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# Self-expressiveness and hedonic brand affect brand love through brand jealousy

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## Abstract

This study investigates the effect of self-expressiveness and hedonic brand aspect on brand jealousy through brand love of female fashion clothing brands. Conceptualized research framework is empirically tested through utilization of Smart PLS. Data are collected through questionnaire survey from 313 female consumers of fashion clothing brand with convenience sampling. It is empirically proven that self-expressiveness and hedonic brand aspect are positively related with brand love and indirectly associated with brand jealousy for female fashion clothing brands. Brand love in association with brand jealousy enhances knowledge in the context of female fashion clothing brands.

**Keywords:** Self-expressiveness, Hedonic brand, Brand love, Brand jealousy, Fashion clothing

## Introduction

### Background of the study

Fashion clothing consumers want continual new trends, constant fashion changes and the availability of new products (Evans, Grimmer & Grimmer, [31]). Branded clothing consumption is emerging, and it holds a focal activity of consumer behavior. Consumers' behavior is highly devoted to fashion clothing brands to improve their social self-expression (J. G. [87]). Particularly, it must be given more importance when it is to be considered for female branded clothing consumption because women have higher level of fashion consciousness [60]. Fashion clothing brands consumption is increasing in Pakistan particularly for females from universities and colleges (teachers and students); because they are more aware of the designs, quality, and latest fashion trends due to their enhanced engagement of social media [72]. Emotionally attached female consumers with the brands are diligently willing to pay the premium price (Pourazad, Stocchi, & Pare, [78]; [79]). Emotionally attached consumers often use the phrase "I love this dress" which depicts that consumers not only love to shop but they also fall in

love with the brands ([2]. Young female consumers are converting into shopping addiction [51]. Fashion clothing consumers adopt new fashions and socially communicate their experience to influence followers and opinion-seekers [3]. Brand love is a phenomenon that is experienced by satisfied customers' group [38]. The word love is used for brands similarly as for persons and love is blind, managers must try to develop high level of love for the brands (Zhang, Zhang, & Sakulsinlapakorn, [102]). Consumers feel love due to emotional attachment with the brands. Love is a second highly ranked emotional experience succeeded by happiness [89]; therefore, consumer-brand relationship retains significant place in the literature of branding [52].

Brand managers strategize to develop stronger relationship with the customers through financial and non-financial benefits to keep the relationships for longer periods. However, it is difficult to maintain the relationship without the emotional attachment to the brand [10, 56]. Brand love is more than liking and satisfaction, and a wide variety of the brands are loved by consumers (Ahuvia, Rauschnabel, & Rindfleisch [1]. Satisfaction involves rational thinking, whereas brand love has stronger affective approach [18]. Positive experience with the brand generates brand love. Consumers feel love when the brand enhances the consumer's self-image

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and self-expressiveness [56]. Customers purchase brands for utility, social, and psychological needs [44]. If the brand image correlates with the consumer's self-image and enhances the consumer's self-esteem, she feels that the brand is more appropriate to select. Consumption of branded fashion clothing is symbolic communication with the society [44]. Consumers purchase the brands to satisfy the needs of psychological proximity, status, and belonging.

Brand love is associated with hedonic aspect of the product. Consumers are more emotionally attached with hedonic than utilitarian aspect of the product [18]. Hedonic aspect is related to the feelings of pleasure, joy, and fun [104], whereas utilitarian aspect of the product refers to the basic product function [24]. Companies attain competitive advantage based on strong brands; brands become strong with consumers' emotional attachment.

Customer's strong feelings of brand love initiate brand jealousy as well. Jealousy is experienced when a customer is unable to buy the loved brand and notices another individual consuming the same brand ([85]. The brand-jealous customers become more possessive and consider other customers of that brand as their rivals (Leventhal [66]. Brand jealousy is considered as a negative emotion. Non-user of brand perceives threat to self-esteem when the customer observes other individuals using the same brand [100].

### **Aims of the study**

This study is grounded on the theory of interpersonal love and relationship for fashion clothing brands of female consumers. Brand love is similar to the emotional attachment between two individuals [55]. Brand love can result in a strong emotional statement of brand addiction [63]. Increased consumption of fashion clothing brands among female consumers motivated the authors to further investigate brand love in the context of Pakistani fashion clothing brands. Fournier [36] initially advocates those consumers may have love-like feelings with brands like personal relationships. Further, consumers can develop emotions for the brand same as love (Noël [5, 18]).

Outcomes of brand love are suggested in the literature such as positive word of mouth and brand loyalty ([2], Noël [4], Leventhal, Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, [67]), ready to pay the premium price [32], strong purchase intention [33, 75], tolerance for product failure [37], and brand jealousy (Leventhal, [85]. Therefore, this study proposes brand jealousy as an outcome of brand love and provides the impact of self-expressiveness and the brand hedonism on brand love of female consumers of fashion clothing. This study fills the knowledge gap through

investigating the impact of self-expressiveness and brand hedonic aspect on brand jealousy through brand love of female consumers of fashion clothing. Brand jealousy is relatively a new construct in branding literature; therefore, brand jealousy as an outcome of brand love is investigated to enhance knowledge particularly in the context of female consumers of fashion clothing brands. Primary purpose and novelty of this study are to investigate the research objectives: (I) to investigate the effect of self-expressiveness on brand jealousy through brand love of female consumers of fashion clothing brands and (II) to investigate the effect of hedonic brand aspect on brand jealousy through brand love of female consumers of fashion clothing brands.

