**Perspective of Brand Clues on Self-Identification towards Social Identification in the Fashion Industry in Saudi Arabia**

**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** This paper seeks to investigate the direct effects of brand clues on self-identification and social-identification within the fashion industry in Saudi Arabia.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Data was collected through an online survey, resulting in 1,041 quantitative responses. The study targeted the Saudi fashion industry and utilized a snowball sampling method for participant selection.

**Findings:** Results show that brand clues significantly impact both self-identification and social-identification, with self-identification strongly influencing social-identification among Saudi fashion consumers.

**Research implications:** Fashiondecision-makers in Saudi Arabia can adopt proactive approaches by considering brand renaming, developing innovative segmentation strategies, positioning brands effectively, and introducing new products aligned with customer values to encourage self and social-identification.

**Originality/value:** This study adopts a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach by integrating insights from marketing, branding, and psychology. It deepens the understanding of how Saudi Arabia’s cultural context affects brand identification within the fashion industry.

**Keywords**: brand clues; self-identification; social-identification, fashion*.*

**Introduction**

The fashion industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is thriving, reflecting a dynamic and expanding market projected to grow significantly in the coming years. In fact, 39.4% of the leading market is targeted toward women fashion, while 36.3% is targeted for men’s fashion clothing (Fashion Commission, 2023). Therefore, according to Marketline (2022), the industry is expected to increase by 34.6%, reaching a value of $20.18 billion. This substantial growth is primarily driven by women, representing 39.4% of the market. The demand for fashionable brands, particularly among the younger generation, is evident, with clothing and shoes comprising 71.6% of the market share. KSA’s Vision 2030 is pivotal in fueling this growth, as it aims to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on oil. This economic shift is anticipated to enhance consumers’ purchasing power and increase spending, especially among the youth, who are increasingly drawn to trendy fashion brands (Marketline, 2022).

Many marketing experts strive to understand how customers evaluate their choices, form preferences, and make purchase decisions (Malar, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011; Chaudhuri, 2006). One of these evaluations is the exposure to attractive packaging, design, or other aesthetic elements that engage the customer’s five senses and significantly enhance the in-store and online experience. This sensory appeal fosters a positive attitude towards the brand’s benefits, creating an enriched brand experience that plays a crucial role in shaping an individual’s self-identity and societal perception. These psychological mechanisms explain customers’ choices, linking sensory engagement to identity formation (Jones, Runyan, & Kim, 2012).

The primary gap in the literature lies in the lack of direct investigation into the relationship between brand clues and brand identification, specifically self-identification and social-identification. This paper aims to bridge this gap and offers several contributions. Firstly, it adopts a holistic, interdisciplinary approach combining marketing, branding, and psychology insights, offering a well-grounded perspective. Secondly, unlike previous research, which has only explored these relationships indirectly through other variables (Khan & Fatma, 2017; Jones et al., 2012), this study directly examines the link between brand clues and brand identification, explicitly focusing on self and social-identification. Thirdly, this paper enhances our understanding of how brand clues influence Saudi consumers and express their self and social identity. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the direct impact of brand clues on self-identification and social-identification in the Saudi fashion industry, adding valuable insights to both the academic and practical realms.

**Theoretical Background**

This paper integrates symbolic interactionism and social identity theory to comprehensively analyze brand clues, self-identification, and social-identification. The symbolic interactionism theory was introduced by Blumer in 1986 and further developed by subsequent scholars, examining how individuals interpret and ascribe meanings to various symbols in their environment. These interpretations influence their perspectives and interactions, leading to the construction of identities within a societal context. Through these social interactions, individuals continuously negotiate and redefine their identities based on the meanings derived from symbols (Quist-Adade, 2019). Symbols—words, labels, and gestures—are crucial in creating meaningful interpretations for individuals (Quist-Adade, 2019). These meanings can shape the behavior of groups, as ongoing communication through these symbols continuously influences individuals’ perception of reality.

