

Examining the Influence of Actual and Ideal Self-Congruity on Repurchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Consumer Awareness

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This paper examines how actual and ideal self-congruency influences the consumer awareness with the mediating impact of consumer awareness. Using self-congruency theory, the study holds that the compatibility between the self image and brand image of the consumers will help improve their consumer awareness, eventually boosting their intentions to repurchase. It employed a quantitative research design and analyzed data with the structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings show that actual and ideal self- congruency could be important factors contributing to consumer awareness. These relationships are mediated by consumer awareness to some extent. The results can be used in branding literature since they describe how self-image correspondence and awareness determine consumer loyalty. Managerial suggestions are offered to marketers on how to improve the repurchase behavior by positioning the strategic brand image and creating awareness.

1. Introduction

The modern market is being defined by the heightened competition in the world, the fast pace of digitalization, and the growing variety of consumer demands. This change has prompted the brands to not only distinguish themselves based on functional values but also, based on the psychological and symbolic value propositions. The consumption of products that express an individual's identity or desired identity has become a key topic in the study of marketing and the behavior of the consumers (Islam et al., 2020; Sirgy, 2021). The fact that consumers can have a high degree of self-congruity with the brand image which is the extent to which the consumer perceives consistency between his self-concept and the brand image has become a leading paradigm in explaining the role of identity in consumer evaluations and behavioral intentions. According to this theoretical view, consumers are more likely to select the brands that resonate with their real or desired self-image and, as a result, have greater emotional attachment, satisfaction, and loyalty (Kang et al., 2021; Hwang & Lee, 2022).

There are two dimensions of self-congruity: actual self-congruity, which indicates the similarity between the image of a brand and the actual self-view of a consumer, and ideal self-congruity, which implies the correspondence between the brand and the self-image of a consumer (Sirgy, 2021). The two dimensions are relevant in influencing post purchase behavior such as repurchase intention (Danish et al., 2025; Mankash et al., 2025; Hafeez et al., 2019). Recent research indicates that customers can derive symbolism in brands that can reflect their self-concept, which reinforced their bond and desire to be engaged in long-term relationships with the brand (Akbari et al., 2021; Liu & Phau, 2023). Accordingly, self-congruity has been more and more associated with consumer awareness as a key factor affecting brand loyalty and long-term profitability, which is why the research issue is both interesting and worthy of empirical research (Rasheed et al., 2025; Shahzadi et al., 2025; Naz et al., 2022).

Repurchase intention refers to the premeditated intention of a consumer to purchase a product or brand once more (Hwang & Lee, 2022). This is an important behavioral intention especially in the competitive markets where the acquisition cost is very high and customer loyalty plays a very important role in the sustainability of the firm. It is not just the case that brands want to attract the customers, but they also want to win patronage, which requires a better insight into the psychological processes that support repeated purchasing behavior. Conventional theories put much emphasis on satisfaction and perceived value as antecedents of repurchase intentions, yet current developments indicate that identity-based processes might be as effective or even more effective (Yoo & Park, 2023). The consumer can feel that a brand is relevant to them and has a psychological fit when they feel they visually connect to that brand, or to whom they wish to be, and they become motivated to repurchase (Islam et al., 2020).

Consumer awareness is one of the keys but seldom considered variables in the process. Within the information-saturated environment, awareness should not be limited only to the familiarity with the fundamental knowledge about a specific brand but also with the knowledge about its identity, values, attributes, and market reputation (Shin & Mattila, 2022). The consumer awareness allows people to make better and identity consistent decisions and it has a key role to play in influencing brand-self alignment perceptions. A knowledgeable buyer stands a better chance of reviewing the symbolic and psychological advantages of a brand, thus enhancing the chances that self-congruency will be changed into a factual behavior intention (Akbari et al., 2021; Park & Kim, 2024). Consumer awareness, therefore, can act as a mediating factor that increases or directs the impacts of self-congruity on repurchase intention.

Even though academic investigation of self-congruity is increasingly popular, the studies are still disjointed in a number of respects. To start with, the majority of the current

literature has investigated actual and ideal self-congruity separately without providing the overall picture of the combined effect of the two forms on repurchase intention (Hwang & Lee, 2022; Liu & Phau, 2023). Second, little empirical evidence has been done on the mediating role of consumer awareness effect on self-congruity-repurchase intention relationship. Despite the base position of awareness in the consumer decision-making process, scholars have not comprehensively examined the role of awareness in reinforcing or facilitating identity-based repurchase behavior in the current digital and highly informed consumer society (Shin & Mattila, 2022; Park & Kim, 2024). Third, the majority of the previous research was performed in the context of Western settings or luxury brands thus providing a knowledge gap in terms of mass-market brands and developing economies where the dynamics of awareness and identity may vary significantly.

