

Affordable prestige: A conceptual framework of masstige marketing and consumer behaviour in emerging markets

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Abstract

Masstige marketing, a hybrid positioning strategy that fuses the symbolic appeal of luxury with the accessibility of mass market pricing, has grown rapidly across fashion, cosmetics, automobiles, and electronics over the past five years, yet the concept remains fragmented across disparate strands of literature. This conceptual paper synthesises existing research to clarify the meaning, evolution, and growing relevance of masstige marketing in the contemporary marketplace. It develops an integrated framework around four key dimensions, perceived prestige, affordability, brand symbolism, and emotional connection, and examines how these dimensions jointly shape consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and buying behaviour. Drawing on existing literature and illustrative industry examples, particularly from India's rapidly expanding beauty, fashion, and personal care sectors, the paper traces how masstige has evolved from a niche branding tactic into a broader cultural phenomenon tied to social mobility, digital personalisation, and sustainability driven prestige. The paper further discusses managerial implications, outlining how firms can apply masstige principles to strengthen brand positioning, deepen consumer engagement, and build durable consumer brand relationships without diluting aspirational value. By consolidating a growing but scattered body of work into a single conceptual model, the study contributes an integrated understanding of affordable prestige and its significance for consumer behaviour theory and practice, particularly in emerging economies where the expanding middle class is reshaping the boundary between luxury and mass consumption.

Keywords: Masstige Marketing, Brand Symbolism, Consumer Behaviour, Affordable Luxury, Emerging Markets, Brand Positioning, Purchase Intention

JEL Classification: M31, M37, D12

1. Introduction

The concept of masstige—a blend of “mass” and “prestige”—was first introduced by Silverstein and Fiske (2003) as “Luxury for the Masses.” It describes products that carry the aura of luxury but remain affordable for a wider audience. Unlike traditional luxury, which is defined by exclusivity and high prices, masstige brands aim to deliver symbolic value, emotional appeal, and aspirational status at accessible price points (Kumar, Paul, & Unnithan, 2020). Over the past decade, consumer preferences have shifted beyond functional utility toward identity, self-expression, and lifestyle. Between 2020 and 2025, masstige consumption has grown rapidly across industries such as fashion, cosmetics, automobiles, and electronics. Globally, the masstige beauty segment accounted for 11% of overall cosmetic sales in 2024, expanding at nearly 16% annually—twice the growth rate of mass-market products (McKinsey & Company, 2025). This growth is largely driven by younger consumers, especially Gen Z, who value authenticity, aspirational branding, and affordability (Roy, Das, Lim, & Kalai, 2025).

India has emerged as a particularly strong market for masstige. The masstige derma cosmetics sector was valued at USD 65.55 million in 2025, with projections of steady growth through 2035, supported by rising disposable incomes, digital adoption, and demand for skincare and hair care products (India Masstige Market Report, 2025). At the same time, India’s broader beauty and personal care industry is expected to reach USD 34 billion by 2028, reflecting how affordable luxury is becoming part of everyday consumption (Statista, 2025). Studies also show that urban consumers demonstrate higher purchase intentions for masstige brands compared to rural consumers, highlighting socio-economic differences in aspirational buying (Sharma & Yadav, 2025). Consumer behaviour research adds further depth. Brand happiness mediates masstige consumption, while age moderates purchase behaviour—younger consumers are more aspirational, whereas older groups emphasize functional prestige and value (Paul, Alagarsamy, & Mehroliya, 2025). Emotional attachment also plays a critical role, with masstige brands fostering loyalty through symbolic cues and aspirational communication (Robertson et al., 2022). Digital platforms and influencer marketing have accelerated this trend, with live-streaming campaigns in Asia showing extraordinary success—for example, ZHUBEN sold 50,000 bottles of makeup remover in one minute (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2024).

This transformation shows that masstige marketing is not just a branding strategy but a cultural phenomenon. By offering prestige at accessible prices, masstige brands align with modern

consumer aspirations and provide meaningful opportunities for growth, especially in emerging economies like India where the middle class is expanding rapidly.