On the other hand, the social identity theory suggests that individuals are categorized into distinct groups within a community, shaping their identity and influencing their interactions based on these classifications (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). This classification can lead to further distinctions, determining whether one belongs to or is excluded from a certain group (Jones et al., 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Thus, social identity theory explains how customers perceive their identity solely and collectively among other individuals. Moreover, when individuals start to assign themselves to a particular category in the community, they begin to behave the same way others behave (Jones et al., 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1985).

Repeated exposure to specific brand clues in the fashion industry, such as logos, slogans, and colors, helps customers understand and express their personal identity, steering a sense of belonging within a brand community (Khan & Fatma, 2017; Jones et al., 2012). In the context of this industry, the symbolic interactionism theory and the social identity theory provide meaningful insights into how customers form connections with brands and themselves. Symbolic interactionism theory suggests that brand elements act as pathways through which customers perceive themselves, shaping their identity in their own eyes and their community’s eyes. By resonating with these brand values, social identity theory further explains how customers identify the social category to which group they belong. Through this identification process, Saudi consumers enhance their desired self-image and social identity by associating themselves with fashion brands, creating a bond that aligns personal identity with social belonging.

**Literature Review**

***Brand clues***

Brand clues pave the way for the firm’s reputation to be established, built, and maintained (Dahiya & Kumar, 2022). In fact, brand clues encompass the visual aspects of a brand, including packaging, brand identity, location, and design (Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014). Furthermore, brand clues are a crucial aspect of brand identification that previous scholars have not fully digested. Brand clues constitute three dimensions: functional, mechanical, and humanized clues (Berry, Wall, & Carbone 2006). The functional clues concern the benefits, usefulness, and other aspects that can deliver an intangible advantage from using the product. The mechanical clues include brand identifications using one or more of the five senses, such as listening to sounds, smelling scents, beauty or identification using sight, feeling textures through touching, tasting flavors, lighting, and brand atmosphere. (Berry et al., 2006). Humanized clues mainly concern individuals between the customer and the product, such as the seller, customer service officer, brand manager, etc. The humanized clues are identified through employees’ behavior, dealing with dissatisfaction, professionalism, dress code, and flexibility. Thus, these clues can be imitated if the product is copied, but the holistic experience cannot be imitated (Khan & Fatma, 2017). In fact, brand clues are boosters for strengthening customers’ brand experience (Danhauser, Boechat, Inácio, & Tavares, 2025).

***Self-identification***

Self-identification involves how customers perceive and project their self-image through the brand’s offerings (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). However, this definition might be distinguished in a different context, such as brand clues (Berry et al., 2006). Customers can identify themselves more when functional brand clues are established between the customer and the brand (Jones et al., 2012; Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Therefore, brands can serve as a powerful reflection of customers’ identities, fostering a strong bond between individuals and the aspects of the brand they connect with. Brand clues from a fashion brand can go beyond reflecting customers’ identities to becoming tangible aspects of their self-image. This is because customers seek to express who they are and to attain an idealized version of their self-identity (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Some brands can incorporate elements into their in-store environment that help bridge the gap between customers’ self-perception and the image they project socially among their peers (Claridge & Hur, 2021; Jones et al., 2012). Furthermore, self-identification is an effective trigger of customers’ attitude toward the brand, such as loyalty, satisfaction, or any brand involvement (Karagöz & Uysal, 2023).

***Social-identification***

Social-identification occurs when customers are attached to a brand due to its recognizable clues, developing shared beliefs and attitudes and fostering a sense of community (Hogg & Terry, 2000). In the context of brand clues, social-identification happens when multiple customers within a community associate themselves with the same brand clues, creating common beliefs and attitudes (Jones et al., 2012; Hogg & Terry, 2000). On the other hand, some brand clues can be socially unidentifiable, and individuals do not prefer to belong to this social group if they possess brand clues from a specific fashion brand (Jones et al., 2012). In most cases, customers prefer a specific brand since it offers them a clearer image of who they are in society’s eyes (Fournier, 1998). When a brand’s values and beliefs are congruent with those of customers, it creates a powerful impact, strengthening customers’ desire to belong to the brand’s community. This alignment, conveyed through brand clues, fosters a sense of shared identity and deepens the connection between the brand and customers (Al-Haddad, 2019).