The proposed research fills these gaps by postulating and empirically testing a model combining actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, consumer awareness and repurchase intention. This research is based on self-congruity theory, identity signaling theory, and modern branding literature, which postulates that actual and ideal self-congruency have positive impacts on repurchase intention and consumer awareness plays a significant role in mediating the impacts (Naseer et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2023; Aurangzeb & Haq, 2012). This study offers evidence applicable in the new market where the brand awareness, identity aspiration and a changing consumer sophistication are quickly transforming the purchasing patterns by targeting a variety of consumers.

The importance of the given research is manifold. Hypothetically, it would add to the larger body of consumer behavior studies by extending self-congruity theory to the mediating effect of awareness- a more and more pertinent concept in the digital marketing landscape. In practical terms, it offers practical knowledge to brand managers who want to build loyalty based on identity-congruent approaches. In a saturated market where there is a plethora of information and substitutes, an increase in consumer awareness and a consistent match-up of the brand with the actual and desired selves of consumers, can be a strategic benefit that goes beyond the traditional functional and price-based differentiation (Khan et al., 2022; Shaukat et al., 2021). The relative nature of the interactions between these psychological and cognitive processes is necessary in creating specific branding, advertising, and customer interaction strategy which will eventually increase the repurchase intention.

Moreover, the work develops the current debates about symbolic consumption. Due to the emerging trend of curating personal brand and identity with the choices they make when purchasing products, the mechanics that shape and develop self-congruity is an important topic to be aware of by marketers (Yoo & Park, 2023; Chen et al., 2024). Incorporating consumer awareness in this model appreciates the importance of the accessibility of information and cognitive appraisal in identity-based behavior (Nisar et al., 2025; Basharat et al., 2023; Naz et al., 2020). With the availability of consumers to more information about a brand besides what they previously possessed, digital platforms are introducing awareness as one of the precursors to the formation of more psychological relationships, namely congruity and attachment.

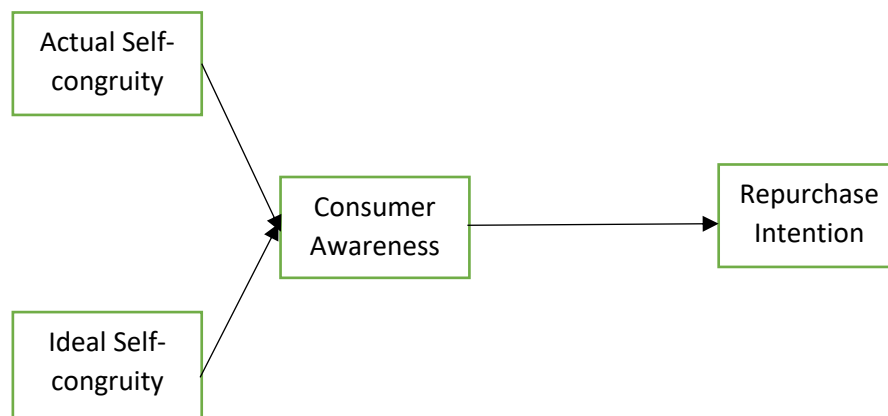
Lastly, the current research is timely in the sense that it aims to capture the consumer behavior changes after the pandemic. The COVID-19 period stimulated the acceleration of digitalization, the growth of the range of products, and the extent of influence of online reviews, influencer content, and brand storytelling on creating awareness and identity perceptions (Chen et al., 2024; Park & Kim, 2024). Since consumers increasingly interact with brands more carefully and critically at the moment, the study of awareness as a mediating variable is especially topical.

In summary, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of actual self-congruity on consumer awareness?
2. What is the effect of ideal self-congruity on consumer awareness?
3. Does consumer awareness influence repurchase intention?
4. Does consumer awareness mediate the effects of actual and ideal self-congruity on repurchase intention?

By answering the questions, the research provides not only theoretical but also empirical value to the existing knowledge on the psychological mechanisms of consumer loyalty formation. The combination of self-congruence dimensions and consumer awareness contributes to the development of the literature, suggesting a more comprehensive approach to explaining the intention to repurchase.