### **Self-expressiveness**

Brand acts as symbol for the consumers which they associate with certain individuals [56]. The symbolic aspect of the brand enables consumers to express themselves in the society [44, 45]. Self-expressiveness of brand is defined as, "the customers' perception of the degree to which the specific brand enhances one's social self and/or reflects one's inner self" [18], p. 82). Consumers want to be a part of specific reference groups and they want to maintain their unique selves (Kleine, Kleine III, & Allen [61, 92]. The notion of self is categorized as social self, inner self, ideal self, and real self [29]. Social self refers to the public image consumers want to attain being the member of a reference group and the inner self refers to the personal satisfaction of consumer [25]. Real self is the actual image of the consumer, while the ideal self is the image a consumer that she desires to have. Consumers actually express their self-image and set it apart from others in the society through brand consumption [44]. Self-expressive brand mirrors the consumers' inner self and uplifts their social self through brands consumption [18].

Flight and Coker [34] state that consumers rate the brands higher which uplift their self-image; consumers express themselves better in the society through consumption of such brands. Consumers can express their individual identities by associating themselves with the brand attributes [22, 36]. This association with the brand is based on intrinsic and extrinsic product features [22]. Therefore, consumers buy brands to gain functional product utility and the symbolic meanings of the brands. Consumers' relationship with the brand provides a structure to their lives and makes it meaningful, by connecting and reinforcing brand's image with consumers' self-image [13, 22, 36, 54]. Therefore, consumers express their inner self by consuming a specific brand [30], and this attribute of self-expressiveness becomes the driving force for the consumers to make a purchase decision [93].

Feelings of love for the brand are developed when consumer is emotionally attached to the brand [18]. Hwang and Kandampully [50] describe that consumers love the fashion brands more which truly represent their selves in the society. The attribute of self-identification in a brand contributes to creating love-like feelings for a brand [14].

Self-expressive brands express consumers inner self in the society and enhance their social self [25]. There is a positive relationship between consumers' social self and brand love (Aron, Paris, & Aron [9]). Consumers' love for the brand is greater if it mirrors their social self. Consumers are more satisfied in their social circle if the brand image coincides with the self-image. Consumers have strong positive relationship with the brands that can contribute to their social identity. Social identity plays a significant role in defining consumers-brand relationship (Vernuccio, Pagani, Barbarossa, & Pastore [98]). The brands which are close to consumers' inner selves are more loveable. Attribute of self-expressiveness results in positive word of mouth for the brand and creates brand loyalty [81]. Consumers feel more connected to fashion or luxury brands which correlates to their self-identity [49]. Self-expressiveness can influence positively brand love [68]. Consumers' love-like feelings will be greater for the brands which can shape and express their self-identity.

### **Hedonic brand**

Hedonic aspect of product is defined as, "the consumer's perception of the relative role of hedonic (as compared with utilitarian) benefits offered by the product category" [18], p. 82). Perceived hedonic value is vital to a marketing strategy because perceived value can influence consumers' beliefs, wants, and expectations of the products [21]. Hedonic product is defined as, "whose consumption is primarily characterized by an effective and sensory experience of aesthetic or sensual pleasure, fantasy, and fun" [28], p. 61). Consumers exhibit different buying behavior for hedonic and utilitarian products [56]. All products have aspects of utilitarian and hedonic. Hedonic value of the product refers to the sensual experience of pleasure, aesthetics, and joy [104]. Experience of delight, fantasy, thrill, and excitement is related to the consumption of such products, whereas the utilitarian aspect refers to the specific or core function of the product [24].

Hedonic product aspect is subjective, whereas for utilitarian product aspect is objective. To understand the value of hedonic and utilitarian aspects of the product, it is important to identify the reasons of buying the product, as all products are bought for various reasons. Purchase reasons may be health, environmental friendliness, and societal concerns in case of food products, whereas

in case of tourism service, the reason is pleasure, fun, and excitement which is objective orientation [70]. It is difficult to rationalize the shaping of hedonic product than utilitarian product because it is difficult to quantify the hedonic value of products or brands.

Hedonic value of the product satisfies the need of self-expressiveness [56]. If the hedonic value offering is in line with consumers' self-image, consumers are more willing to purchase the brand. Consequently, consumers are more emotionally attached to the brands with hedonic values. Low involvement products are positioned on the basis of congruency with consumers self-image [71]. When a product is positioned on thrill or adventure and a customer feels that the brand image is in line with her self-image, then the customer would be emotionally involved with the brand and purchase of the brand justifies hedonic value offering. Companies offer hedonic and utilitarian premiums for the promotion of products [74].