**Hypotheses Development**

Previous research has struggled to establish a direct relationship between brand clues and self-identification and another direct relationship between brand clues and social-identification. Instead, one of the few indirect influences identified is the impact of brand clues on self-identification through brand experience (Khan & Fatma, 2017; Jones et al., 2012; O’cass & Frost, 2002). Furthermore, self-identification positively affects social-identification (Jones et al., 2012). The positive relationship between self-identification and social-identification highlights that when consumers align their self-image with a brand, they are more likely to associate themselves with social groups within the same brand affiliation (Jones et al., 2012). This effect is particularly evident in culturally rich contexts like KSA, where brand choices in the fashion industry carry significant social implications. Here, brand selection is not only a reflection of individual style but also conveys social status, alignment with cultural values, and a sense of being part of a fashionable community. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H1**: there is a positive effect of brand clues on self-identification

**H2**: there is a positive effect of brand clues on social- identification

**H3**: there is a positive effect of self-identification on social-identification

Brand clues

Self- Identification

Social-identification

**H1**

**H2**

Brand Identification

**H3**

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

**Methodology**

***Research Design***

The research approach of this paper is a quantitative method using cause and effect relationship. Using this approach is suitable for this study since it provide deeper examination of the impact of brand clues on self-identification and social-identification.

***Data Collection and Sampling***

The sampling frame for this study consists of Saudis, focusing on individuals born, raised, and acculturated in Saudi culture. The sampling method is snowball sampling, with data collected through an online survey. Respondents were first asked about their knowledge of brand clues, followed by questions regarding their self-identification and perceptions of their social identity. Demographic information was collected at the beginning of the survey. The final sample size of 1,041 respondents is substantial and robust. Previous researchers have indicated that the ideal sample size is multiplying the number of items by 10 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2006). This paper has 11 items by 10 is 110, and this study has exceeded 1000 observations

The sample characteristics include age, gender, income, occupation, educational level, and marital status. The majority of respondents were between 20 and 30 years old. A significant portion of the sample, 86.4%, were female. Most participants reported an income of less than 20,000 SAR. Regarding occupation, the sample primarily consisted of students, 42.4%, and regular employees, 46.2%. Approximately 73% held a bachelor’s degree, and 64.3% were unmarried. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the sample.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1 Sample Characteristics** | | |
|  | **N** | **(%)** |
| ***Age***  Between 20-30  Between 30-40  Between 40-50  Above 50 | 613  279  102  47 | 58.9%  26.8%  9.8%  4.5% |
| ***Gender***  Male  Female | 142  899 | 13.6%  86.4% |
| ***Income (SAR)***  Less than 5,000  5,001- 20,000  20,001-30,000  Above 30,000 | 429  343  116  153 | 41.2%  32.9%  11.1%  14.7% |
| ***Occupation***  Student  Employee  Business owner  Retired | 441  481  55  64 | 42.4%  46.2%  5.3%  6.1% |
| ***Educational Level***  Diploma  Bachelor  Masters’ degree  PhD holder | 60  760  165  56 | 5.8%  73%  15.9%  5.4% |
| ***Marital Status***  Married  Not married | 372  669 | 35.7%  64.3% |
| Total | 1041 | 100% |
| *Source: Prepared by the researcher* | | |

***Measures***

Most items in this study were drawn from previous literature to ensure internal consistency and reliability. The independent variable, brand clues, was measured using a four-item scale adopted from Khan & Fatma (2017). The dependent variable, self-identification, was measured with a three-item scale from Escalas & Bettman (2003). The dependent variable, social-identification, was measured with a four-item scale from Mael & Tetrick (1992). All variables used a 7-point Likert scale. However, prior research has strongly recommended using a five-point scale (Jenkins & Taber, 1977; Lissitz & Green, 1975). Studies suggest that applying a five-point scale can enhance item reliability compared to a seven-point scale (Lissitz & Green, 1975).