Figure No 1: Hypothesized Research Model



2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Self-Congruity Theory

Self-congruity theory is a well-established theoretical construct in consumer behavior, as it outlines the relationship between the identity and the determination of product ratings and decisions of a brand (Khoso et al., 2024; Sultana & Imran, 2024; Ahmad et al., 2023). The theory, initially developed by Sirgy, assumes that the brands with an image that corresponds to self-concept and which, in turn, provides a sense of psychological comfort, consistency, and symbolic satisfaction, are the ones that consumers prefer (Sirgy, 2021). The theory has recently been reshaped into interest as the markets are becoming more and more symbolically consumed, based on lifestyle branding, and identity-driven marketing (Hwang & Lee, 2022; Kang et al., 2021). Consumers in the digital age have shifted to actively developing and presenting personal identities on the internet, which strengthens the relevance of selecting brands that try to mirror their self-image (Yoo & Park, 2023).

There are various dimensions of self-concept among them actual, ideal, social and ideal-social self-concept, although the current study considers actual and ideal self-congruity since they are the most direct and direct forms of self-congruity when it comes to repurchase behaviors (Iqbal et al., 2025; Ivascu et al., 2022; Ghulam et al., 2019). Actual self-congruity is the correspondence between the brand image and the perception the consumer has of their current self while ideal self-congruity is associated with correspondence with the desired or aspired self of the consumer (Kang et al., 2021). These dimensions are reported to have an effect on emotional attachment, brand trust, loyalty, and the behavioral intentions (Islam et al., 2020; Liu & Phau, 2023).

Recent research points out that self-congruity particularly plays out in the classes where symbolic worth and psychological significance are the key determinants of purchase choice like fashion, cosmetics, technology, and lifestyle items (Chen et al., 2024). Due to the emergence of identity-driven consumption, self-congruity has shifted to become a major predictor of the post-purchase behavior of consumers, such as repurchase intention (Azhar, 2024; Azhar & Imran, 2024; Azhar et al., 2022).

2.2 Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention is a desire of a consumer to buy a brand once again or intentionally (Hwang & Lee, 2022). It is regarded to be among the best predictors of brand loyalty, customer retention, as well as business profitability in the long term (Kayani et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021; Khan & Khan, 2020). The introduction of self-congruity into the study of the research on the repurchase intention brings out the symbolic and psychological aspects of loyalty (Parveen et al., 2020; Ul Haq, 2019; Ali & Haq 2017). Customers desire the consistency of self identity and their selection of products, which in turn supports their incentive to keep on using a brand that supports their self-concept (Liu & Phau, 2023; Yoo & Park, 2023).

2.1 Actual Self-Congruity

Actual self-congruity is the image of the perceived similarity between the real self of a consumer and the brand image (Sohail-Rehan & Ul-Haq, 2018; Haq, 2017; Ul Haq, 2012). Humans are naturally drawn to brands that reinforce their self-image since they do it as a part of self-verification and confirming their identity (Sirgy, 2021). According to the social identity theory, consumers are striving to avoid discrepancies between their personal perception and outward signs they follow, including brands (Hwang & Lee, 2022). Actual self-congruity is used to refer to the extent of a brand to the real self-concept of a consumer (Ali, et al., 2020; Ahmad, 2018). Purchasers want a brand that will match their identity since this will increase emotional fulfillment and decrease cognitive dissonance (Sirgy, 2021). The previous research shows that actual self-congruity has a positive effect on brand preference and consumer awareness (Islam et al., 2020).

H1: Actual self-congruity has a positive and significant effect on consumer awareness

2.2 Ideal Self-Congruity

Ideal self-congruency is a correspondence with the consumer aspirational self presentation and brand. Although actual self-congruity is more authentic and realistic, ideal self-congruity embodies imagination, ambition and desired change (Kang et al., 2021). This dimension is more effective in the categories with aspirational products, lifestyle goods, and brands placed along the self-improvement (Shaukat et al., 2020; Ul Haq & Ur Rehman, 2017).

Brands are also often used as self-enhancement tools because consumers are often interested in how they would like to be instead of who they are (Muhammad et al., 2020). Ideal self-congruity consequently reaches into need of growth, social mobility, attractiveness, and self-development (Sirgy, 2021). The research has demonstrated that ideal self-congruency can be more effective as an indicator of emotional attachment and loyalty than real self-congruity, especially in symbolic product categories (Liu & Phau, 2023; Yoo & Park, 2023).

The concept of ideal self-congruity describes the correlation between the brand and the aspirational self-image of consumers (Khan & Haq, 2025; Haq & Khan, 2024). Most of the time, consumers purchase the brand that symbolizes their desired identity, and not necessarily their current one (Kang et al., 2021). According to the recent study, ideal self-congruity can

contribute greatly to emotional attachment as well as consumer awareness (Hwang & Lee, 2022).

