of the hypothesis test, based on the beta, total effect and p-value.
According to the results of the path analysis, VC tend to have a relationship with BA since the \((\beta = 0.432, P=0.025 < 0.05)\). However, it showed a direct effect of 0.512 and indirect effect of 0.212.

SNI tends to have a positive relationship with BA since \((\beta = 0.456, P=0.021)\). However, it showed a direct effect of 0.612 and indirect effect of 0.112.

BA tends to have a relationship with Purchasing Intention since the \((\beta = 0.536, P=0.036 < 0.05)\). However, it showed a direct effect of 0.236 and indirect effect of 0.436.

According to the results of the path analysis, VC tend to have a relationship with PI since \((\beta = 0.732, P=0.026)\). However, it showed a direct effect of 0.612 and indirect effect of 0.413.

SNI tends to have a relationship with purchasing intention \((\beta = 0.543, P=0.041)\). However, it showed a direct effect of 0.532 and indirect effect of 0.562.

In all the hypothesis models, the results show a partial mediation effect, which means that the brand attitudes (BA) have a partial role in mediating the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In other words, the brand attitudes are contributing to the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, but not completely explaining it.

**Discussion**

Value consciousness refers to an individual's focus on the monetary value of a product or service and their tendency to seek out the best deals and discounts when purchasing. Conversely, purchasing intention refers to purchasing high-end, expensive products or services that are not considered necessities. Some research suggests that there may be a negative relationship between value consciousness and purchasing intention. Highly value-conscious individuals may be less likely to purchase goods and services because they perceive them to be less cost-effective. However, this is not always the case. Some individuals may have a high level of value consciousness but still, choose to purchase goods because they place a high value on their exclusivity and status. Additionally, value consciousness could affect how individuals consume in the aesthetics industry.

Highly value-conscious individuals may be more likely to research and compare prices, look for discounts, or choose more affordable options. It should be noted that these are possible examples and specific research on the aesthetics industry in Lebanon would be needed to get a more accurate understanding of how value consciousness affects purchasing intention in that particular context.

H1: There is an association between consumers’ VC and their attitudes toward purchasing intention.

Susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) is one of the factors affecting purchasing intention in the Lebanese aesthetics industry. The relationship between SNI and purchasing intention indicates that individuals susceptible to normative influence are more likely to engage in purchasing intention. This may be because individuals susceptible to normative influence pay more attention to what is socially desirable and tend to conform to social norms and expectations, which often include consuming goods. In addition, these individuals may also be more likely to be influenced by peer pressure and social comparison, which can further drive their purchasing intention behavior.
The extent to which SNI affects purchasing intention in the Lebanese aesthetics industry can be quantified through empirical research and data analysis.

The relationship between susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) and purchasing intention in the Lebanese aesthetics industry is a topic that has gained significant attention among researchers. Therefore, it is essential to re-evaluate the hypothesized relationship liking consumers’ SNI to their attitudes towards the best-known brands, taking into account the disruption of the pandemic on these studied variables, in the following formulated hypothesis:

H2: There is an association between consumers’ SNI and their attitudes toward purchasing intention

Brand attitudes may mediate the relationship between value consciousness and purchasing intention in the aesthetics industry in Lebanon. Brand attitudes refer to an individual's overall evaluation of a brand and their level of loyalty towards it. If highly value conscious individuals have positive brand attitudes towards aesthetics brands, they may be more likely to engage in purchasing intention. They may view these brands as providing high-quality products and services worth the extra cost. In this case, their brand attitudes towards aesthetics would mediate the relationship between their value consciousness and purchasing intention. On the other hand, if highly value-conscious individuals have negative brand attitudes towards aesthetics brands, they may be less likely to engage in purchasing intention.