***Analysis and Results***

This study has produced the Pearson Correlation by testing the three variables: brand clues, self-identification, and social-identification. It is identified in the literature that if the correlation value is between 0.10 and 0.30, it indicates a small correlation; if the correlation value is between 0.30 and 0.50, it indicates a medium correlation; and if the correlation value is above 0.50, it shows a large correlation (Cohen, 1988). Therefore, the independent variable, brand clues, is significantly correlated to self-identification and social-identification *[|r|= 0.503, large correlation; |r|= .219, small correlation].* On the other hand, self-identification is significantly correlated to social-identification *[|r|= .361, medium correlation*]. Table 2 summarizes the correlation matrix of the study.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 2 Correlation Matrix** | | | | |
|  |  | **Brand Clues** | **Self-Identification** | **Social-Identification** |
| **Pearson**  **Correlation** | **Brand Clues** | **1.00** | .503\* | .219\* |
| **Self-Identification** | .503\* | **1.00** | .361\* |
| **Social-Identification** | .219\* | .361 | **1.00** |
| *\* significant correlation*  *Source: Prepared by the researcher* | | | | |

All constructs were analyzed in SPSS software version 22 to assess reliability, with each construct demonstrating a Cronbach’s alpha value above 0.7, indicating strong reliability and internal consistency among the items for each variable (Kline, 2005; DeVellis, 2003; Nunnally, 1978). The higher the value of Cronbah’s alpha, the greater the consistency among the items within a single construct (Kline, 2005; DeVellis, 2003; Nunnally, 1978). The scale of all constructs: bransd clues, self-identification, and social-identification had a high level of internal consistency, respectively, as determined by a Cronbach’s alpha [∝= .843; ∝= .790; ∝= .733] (Kline, 2005; DeVellis, 2003; Nunnally, 1978). Table 3 summarizes the Cronbach’s alpha values for the three variables.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 3 Measurement Scales** | | | |
|  | **Mean** | **SD** | **Cronbach’s Alpha ∝** |
| **Brand clues** | 4.01 | 3.91 | .843 |
| **Self-Identification** | 3.47 | 3.07 | .790 |
| **Social-Identification** | 2.56 | 3.94 | .733 |
| *SD: Standard Deviation*  *Source: Prepared by the researcher* | | | |

A principal components analysis (PCA) was run using SPSS software version 22 software on an 11-item questionnaire that measured brand clues' impact on self-identification and social-identification. The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.836. Previous studies suggest that individual KMO measures for all items should be greater than 0.7 (Kaiser, 1974). Moreover, each item’s loading on its designated variable should be higher than its loadings on other variables and exceed 0.5, a criterion met in this study (Ramayah, Cheah, Chuah, Ting, & Memon, 2018; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Table 4 presents the results of the factor analysis.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 4 Factor Analysis** | | | |
|  | **Components** | | |
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| **Brand clues**  BC1. In the fashion sector, I lean toward brands that offer high-quality products/services catering fashion trends  BC2. In the fashion sector, I lean toward the brand that has a comfortable ambiance.  BC3. In the fashion sector, I lean toward the brand that has a professional and respectful staff.  BC4. In the fashion sector, I lean toward the brand whose staff has elegant and modest appearance. | **.665**  **.782**  **.876**  **.833** |  |  |
| **Self-Identification**  SeI1. In the fashion sector, I can find a brand that expresses myself.  SeI2. In the fashion sector, I feel there is a personal connection with a certain brand.  SeI3. In the fashion sector, there are brands suits me well culturally. |  | **.767**  **.807**  **.797** |  |
| **Social-Identification**  SoI1. In the fashion sector, if a story in the media criticized a certain brand, I would feel embarrassed.  SoI2. In the fashion sector, when I talk about a brand, I usually say (we) rather than (they).  SoI3. In the fashion sector, I consider a certain brand’s success my success.  SoI4. In the fashion sector, while shopping from a certain brand, I act like others who shop at the same brand to a great extent. |  | **.612**  **.839**  **.823**  **.639** |  |
| KMO= .836  Sig.0.000  df=55 | | | |
| *Source: Prepared by the researcher* | | | |