Hedonic premium refers to the product consumed for fun and pleasure, e.g., sunglasses, whereas utilitarian premium refers to the product consumed for accomplishment of the task, e.g., thermos flask. Shoppers prefer hedonic premium over utilitarian premium when the decision is more affective and utilitarian premium over hedonic premium when the decision is based on cognition [74].

Hedonic and utilitarian purchases are based on situational factors like shopping environment. When shopping environment is exciting, it triggers (specially female) consumers to buy the product [17]. Shoppers inclined toward hedonic aspects look for the pleasure and joy associated with the shopping experience, whereas shoppers concerned with utilitarian aspects look for the accomplishment of the task [8].

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Hedonic aspect gained from the product can lead consumers to brand love [19]. Hedonic value delivered by the brand is basically an important predictor of brand love [12], as it affects consumers' emotions for the brand. Hedonic value and brand love are positively associated to each other [18, 48]. Brand love is based on both cognition and emotional aspects of value gained from the brand [12]. Hedonic brand aspect can predict brand love [20]. Hedonic product aspect and brand love have positive relationship [48]. Consumers are emotionally attached to the brands which provide hedonic value [64]. Hedonic

brand aspect generates greater emotional responses among consumers who have feelings of brand love [56].

### **Brand love**

Brand love is originated from the studies based on consumer delight and relationship of consumer with the brand [53]. Love is defined as the combination of three components: commitment, passion, and intimacy [56]. Additionally, brand love is defined as, “the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular trade name” [18]. Fournier [36] proposed six dimensions of consumer–brand relationships inclusive of brand. Brand love has six dimensions: admiration, closeness, delight, trance, recollections, and unicity (Noël [5]. Later on, seven dimensions of brand love are identified such as passionate, self-brand congruency, deep positive emotions, loyalty, attitude, confidence, and fear to lose. Thomson, MacInnis, and Whan Park [97] suggested three dimensions of brand love: affection, passion, and connection.

Mostly brand love studies are based on Sternberg's triangular theory of love. Sternberg [96] proposed three dimensions of interpersonal love such as passion, intimacy, and commitment. Intimacy refers to the emotional attachment for an interpersonal relationship, passion refers to the level of motivation for an interpersonal relationship, whereas commitment is the logical support for the relationship [26]. Level of commitment depicts the inclination to continue the relationship for a longer period. Love can exist with the presence of all three dimensions. Presence of all three dimensions ensures the complete love.

Shimp and Madden [91] described three dimensions of brand love (liking, desire, and decision) that corresponds to Sternberg's dimensions of interpersonal love. Liking and desire refers to intimacy and passion for the brand, respectively, whereas commitment refers to the cognitive stage of decision to choose a brand. Brand love is consumer's emotion and passion for the brand [18, 95]. Emotion and passion make the relationship romantic and interactive [96]. Thus, researchers conceptualize consumer's love as passionate and emotional attachment with a brand which results in loyalty.

Brand love conceptualization is based on attitude, subjective norm, and control factors, and it provides view of love as an emotional relationship between consumer and her brand [47, 83]. Attitude toward the brand, subjective norms, and brand anthropomorphism influence brand love. However, subjective norms influence brand love in case of highly involved consumers and brand anthropomorphism influence brand love in case of low involved consumers. Brand love is more than positive attitude and

customer satisfaction. Although positive attitude is considered as a dimension of brand love, it solely does not create love for the brand [56]. Similarly, satisfaction is related to rational judgment whereas brand love involves affection that is irrational. However, customer satisfaction is partly cognitive and affective phenomenon [80]. Satisfaction after consumption leads customers to emotional association with the brand [97]. Hence, collective satisfaction of customers with the brand for a longer period builds an emotional bond between customer and brand. Brand love constitutes a broad range of positive feelings, emotions, and attitude which elicit consumer behavior (Bairrada, Coelho, & Lizanets, [11]; [59, 69].

Brand love involves synergy between brand and consumer's inner self, deep emotional attachment, brands commitment, brands care for the consumer, sense of identity, source of pleasure, and the continuous delivery on performance [12]. Brand love increases loyalty that generates positive word of mouth, and brand lovers resist any negative information about the brand (Noel [4].

Brand love results in positive communication about the brand and loyalty (A. C. [2], Leventhal, [85], repurchase intention [33, 75], ready to excuse the brand in situation of brand failure in unfair circumstance [37], willingness to pay premium prices [32], brand jealousy when other individuals are consuming the brand and the potential consumer does not have it currently (Leventhal, [85], [86], and shielding the brand if any negative information is circulating about the brand [12]. Jealousy in interpersonal relationship arises when the partner perceives the potential involvement of the loved one with someone else. Consumers are emotionally attached with the objects they consume [91]. Consumers love the brands; this love has a lot of similarities with interpersonal love. Romanticism exists in consumer–brand love relationship. When consumers are in love with the brand and cannot purchase due to any constraint, consumers become jealous ([84]. This romanticism is a composition of passion, intimacy, and commitment [18]. Therefore, brand love can initiate feelings of brand jealousy.