H2: Ideal self-congruity has a positive and significant effect consumer awareness

2.3 Consumer Awareness

Consumer awareness is a concept that implies the degree of familiarity, knowledge, and cognitive recognition that consumers have in a brand, its qualities, and its presence in the market (Shin & Mattila, 2022). Awareness includes brand recall, recognition, perceived knowledge and informational clarity. It serves as a precursor to the consumer decision-making process and a condition that must be fulfilled to associate with a brand, prefer, and be loyal to the brand (Akbari et al., 2021). Knowledge about features, benefits, image, and reputation of a brand passed on to consumers is known as consumer awareness. The awareness enhances confidence in the consumers in the decision to make purchases and perceived risk decreases (Akbari et al., 2021). Whether a product is strongly brand-aware consumers can make comparisons with the identity and assess the product in relation to it more often (Shin & Mattila, 2022).

In addition, the impact of self-congruity may also be mediated by consumer awareness that strengthens brand perception and leads to more repurchase intentions.

H3: Consumer awareness positively influences repurchase intention.

H4: Consumer awareness mediates the relationship between actual self-congruity and repurchase intention.

H5: Consumer awareness mediates the relationship between ideal self-congruity and repurchase intention.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The conceptual model was tested with the help of a quantitative and cross-sectional design. The structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the correlation between constructs.

3.1 Research Design

The research design taken in this study is a quantitative, cross-sectional research design that will be used to determine the linkages between actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity and consumer awareness and repurchase intention. Quantitative method is suitable due to the fact that the study will attempt to test the hypotheses developed on the basis of theories and quantify the statistical significance of relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2021). To learn the perception of consumers and their behavioral intentions in a real-market situation, using cross-sectional design is appropriate to gather data at one point in time (Shah et al., 2025; Naseer et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2025).

Due to the nature of the study, which is centered on latent psychological constructs, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used. SEM is known to be effective in marketing and consumer research because it can be applied to test complex relationships, the mediation effects, and the measurement validity (Hair et al., 2022). The reason why partial least squares-SEM (PLS-SEM) was chosen is that it is more robust to use when studying prediction and is appropriate in models that contain formative and reflective constructs (Ringle et al., 2020).

3.2 Population and Sampling Technique

The target market will consist of adult buyers who have already tried branded products at least once over the past six months and who reside in city Lahore. Such a choice will guarantee that respondents have the relevant experience to assess the intentions to repurchase and the perception related to the brand. The sampling technique employed is purposive, non-probability type due to the fact that the researcher needs to have participants with certain brand experience. It is consistent with other studies on self-congruency and branding that employed similar sampling preferences in the past (Islam et al., 2020; Hwang & Lee, 2022). The target population was 300 respondents, which agrees with PLS-SEM recommendations where the minimum sample sizes depend on the complexity of the model used, and statistic power (Hair et al., 2022). This is a sufficient sample in models that have many predictors and mediation.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The collection of data was conducted in the form of an online self-administered questionnaire that had to be distributed on the social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Data collection online guarantees cost effectiveness, greater accessibility as well as expanded coverage to various consumer segments.

Two qualifying questions were used to screen the respondents:

1. "Have you purchased any branded product in the last six months?"
2. "Are you 18 years or older?"

Only respondents meeting both criteria were allowed to proceed. Data collection spanned a period of four weeks to ensure adequate participation and representation.

3.4 Measurement Instruments

Multi-item reflective scales based on the previously validated research instruments were used in the measurement of all constructs utilized in the study.

3.4.1 Actual Self-Congruity (ASC)

Scaled based on four items that were modified based on Sirgy (2021) that measure the degree to which the brand is similar to the real self-image of the consumer.

3.4.2 Ideal Self-Congruity (ISC)

Measured through four questions based on items used by Kang et al. (2021) to measure alignment with the aspirational self-image of the consumers.

3.4.3 Consumer Awareness (CA)

Based on four items that were modified after Akbari et al. (2021) and Shin and Mattila (2022) and refer to familiarity, knowledge, and recognizability of the brand.

3.4.4 Repurchase Intention (RI)

Measured based on three items that have been modified to fit the research of Hwang and Lee (2022) that explore the intention of consumers to purchase the brand once more.

The ratings were made on all items through the five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

The scale is widely applied to consumer research because of its reliability and understanding by the respondents (Hair et al., 2021).

4. Analysis and Results

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data obtained after 300 respondents using SmartPLS version 4.0. The evaluation involved two significant phases: measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation (Hair et al., 2022). This part gives the reliability, validation, path analysis, mediation evaluation, and the general predictive power of the model.

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

Indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity were used to measure the measurement model.

4.1.1 Indicator Reliability

A loading of more than 0.70 indicates why it is considered to be sufficiently reliable (Hair et al., 2022). All the measures of Actual Self-Congruity (ASC), Ideal Self-Congruity (ISC), Consumer Awareness (CA) and Repurchase Intention (RI) are higher than the suggested measure.