***Hypotheses Testing***

The proposed hypotheses were tested using SPSS software version 22, calculating each relationship’s R², t-test, beta coefficient, and p-value for each relationship. The results reveal significant relationships, indicating that brand clues positively impact self-identification and social-identification for H1 and H2, respectively [*t-test = 18.74; β = 0.503; p < 0.001*]; [*t-test = 7.24; β = 0.219; p < 0.001*]. Thus, H1 and H2 are supported. Furthermore, the findings indicate that brand clues are influential, and self-identification also significantly affects social-identification, supporting H3 [*t-test = 12.48; β = 0.361; p < 0.001*]. Thus, H1, H2, and H3 are accepted, underscoring the importance of brand clues in shaping consumers' self and social identities. The detailed path coefficients and statistical values for each hypothesis are summarized in Table 5, providing a comprehensive overview of the strength and significance of these relationships within the study’s framework. See Figure 2.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 5 Hypothesis Relationships** | | | | | |
|  | **R2** | **t-test** | **β** | **P value** | **Relationship** |
| H1: Brand clues 🡺 Self-identification | .253 | 18.74 | .503 | .000\* | Supported |
| H2: Brand clues 🡺 Social-identification | .048 | 7.24 | .219 | .000\* | Supported |
| H3: Self-identification 🡺 Social-identification | .130 | 12.48 | .361 | .000\* | Supported |
| *Source: Prepared by the researcher* | | | | | |

Brand clues

Self- Identification

Social-identification

**H1**

**β =.503**

Brand Identification

**Figure 2: Result of Hypothesis Testing**

**H3**

**β =.316**

**H2**

**β =.219**

**Discussion**

Evidence suggests that brand clues play a significant role in influencing self-identification and social-identification, which is consistent indirectly with previous studies (Nayeem, Murshed, & Dwivedi, 2019; Khan & Fatma, 2017; Jones, Runyan, & Kim, 2012). When customers are identified with a brand on a personal level, this self-identification can naturally extend to their social identity, as they see the brand as a shared symbol among like-minded individuals or communities (Jones et al., 2012). This dynamic is particularly relevant in industries where self-expression is prominent, such as fashion. The findings of this paper not only confirm existing theories like symbolic interactionism but provide new insights by exploring how localized cultural elements in KSA intensify these dynamics.

The relationship between brand clues and self-identification reveals the nuanced role of symbolic elements such as logos, mascots, packaging, and names. For example, brands incorporating traditional Saudi design, like Arabic calligraphy or desert-inspired motifs, resonate deeply with local consumers. These elements symbolize modernity and authenticity, allowing consumers to project an identity that is simultaneously personal and culturally aligned (O’cass & Frost, 2002; Blumer, 1986). When these brand clues are aligned with the Saudi cultural elements, they provide additional layers of meaning that resonate with individuals, reinforcing a sense of self-consistent with previous studies (Khan & Fatma, 2017; Jones et al., 2012; O’cass & Frost, 2002). In addition, customers with a strong sense of self-identification may disregard what the brand offers unless it provides clues congruent with their self-image (Feng, Xu, & Wang, 2024).

In KSA, as previous studies highlight, consumers in the fashion industry are often judged based on their dress code, which is a strong indicator of personal values and social alignment (Howlett, Pine, Cahill, Orakçıoğlu, & Fletcher, 2015; Hannover & Kühnen, 2002). The findings of this study support these findings by showing that brand clues reflect qualities such as trendiness, elegance, prestige, and simplicity that are crucial in forming consumers’ self-image. These attributes influence self-identification and shape peers' perceptions of competence, confidence, and credibility (Furnham, Chan, & Wilson, 2013). The literature provides ample evidence of how dress codes impact individuals' perceptions, further supporting the idea that brand clues in fashion play an essential role in self-presentation (Johnston, 2009). Additionally, customers in the Saudi fashion market are drawn to exclusive brands, as this enhances their sense of individuality. Visual brand clues, such as specific designs or motifs, allow individuals to communicate their aspirations, values, and objectives. For instance, brands incorporating traditional Saudi elements, such as Arabic calligraphy, desert-inspired colors, and classic regional styles, can foster a deeper connection with consumers by celebrating their cultural heritage.