### **Brand jealousy**

A novel psychological construct termed as brand jealousy is investigated in consumer behavior research [15, 27, 57]; this construct is conceptualized on the basis of interpersonal relationship [62]. Jealousy is an intense feeling which occurs when a particular romantic relationship is threatened by a rival (Hancock, Adams, Breazeale, & Lueg, [46]; [62]. Interpersonal jealousy is defined as, “complex of behaviors, thoughts and emotions resulting from the perception of harm, or threat to the self and/or the romantic relationship by a real or potential rival

relationship” (G. [99]. Interpersonal jealousy is classified as emotional and cognitive jealousy [77]. Cognitive jealousy is the result of thoughts and fears faced by an individual for his/her romantic relationship, whereas emotional jealousy is a perception of threat to a relationship [15, 77].

Feelings of interpersonal jealousy are experienced for things other than people [15]. Just like interpersonal relationships, consumers have strong emotional relationships with brands [97]. When a customer has love-like feelings for a brand but does not possess that brand due to any constraint, she may feel jealousy when the same brand is purchased by others [15]. Therefore, when a potential customer is unable to purchase the loved brand at a certain point in time, she starts considering other consumers of that brand as her rivals and becomes a brand-jealous customer (Leventhal, [85], [85, 94]. This rivalry is a specific mental state and the potential customers usually do not express this publicly ([85]. Difference between interpersonal jealousy and brand jealousy is that brands do not have the ability to reciprocate in the relationship ([85]. Companies are now overcoming this reciprocity aspect by introducing the concept of interactive marketing. Companies are now engaging customers in the production process and allowing them to design the products according to their unique needs and desires.

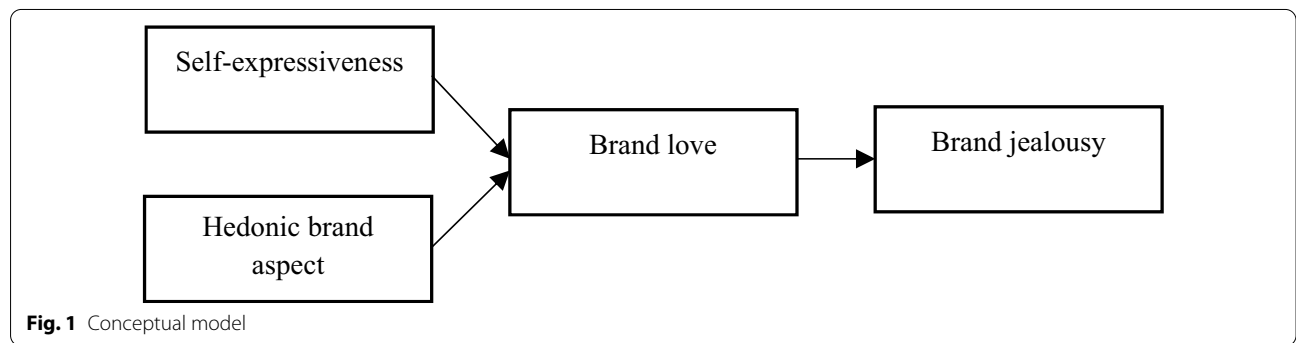
Brand jealousy is considered as a negative emotion with a threat to the self-esteem. Non-user but potential customer of the brand feels threat to self-esteem while seeing other individuals using her loved brand ([85]. Therefore, brand jealousy is mostly experienced for the brands which are consumed to satisfy an individual’s esteem needs ([100]. For example, a potential customer X might romantically desire a fashion clothing brand, but X might not be able to purchase the brand due to financial limitations. Thus, X becomes jealous by seeing her friend wearing that branded dress.

Researchers applied self-presentation theory to conceptualize this construct [15]. Brand-jealous customer might experience the feeling of social anxiety when she

fails to purchase the loved brand due to any constraint. Some scholars have applied social exclusion theory to explain brand jealousy. When the brand-jealous customer cannot possess the desired brand, she feels excluded from the specific social group [15].

Customers join brand communities which are formed so that customers can identify themselves with their loved brands [88]. Brand identity is considered as an antecedent of brand love [14]. Customers might experience the strong self-brand identity without actually experiencing the brand ([85]. Therefore, it is possible that a customer who cannot purchase the loved brand presently due to any constraint and feels rivalry with the present users of the brand, might join a brand community to be identified with other brand users and can satisfy her self-esteem to some extent ([85].