Table No 1: Outer Loadings

Construct	Item	Loading
ASC	ASC1	0.78
	ASC2	0.81
	ASC3	0.84
	ASC4	0.79
ISC	ISC1	0.80
	ISC2	0.83
	ISC3	0.82
	ISC4	0.79
CA	CA1	0.76
	CA2	0.82
	CA3	0.79
	CA4	0.78
RI	RI1	0.85
	RI2	0.88
	RI3	0.83

All indicators meet the 0.70 criterion, establishing indicator reliability.

4.1.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

Table No 2: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)
Actual Self-Congruity	0.89	0.92
Ideal Self-Congruity	0.87	0.91
Consumer Awareness	0.85	0.90
Repurchase Intention	0.90	0.93

Internal consistency was measured using **Cronbach's Alpha** and **Composite Reliability (CR)**. All constructs exhibited values above **0.70**, indicating strong reliability.

4.1.3 Convergent Validity (AVE)

Convergent validity is established when the AVE exceeds **0.50** (Hair et al., 2021).

Table No 3: Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	AVE
Actual Self-Congruity	0.68
Ideal Self-Congruity	0.66
Consumer Awareness	0.64
Repurchase Intention	0.77

All constructs meet the AVE threshold, confirming convergent validity.

4.1.4 Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

The **HTMT ratio** was used to assess discriminant validity. All HTMT values were below **0.85**, confirming acceptable discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table No 4: HTMT Values

Constructs	ASC	ISC	CA	RI
ASC	—	0.74	0.69	0.63
ISC	—	—	0.72	0.68
CA	—	—	—	0.70
RI	—	—	—	—

The measurement model meets all reliability and validity criteria, allowing progression to the structural model.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated using:

- Path coefficients
- t-values & p-values (using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples)
- R² values
- Effect size (f²)
- Predictive relevance (Q²)

4.2.1 Coefficient of Determination (R²)

R² measures the explanatory power of the independent variables.

Table No 5: R² Values

Endogenous Variable	R ²	Interpretation
Consumer Awareness	0.51	Moderate
Repurchase Intention	0.63	Substantial

The model explains 63% of the variance in repurchase intention, demonstrating high predictive power.

4.2.2 Path Coefficients

Table No 6: Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	ASC $\rightarrow$ CA	0.32	4.90	0.000	Supported
H2	ISC $\rightarrow$ CA	0.41	6.25	0.000	Supported
H3	CA $\rightarrow$ RI	0.29	3.88	0.000	Supported
H4	ASC $\rightarrow$ CA $\rightarrow$ RI	0.14	3.12	0.002	Supported (Partial Mediation)
H5	ISC $\rightarrow$ CA $\rightarrow$ RI	0.17	3.45	0.001	Supported (Partial Mediation)

All direct effects are significant ($p < 0.01$), supporting H1, H2, and H3.

4.4 Effect Size (f^2)

Table No 7: Effect Size f^2

Relationship	f^2	Effect
ASC $\rightarrow$ CA	0.10	Small
ISC $\rightarrow$ CA	0.19	Medium
CA $\rightarrow$ RI	0.11	Small
ASC $\rightarrow$ CA	0.28	Medium
ISC $\rightarrow$ CA	0.24	Medium

4.5 Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Using blindfolding technique, Q^2 values > 0 indicate predictive relevance.

Table No 8: Q^2 Values

Endogenous Variable	Q^2
Consumer Awareness	0.33
Repurchase Intention	0.42

Both values exceed 0, demonstrating the model's strong predictive relevance.

5. Conclusion

Present paper proposes the significance of real and ideal self-congruency in the determination of consumers awareness. These two types of self-alignment have very high repurchase intentions. Also, consumer awareness is an important mediating factor, which has shown that knowledgeable consumers are more dependent on identity-brand congruences when making buying decisions. The results add to the body on self-congruency and brand-loyalty and provide useful implications to marketers.

5.1 Recommendations

1. Increase brand identity consistency through effective communication of brand personality that encompasses the real and aspiration personalities of consumers.

2. Formulate specific marketing campaigns that serve the identity needs and aspirations of consumers.
3. Grow the consumer awareness by usage of educational information, product demonstrations, and brand storytelling.
4. Use the internet to enhance brand-self associations through customized advertising.
5. Enhance customer experience in order to strengthen awareness and identity fit.
6. Keep track of the perceptions of consumers so that brand image is not out of date.
7. Do the long-term branding and not short-term sales promotion to establish a long-term loyalty.

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