Language and cultural communication are essential to KSA's brand identity, reflecting societal norms and localized values. For example, greeting expressions differ across cultures, with phrases like “Alsalam Alaykom,” “Marhaba,” and “Hayakom Allah” conveying a distinctively Saudi identity (Klabi, 2020). Incorporating these greetings into brand packaging or marketing materials can enhance self-identification among Saudi consumers by signaling cultural pride and belonging. By embedding such localized language and cultural markers, brands can strengthen their appeal and create a more profound customer bond.

The relationship between brand clues and social-identification can be understood through symbolic interactionism and social identity theory (Blumer, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). This research emphasizes the strong impact of brand clues on social-identification, demonstrating that elements like modernity and luxury embedded in brand clues help align customers’ values with those of social groups, thus nurturing a socially cohesive self-identity. Additionally, religious considerations play a significant role in shaping fashion choices, allowing consumers to identify with groups that share similar values (Indrayani, Rahmadi, Diana, & Zeranika, 2018). For instance, global brands that adapt their marketing strategies to align with Saudi religious and cultural values, such as modest designs and culturally relevant advertising, find greater acceptance. These adaptations are evident in ads that feature appropriately dressed individuals and incorporate culturally significant elements—such as offering dates, a religiously favored treat, and coffee (Indrayani et al., 2018). Such cultural alignment fosters social conformity within the community, indirectly supporting findings from earlier studies (Khan & Fatma, 2017; Jones et al., 2012).

The interplay between local and global trends profoundly influences consumer choices. Luxury brands, in particular, represent more than wealth — they reflect shared cultural values and social cohesion. Luxury and sophistication are especially valued as symbols of social status in KSA, not merely for the wealthy but as expressions rooted in shared values, religion, culture, and family orientation (Algumzi, 2022). Saudi consumers associate prestigious qualities, such as exclusivity and VIP status, with elite groups, often showcasing brand clues online to signal their belonging to these groups (Klabi, 2020). Platforms like ‘X’ (formerly Twitter) are prevalent in KSA, where users actively enhance their social-identification by sharing images and engaging with trending hashtags that highlight their affiliations and brand choices (Klabi, 2020). This online presence allows individuals to boost their self-esteem by showcasing luxury brand associations, thus reinforcing their social identity.

The findings suggest that brands aiming to strengthen social-identification in KSA should prioritize aligning with the client’s self-concept rather than focusing solely on brand image (Klabi, 2020; Malar et al., 2011). By doing so, brands can foster deeper connections with consumers, encouraging them to incorporate brand values into their own social identities and project these identities within their social networks.

**Theoretical Implication**

The study offers several theoretical implications within the KSA’s fashion industry. The outcome of this research contributes to the literature by bridging symbolic interactionism with social identity theory in the context of the fashion industry. This bridging is established by testing the impact of brand clues on self-identification and social-identification that drive customer interactions in specific cultural contexts. First, symbolic interactionism theory is extended by showcasing that fashion brands are a major source of symbolic clues that motivate consumers to express their self-image. In the Saudi fashion context, logos, designs, and brand clues are influential in shaping consumer personal identity. Second, social identity theory is extended by empirically showing how a consumer’s self-image is bonded through belonging to a group with similar characteristics. Thus, the findings of this paper demonstrate the importance of fashion brand clues in shaping social signaling in a collectivist society, influencing customers’ self-identification and social-identification. Third, this paper offers valuable insights on highlighting the Saudi cultural dynamics, such as norms, values, and principles, in which consumer interactions are generated. Thus, it is notable that this insight contributes to the literature by stressing the importance of cultural aspects in shaping self-identity and social-identity. This area remains underexplored in Middle Eastern markets. Finally, this paper offers a methodological approach to integrating psychological, marketing, and social disciplines that can emerge in industries with powerful cultural foundations. Overall, the findings contribute to the literature by positioning brand clues as a powerful psychological antecedent in forming self-identity and social identity in a collectivist society such as KSA.