Researchers have treated this construct in different ways. A. Sarkar et al. [85] conceptualize that brand jealousy is the consequence of brand desire. Brand desire is treated as romantically that brand desire is an emotional force which leads customers toward consumption. Brand jealousy as an independent variable and its influence on willingness to pay premium through the mediation of materialism are investigated [15]. Consumers purchase the products to gain value. Studies on consumer behavior are focusing on consumer value exclusively. Consumer value is a concept which denotes the benefits consumers perceive from the brand and the cost they have to pay for the benefits [48]. Consumer value is categorized as extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic value is the basic functional utility of the brand; the core function a brand is supposed to perform, whereas intrinsic value refers to elements of pleasure, fun and joy associated with the consumption of a brand [65]. Therefore, the combined value gained from the brand has an impact on brand love. Hedonic product concept is incorporated as hedonic brand aspect. This study conceptualizes that self-expressiveness and hedonic brand aspect can affect brand jealousy through mediation of brand love, see Fig. 1.





Thus, hypotheses are postulated for empirical testing.

*H1* Self-expressiveness positively affects brand love of fashion clothing brands.

*H2* Hedonic brand aspect positively affects brand love of fashion clothing brands.

*H3* Brand love positively affects brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands.

*H4* Brand love mediates the relationship of self-expressiveness and brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands.

*H<sub>5</sub>* Brand love mediates the relationship of hedonic brand aspect and brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands.

### Theoretical foundation

This study is grounded on Sternberg's triangular theory of love. Mostly studies have utilized this theory to conceptualize brand love [18, 36, 56, 91]. Love is the combination of three major constituents; intimacy, passion and commitment [96]. These three constituents can be joined in different ways which gives eight different forms of love [91].

Intimacy refers to the strong emotions which results in love relations. Intimacy is "feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness" [96], p. 119). Intimacy embraces the emotional support, strong communication and regard for the other. The construct liking equivalent to intimacy for consumer-object relationship is introduced in the literature [91]. For example, consumer may have strong positive associations with an apparel, and it is like an old friend of her. Similarly, different items including jewelry, shoes, and ornaments become the part of consumers' self-identity and symbolic significance in the society.

The motivational part is passion and it is defined as "the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation, and related phenomena in loving relationships" [96], p. 119). Construct of yearning equivalent to passion for consumer-object relations is a strong desire to have something. In combination with other components of the consumer-object relations, yearning can provide different possible love relations. Consumers continuously thought about the products which occupy their wish list [91]. Yearning refers to the consumer's extreme desire to have new house, to visit new restaurant, and to attend an upcoming musical event. The intensity of yearning may be high, low or moderate.

Cognitive component of decision/commitment is defined as "Decision is the short term recognition that one loves someone else, whereas commitment is the long term intention to maintain the love" [96], p. 119). Consumers may decide to purchase a product because of its attributes, in the short run. In the long-term consumers become loyal toward brand and repeatedly purchase the brand. Consumers are strongly committed to some brands because they have strong preferences for those brands and they consider the brands as best in the category due to strong feelings of love.

Theory of love conceptualizes the nature of love [96]; this theory explains loving relationships in the context of human psychology and sociology. Marketing scholar are applying this theory to explain the relationship between the brand and the customers. This theory suggests to conceptualize love through brand intimacy, brand commitment, and brand passion [6]. The conceptual model of this study is considering brand intimacy in the context of self-expressiveness, brand commitment in the context of hedonic brand aspect, and brand passion in the context of brand jealousy. The conceptual model tries to borrow the conceptual underpinning of triangular theory of love.

### Method

#### Data collection and survey instrument

Data are collected through self-administered questionnaire survey with convenience sampling. Convenience sample is employed to obtain a large number of completed questionnaires quickly and economically (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin [105]). A target sample of 500 respondents is decided in consideration of the problem solving study should have 200 or 10 times of the number of variables whichever is more, so typical range is 300–500 [105]. A preliminary version of the questionnaire was employed and pretested on a small sample of the similar female consumers of fashion clothing brands. Questionnaires were distributed in various universities and colleges at four metropolitan cities of Pakistan (Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi) because majority fashion-conscious female consumers reside in these cities. These cities were decided based upon the respondents' high degree of awareness about fashion clothing brands as well as their availability and accessibility. In total, 330 filled questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 66%. Seventeen incomplete questionnaires were rejected. So, 313 responses were considered for data analysis with Smart PLS-3. Target population consists of female consumers (teachers and students) of fashion clothing brands in Pakistan. Because female consumers (teachers and students) are more fashion-conscious, they purchase more fashion clothing brands

[16, 51]. Furthermore, women are regarded more fashion conscious than men [73].

Self-expressiveness is measured with eight items adopted from a previous study with 5-point Likert scale [18]. Hedonic aspect of brand is measured with five items with 5-point Likert scale adopted from a previous study (Ryu, Han, & Jang [82]). Brand love is measured with items adopted from a previous study [18]. Brand jealousy is measured with items of previous study as well [15].