They may view these brands as overpriced or unnecessary and therefore avoid them. In this case, their brand attitudes towards aesthetics would also mediate the relationship between their value consciousness and purchasing intention. It is worth noting that these are potential examples and research would be needed to examine the relationship between value consciousness, brand attitudes, and purchasing intention in the aesthetics industry in Lebanon. Based on the above, the following hypothesis will be validated:

H3: Brand attitudes mediate the relationship between value consciousness and purchasing intention

The relationship between susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) and purchasing intention in the Lebanese Aesthetics Industry can be analyzed by understanding the mediating role of brand attitudes. The research suggests that brand attitudes play a significant role in the relationship between SNI and purchasing intention. Consumers’ attitudes toward brands affect the relationship between SNI and purchasing intention. Susceptibility to normative influence refers to the extent to which the opinions, values, and beliefs of others influence consumers. Suppose a consumer has high susceptibility to normative influence. In the Lebanese Aesthetics Industry, the research suggests that the higher the SNI of a consumer, the more they are likely to have positive brand attitudes towards brands. This positive brand attitude, in turn, increases the likelihood of purchasing intention. Therefore, the research confirms that brand attitudes partially mediate the relationship between SNI and purchasing intention in the Lebanese Aesthetics Industry.

This implies that understanding and targeting the brand attitudes of consumers is important for the brands to enhance their appeal and increase the likelihood of purchasing intention. The relationship between susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) and purchasing intention in the Lebanese Aesthetics Industry can be understood through brand
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attitudes mediating this relationship. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that individuals highly susceptible to normative influence tend to conform to societal norms and values, including those related to purchasing intention. Based on the above, the following hypothesis is validated:

H4: Brand attitudes mediate the relationship between susceptibility to normative influence and purchasing intention

Implications

This research provides additional knowledge on consumer psychological traits literature that was not much tackled under this category before, in addition to the literature reflecting the mediating effect of brand attitudes between these traits and purchasing intention. By employing brand attitude as a mediator, this research presented a new conceptual framework from previous research for analyzing the relationship between consumer psychological traits and purchasing intention taking brand attitudes as a mediator. This research expanded the information in marketing literature, and which will promote the better understanding of consumer psychological traits in reflection to the theories and literature review addressed in this research.

This research added to the knowledge of consumer psychological traits and most of the studies that tackle similar topics are conducted in western and few Arab countries, but this research addressed the topics within the context of the health and financial crises Lebanon faced and still facing from three years till present. This research is considered one of the few studies that conceptualizes variables like the consumer psychological traits and research their relationship on purchasing intention through the mediating effect of brand attitudes

Research limitations

Research may have been conducted on a limited sample size, which might not represent the entire population of the Lebanese Aesthetics Industry. This may limit the ability to generalize the results. The impact of consumer psychological traits on purchasing intention might be influenced by various contextual factors such as cultural, social, and economic conditions. The research may not have accounted for these factors, leading to a limited understanding of the relationship between psychological traits and purchasing intention.

The measures used to assess consumer psychological traits, brand attitudes, and purchasing intention might not be valid or reliable. This could affect the accuracy of the results and lead to incorrect conclusions. The research may have used self-reported data, which could be subject to bias and social desirability effects. The use of other data collection methods, such as experiments or observational studies, could provide more robust results.

The research may have limited theoretical grounding, and existing literature may not support the findings. Further research is needed to strengthen the theoretical foundations and explore the relationships between consumer psychological traits, brand attitudes, and purchasing intention in the Lebanese Aesthetics Industry.

Cultural differences between countries can affect consumer behavior and make it difficult to generalize findings from one country to another.
Recommendations for future research

Although the main dependent variable investigated by the research is purchasing intention, which entails a long period to be effectively observed, evaluated, and measured, this research relied on a cross-sectional sampling technique: convenience sampling. Therefore, the time dimension may undermine the value of the results of this research, especially with the current accelerated environmental changes so the current research findings should be used with caution.

Thus, a longitudinal sample is recommended to be used in future research. This research focused on three variables to analyze the mediation effect of brand attitude on consumer psychological traits and purchasing intention. Still, many other important variables should be considered in future research to understand the phenomenon better. Therefore, this research recommends extending the current conceptual framework to include these variables to build a more integrated framework for understanding consumer psychological traits and behavior.

Although the concept of consumer psychological traits is a vital concept for the success of the aesthetics in Lebanon, this research focused on aesthetics in Lebanon and thus multinational and international companies should be considered for future research. Different countries have different cultures, attitudes, and behaviors. Since this research is conducted in Beirut, Lebanon, the results should be cautiously used. It is recommended for future research to duplicate the framework in other cultures and conduct comparative studies to conclude the behavior differences across the different countries to gain more insights for international and global companies.

References:


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