**Managerial Implication**

This paper offers several valuable managerial contributions to the literature. A key managerial implication of the findings is that consumers can increase their self-image and social-image through brand elements, which help marketers position their brand better using specific strategies. The fashion industry in KSA represents sustainability, cultural heritage, and innovation (Fashion Commission, 2023). Thus, brand clues provides insights into innovative strategies for enhancing brand positioning in fashion brands, such as engaging customers using technology development in fashion brands (Mogaji, Dwivedi, & Raman, 2024), selecting the most suitable logos, mascots, packaging, and ambiance to resonate with customers. For example, a logo that reflects modernity while incorporating traditional Saudi motifs, such as geometric patterns or Arabic calligraphy, can appeal to local pride and global sensibilities. It might include choosing the most appropriate logo reflecting the brand’s value visually, mascots that better humanize the brand to reflect a friendly and personal connection with the masses, slogans that can play a major role in shaping customers’ self and social-image, and packaging that can express quality, friendliness, differentiation, and attraction (Khan & Fatma, 2017). For example, fashion industry marketers can use Web 3.0 in their communication strategies to determine logos, packaging, or mascots (San Miguel, Sádaba, & Sayeed, 2024).

Furthermore, the brand name is one of the valuable assets the brand owns (Lim & O’Cass, 2001), and selecting the right brand name can strongly influence how the audience perceives the product or service's benefits (Hillenbrand, Alcauter, Cervantes, & Barrios 2013). Therefore, marketers can thoughtfully engage and consider rebranding (renaming) the brand when necessary. In addition, ambiance is a crucial aspect to consider, and it can be accomplished by creating the most suitable environment in the physical and online stores. This can be achieved by building a solid psychological connection between the brand and customers to better positively enhance their behavior toward the brand (Blazquez-Resino, Martínez-Ruiz, & Tajvidi, 2024). It can also guide decision-makers in developing more effective segmentation strategies that align with customer identity and social values. This helps marketers to hook customers better by understanding their unique characteristics, demographics, behavior, and psychographics. Furthermore, it addresses filling a gap by introducing new product concepts designed to foster strong self- and social-identification in the minds of consumers. Developing a product that strongly associates with customers’ personal and brand values is reflected in customers’ interaction with brand elements. This kind of product notion can establish an evident effect on customers’ self-image and fill the gap in social bonding, reflecting the current social awareness in the fashion industry. Moreover, this research can help fashion companies design products and brand clues that encourage the formation of communities, inspiring customers to aspire to belong to these groups and strengthening brand loyalty. For instance, Saudi fashion brands can promote exclusivity, social values, and luxurious comprehension and start shaping a community of customers aligned with the desired value. Lastly, brand managers in the Saudi fashion industry may benefit from appointing brand ambassadors (Yogeshwaran, Hemalatha, Rohini, & Anandhi, 2022) to embody the brand's values and effectively communicate its story. By leveraging brand ambassadors, companies can strengthen customer connections and enhance brand loyalty.

**Conclusion:** this study aims to deepen our understanding of how Saudis perceive and identify themselves, both from their perspectives and through the lens of their communities through brand clues. By exploring the dynamics of self-identification and social-identification, the research seeks to uncover how cultural, religious, and societal influences shape individual and collective identities. This investigation will provide valuable insights into the interplay between personal and communal perceptions, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of identity formation within the KSA’s context.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The findings of this paper are not free from limitations. One primary limitation is that the conceptual model aims to test the direct effect of brand clues on brand identification without exploring potential mediating factors other than self-identification. Future studies could introduce mediating or sequential mediating variables, such as brand experience or culture, to enrich the understanding of this relationship. For example, the suggested variable, brand experience, can reflect customers’ behaviors rationally and emotionally to enhance their self-image and social-image. In contrast, brand culture can reflect values congruency with social values influencing customers’ bonding with the brand. The current model is relatively straightforward, comprising only three variables, and is tailored to the Saudi market. Further research could incorporate moderators such as gender, age, income, or educational level to provide a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon and to see how these demographic factors might influence the impact of brand clues on brand identification. Gathering the appropriate demographics can produce fruitful insights into the marketing literature. For example, younger generations might provide different insights than the older generation, and customers with high income might provide different data angles than those with low or medium income. Further researchers can expand the conceptual model of this study to reach different cultural contexts, such as Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) or Middle Eastern countries, to see whether brand culture will provide a different perspective.

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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