## Results

### Descriptive analysis

Mostly (49.2%) consumers of fashion clothing brands are in age group of 20–25. 20.1% respondents are in the age group of 26–30. Fifteen percent respondents lie in the age group of 31–35. 10.2% represent the age group of 36–40. Merely 3.2% respondents lie in the age group of 41–45, while only 2.2% respondents lie in the age group of 45 and above. Most of the respondents hold intermediate and bachelor's degrees. 5.8% respondents have the education level of matric. 27.2% respondents have the education level of intermediate. 31% respondents hold bachelor's degree. 19.2% respondents hold master's degree. Only 14.1% respondents hold MS/MPhil degree and 2.9% respondents hold PhD degree, see Table 1.

### PLS-SEM Model Assessment

Partial Least Square based on Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) are two popular methods for data analysis. CB-SEM is grounded on factor analysis which is appropriate for theory testing. CB-SEM uses maximum likelihood estimation whereas PLS-SEM is grounded on principal component [23]. PLS-SEM is

a popular analysis tool used by business management researchers in the fields of operations management [76], marketing management (Joe F [42], human resource management, and organizational behavior [7]. PLS-SEM is used for analysis because it poses less restrictions on sample size and distribution of data (Hair Jr, Howard, & Nitzl [43]; [101]. This study uses Smart PLS-3 to empirically test conceptual model.

### Measurement model assessment

Assessment of the outer model (measurement model) provides the evaluation of internal consistency through composite reliability (CR), evaluation of convergent validity through average variance extracted (AVE) and it also provides individual indicator reliability in PLS-SEM (Joseph F Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele [41]). All the variables have Cronbach's coefficient alpha greater than 0.80 value such as: self-expressiveness ( $\alpha=0.863$ ), hedonic brand aspect ( $\alpha=0.801$ ), brand love ( $\alpha=0.832$ ), and brand jealousy ( $\alpha=0.874$ ). Higher alpha value of 0.70 depicts greater reliability of the variables [90]. Indicator reliability shows the variation in a variable that is explained by an item (J. [39].

Outer loadings represent indicator reliability in measurement model. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out. All the items loaded well (factor loadings greater than 0.7) except three items such as: one item (BL1) of brand love and two items (SE7 and SE8) of self-expressiveness were omitted due to lower values than 0.70. Items having loadings 0.70 or more were considered for further analysis, see factor loadings in Table 2. All the values of CR are greater than 0.80 which means internal consistency is established (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham [40]). VIF value of all the items in our study is less than 5; this ensures no issue of multicollinearity. Convergent validity is assessed through values of AVE. Convergent validity is established as values for AVE are greater than 0.50 [35], see Table 2.

### Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity is ensured through criterion suggested by Fornell and Larcker [35]. Square root of AVE values of all constructs is higher than inter-construct correlations such as: self-expressiveness=0.771, hedonic brand aspect=0.747, brand love=0.736, and brand jealousy=0.894; thus, discriminant validity is established, see Table 3. Furthermore, all HTMT values are below the threshold value of 0.9 to further establish the discriminant validity (Hair Jr et al., [43]), see Table 3.

**Table 1** Demographic analysis

Demographics category	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age profile</i>		
20–25	154	49.2
26–30	63	20.1
31–35	47	15.0
36–40	32	10.2
41–45	10	3.2
45 and above	7	2.2
<i>Education profile</i>		
Matric	18	5.8
Intermediate	85	27.2
Bachelor	97	31.0
Master	60	19.2
MS/MPhil	44	14.1
Ph. D	9	2.9

**Table 2** Construct validity—Results summary for outer model

Latent variables	Indicators	Factor loadings	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Brand jealousy	BJ1	0.906	2.556	0.874	0.922	0.799
	BJ2	0.904	2.355			
	BJ3	0.870	2.217			
Brand love	BL2	0.715	1.751	0.832	0.877	0.542
	BL3	0.736	1.624			
	BL4	0.727	1.633			
	BL5	0.731	1.582			
	BL6	0.776	1.793			
	BL7	0.730	1.662			
	HB1	0.735	1.444			
HB2	0.707	1.489				
HB3	0.771	1.662				
HB4	0.749	1.608				
HB5	0.769	1.638				
Self-expressiveness	SE1	0.749	1.691	0.863	0.898	0.594
	SE2	0.786	1.823			
	SE3	0.825	2.195			
	SE4	0.807	2.001			
	SE5	0.729	1.661			
	SE6	0.723	1.628			

Indicators reliability: Loadings; CR Composite reliability; AVE Average variance extracted

**Table 3** Discriminant validity and Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	1	2	3	4
Brand jealousy	<b>0.894</b>			
Brand love	0.249 (0.28)	<b>0.736</b>		
Hedonic brand aspect	0.265 (0.31)	0.538 (0.66)	<b>0.747</b>	0.25
Self-expressiveness	0.266 (0.30)	0.580 (0.67)	0.496 (0.59)	<b>0.771</b>

The off-diagonal values are the correlations between latent variables, the diagonal are the square root of AVE, and HTMT values are in italics

*value* = 0.000. Brand love positively affects brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands; H<sub>3</sub> is supported as  $\beta = 0.249$ ,  $T = 4.656$ , and *P value* = 0.000 as shown in Table 4.

**Assessing R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup>**

R<sup>2</sup> (coefficient of determination) is proportion of variance in the endogenous variable that is explained by exogenous variable associated to it ([39]). It is basically mutual effect of all exogenous variables on endogenous

**Structural model assessment**

**Hypotheses testing**

Self-expressiveness positively affects brand love of fashion clothing brands; H<sub>1</sub> is supported as  $\beta = 0.415$ ,  $T = 7.459$ , and *P value* = 0.000. Hedonic brand aspect positively affects brand love of fashion clothing brands; H<sub>2</sub> is supported as  $\beta = 0.332$ ,  $T = 5.417$ , and *P*

**Table 5** Results of R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup>

Endogenous variables	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Adjusted	Q <sup>2</sup> (= 1-SSE/SSO)	Effect size
Brand love	0.419	0.416	0.210	Medium
Brand jealousy	0.062	0.059	0.046	Small

Small: 0.0 < Q<sup>2</sup> effect size < 0.15; Medium: 0.15 < Q<sup>2</sup> effect size < 0.35; Large: Q<sup>2</sup> effect size > 0.35

**Table 4** Results of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Path-coefficients	T statistics	P values	Decision	
H <sub>1</sub>	Self-expressiveness Brand love	0.415	7.459	0.000	supported
H <sub>2</sub>	Hedonic brand aspect Brand love	0.332	5.417	0.000	supported
H <sub>3</sub>	Brand love Brand jealousy	0.249	4.656	0.000	supported



variable. Coefficient of determination estimates the predictive precision of the model.  $R^2$  is squared correlation between actual and predictive values of dependent variable. Endogenous variables (brand love and brand jealousy) have  $R^2$  value of 0.419 and 0.062, respectively, to establish the predictive relevance of structural model, see Table 5. Blindfolding test is conducted to evaluate the predictive relevance of the model for each of the endogenous variables. Blindfolding test provides Stone–Geisser  $Q^2$  values, by performing blindfolding technique with an omission distance of 7 yielded cross-validated redundancy. Brand love and brand jealousy have  $Q^2$  values of 0.210 and 0.046, respectively. Both  $Q^2$  values are greater than zero; this establishes predictive relevance of structural model (see Table 5).

**Assessing  $f^2$**

Change in  $R^2$  by excluding any of exogenous variables from structural model is depicted with  $f^2$ . Effect size of an exogenous latent variable on an endogenous latent variable varies from small to medium as shown in Table 6.

**Mediation analysis**

Mediation analysis is performed to assess indirect effect of mediating variable brand love between relationship of brand jealousy and self-expressiveness as well as between relationship of brand jealousy and hedonic brand aspect. Smart PLS addresses mediation analysis with the approach of Zhao, Lynch Jr, and Chen [103]. This study deals with ‘indirect-only mediation’ type identified by Joseph F Hair et al. [41]. Mediator brand love fully complies with hypothesized relationships in the research framework. Results show full mediation of brand love in relationship between self-expressiveness and brand jealousy as well as in the relationship between hedonic brand aspect and brand jealousy. Variation accounted for (VAF) depicts that how

much of the direct path is captivated. The following mediation effects are described by Hair [39] on the basis of VAF value. There is no mediation if  $0 < VAF < 0.20$ . There is partial mediation if  $0.20 < VAF < 0.80$ . There is full mediation if  $VAF > 0.80$ . VAF value is 1 for both self-expressiveness and hedonic brand aspect as shown in Table 7. This indicates that brand love hundred percent explains the relationship between self-expressiveness and brand jealousy as well as between hedonic brand aspect and brand jealousy. Thus,  $H_4$  is supported; brand love mediated the relationship of self-expressiveness and brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands.  $H_5$  is supported; brand love mediated the relationship of hedonic brand aspect and brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands.

**Discussion and conclusion**

This study describes relationship among self-expressiveness, hedonic brand aspect, brand love, and brand jealousy in the context of female customers of fashion clothing brands. Self-expressiveness positively affected brand love of fashion clothing brands. This finding of positive relationship between self-expressiveness and brand love is consistent with previous studies [56], Kaufmann Hans, Loureiro Sandra Maria, & Manarioti, [58]). In other words, it can be said that female customers of fashion clothing brands fall in love the brands when they are self-expressive. Thus, female consumers of fashion clothing brands become part of specific reference group and maintain their unique selves with loved brands. Consumers of fashion clothing brands through consumption of loved brands express their inner self and enhance their social self.

Hedonic brand aspect positively affected brand love of fashion clothing brands; this finding commemorates with previous studies [18, 48, 56]. Hedonic brand aspect of fashion clothing brands influences female consumers to love the fashion clothing brands. Hedonic brand aspect positively affects consumers’ emotions to love the brands. Female consumers are emotionally attached to the fashion clothing brands which provide hedonic value, and this value positively affects feelings of brand love.

Brand love positively affected brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands; this finding is in line with the previous research ([84]. Female consumers of fashion clothing brands experience jealousy when they are unable to purchase the brands to who they love. Emotional attachment of female consumers about fashion clothing brands

**Table 6** Results of  $f^2$

	$f^2$	Effect size
Self-expressiveness Brand love	0.224	Medium
Hedonic brand aspect Brand love	0.143	Small
Brand love Brand jealousy	0.066	Small

Small:  $0.0 < f^2$  effect size  $< 0.15$ ; Medium:  $0.15 < f^2$  effect size  $< 0.35$ ; Large:  $f^2$  effect size  $> 0.3$

**Table 7** Mediation analysis

	Direct effect	Indirect effect	VAF	Mediation	Hypotheses	Decision
Self-expressiveness	0.332	0.103	1	Full	$H_4$	Supported
Hedonic brand aspect	0.249	0.083	1	Full	$H_5$	Supported

develops jealousy among them. Female consumers love the fashion clothing brands. Thus, it is proven when female consumers are in love with fashion clothing brands and they cannot purchase due to constraints, female consumers become jealous about the brands. Brand love initiates feelings of brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands among female consumers.

Brand love mediates the relationship of self-expressiveness and brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands. In other words, self-expressiveness is indirectly associated with brand jealousy through brand love for fashion clothing brands. Female fashion clothing brand-jealous customer experiences social anxiety when she fails to purchase the loved brand. Thus, it can be said that self-expressiveness of female consumer can develop brand jealousy through brand love so they can feel associated to a social group of fashion clothing brands.

Brand love mediates the relationship of hedonic brand aspect and brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands. Female consumer's hedonic brand aspect is indirectly associated with brand jealousy through brand love for fashion clothing brands. Hedonic brand aspect purchase can be based shopping environment. Thus, it is proven that female consumers buy fashion clothing brands due to hedonic brand aspect and hedonic brand aspect is indirectly related with brand jealousy through brand love for fashion clothing brands.

This study describes the importance of emotional attachment of female customers with the fashion clothing brands in the context fashion industry of Pakistan. Female customers use fashion clothing brands not only to achieve functional benefits but also for other benefits such as self-expressiveness and hedonic brand aspect. Therefore, brand managers should develop brands which can relate with the customers' self-identity to yield self-expressiveness. This study provides a model that explains the positive relationships among self-expressiveness, hedonic brand aspect, brand love, and brand jealousy in the context of female fashion clothing brands. Self-expressiveness and hedonic brand aspect are indirectly related to brand jealousy through brand love for female consumers of fashion clothing brands.

### **Theoretical and managerial implications**

This study contributes theoretically to literature by investigating the mediation of brand love between self-expressiveness and brand jealousy as well as mediation of brand love between hedonic brand aspect and brand jealousy about female consumers. This is a valuable insight for brand managers of female fashion clothing brands. Fashion clothing industry is becoming competitive day by day. Customers are becoming more conscious toward

fashion clothing brands. Therefore, brand managers need to develop strong brands that are loved by the customers. The brand managers need to be aware that self-expressiveness and hedonic brand aspect are important predictors of brand love. Self-expressive brands have the capability to express the consumers' social self and inner self toward the society. Brands significantly contribute in shaping customers' identity. Therefore, brand managers need to develop the brands that correlates with the consumers' self-identity. Specifically, fashion clothing brands play a significant role in customers' social status. Similarly, hedonic value gained from the brand builds emotional attachment of customers with the brand and increases love for the brand. The joyful experience of fashion clothing brands creates emotional attachment of customers with the brand. Therefore, fashion clothing brand managers must focus on the hedonic aspect of the brands. Brand love leads customers toward brand jealousy. Brand jealousy can make customers to pay premium prices to purchase and satisfy brand love. Brand managers can strategize to optimize brand jealousy for fashion clothing brands. Therefore, brand managers need to understand this psychological aspect of consumer behavior. Brand managers need to develop loveable fashion clothing brands.

This is a cross-sectional study based on convenience sampling of few cities of Pakistan. It can be generalized only to the female fashion clothing brands. Longitudinal approach with probability sampling frame for various industries can be used to investigate causal relationship among constructs for generalizability.

Brand jealousy is comparatively a new concept. Future researchers can integrate other constructs to the conceptual model of this study through inclusion of antecedents and outcomes of brand jealousy. Anticipated separation distress is an outcome of jealousy in interpersonal relationship. Impact of brand jealousy can be investigated further in association with brand communication.

### **Abbreviations**

AVE: Average variance extracted; CR: Composite reliability; CB-SEM: Covariance-based structural equation modeling; PL-SEM: Partial least squares structural equation modeling; VAF: Variation accounted for; VIF: Variance inflation factor.

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### **Author contributions**

SS conceptualized the study while AR furnished the data analysis and finalized the manuscript for the submission. Both authors have read and approved the manuscript.

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### Availability of data and materials

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### Declarations

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Not applicable.

#### Consent for publication

Both authors have read and approved the manuscript.

#### Competing interests

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