2. Literature Review

Masstige marketing has emerged as a hybrid branding strategy that combines the exclusivity of luxury with the accessibility of mass-market products. Mundel, Huddleston, and Vodermeier (2017) describe affordable luxuries as products that allow consumers to indulge without compromising financial stability, aligning with the symbolic and aspirational value central to masstige. Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan (2020) emphasize that masstige strategies must balance exclusivity with accessibility, warning that excessive mass appeal risks brand dilution. Recent scholarship has increasingly examined masstige marketing through the lens of consumer psychology and symbolic interaction. Researchers argue that masstige consumption satisfies consumers' need for social belonging and personal achievement by allowing them to access prestige cues without violating budgetary constraints. According to Ko, Costello, and Taylor (2023), masstige brands function as “symbolic bridges” between mass consumption and luxury aspiration, enabling consumers to experience elevated self-worth through everyday products. Another emerging area of research focuses on experiential value in masstige branding. Unlike traditional luxury, where exclusivity itself creates value, masstige brands rely on sensory appeal, design aesthetics, and brand narratives to create premium experiences. Park and Lin (2024) find that packaging sophistication, retail ambiance, and brand storytelling significantly enhance perceived prestige in masstige categories, particularly in beauty, fashion, and personal care segments. These experiential cues help compensate for the lack of scarcity typically associated with luxury brands.

Technology-driven personalization has also gained importance in recent masstige literature. Artificial intelligence-enabled recommendations, virtual try-ons, and personalized digital communication strengthen consumers' emotional connection with masstige brands (Dwivedi et al., 2024). Such technologies allow brands to offer a “luxury-like” personalized experience at scale, thereby reinforcing the perception of prestige while maintaining mass accessibility. From a pricing and distribution perspective, scholars highlight the importance of selective availability. Rather than widespread distribution, masstige brands increasingly adopt controlled omnichannel strategies to preserve brand image. Research by Kapferer and Bastien (2023) suggests that partial exclusivity—such as limited editions or online-only launches—enhances perceived value and urgency without alienating mass consumers. This strategy enables brands to maintain aspirational positioning while expanding market reach.

Sustainability has recently emerged as a complementary dimension of masstige marketing. Studies indicate that environmentally responsible practices enhance brand credibility and prestige perceptions, particularly among Gen Z consumers. According to Jain and Mishra (2024), sustainable packaging and ethical sourcing positively influence masstige brand trust and

willingness to pay a price premium, even in cost-sensitive markets. This suggests that sustainability can act as an additional symbolic value driver in masstige branding. In the context of emerging economies, masstige marketing is increasingly associated with social mobility and cultural modernization. Empirical studies conducted in India and Southeast Asia reveal that masstige consumption often reflects changing lifestyle aspirations, professional identity, and global cultural exposure (Nguyen & Rahman, 2023). Consumers perceive masstige brands as markers of progress and global integration rather than mere consumption choices. Despite these advancements, recent reviews emphasize that longitudinal and context-specific studies remain limited. Scholars call for integrative frameworks that capture the interaction between digital influence, cultural values, sustainability orientation, and aspirational motivation in shaping masstige consumption over time (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Langner, 2024). Addressing these gaps is critical for strengthening both theoretical development and managerial relevance.

Suzuki and Kanno (2022) highlight the role of co-branding, showing how collaborations between luxury and mass brands enhance brand coolness and democratize prestige consumption. Robertson, Botha, Ferreira, and Pitt (2022) add an emotional dimension, demonstrating through their “brand love–loyalty matrix” that consumers can form deep emotional ties even with accessible luxury products. Bilro, Loureiro, and dos Santos (2021) extend this discussion to digital platforms, finding that masstige strategies on social media influence consumer sentiment and attitudes, amplifying prestige signals at scale. Purohit and Radia (2022) conceptualize masstige buying behavior, identifying aspiration, self-expression, and perceived status as primary drivers of consumption. Baber et al. (2020) provide evidence from emerging markets, showing that masstige brands strongly shape purchase intentions by offering symbolic prestige at affordable prices. Das, Saha, Jebarajakirthy, Kalai, and Debnath (2022) argue that rising disposable incomes in emerging economies have transformed luxury consumption into a socially acceptable form of self-expression, positioning masstige products as cultural markers of modernity. Ishaq, Hussain, and Khan (2023) add a cross-cultural perspective, demonstrating that affordable luxury consumption patterns vary across societies but consistently reflect aspirations for upward mobility.

Recent international studies further enrich this discourse. Goyal (2024) conducted a bibliometric analysis of masstige literature, identifying dominant themes such as brand symbolism, emotional value, and digital influence. Lim et al. (2023) synthesized two decades of research, noting that while masstige strategies are widely adopted, empirical clarity in emerging economies remains limited. Roya, Das, Lim, and Kalaib (2025) propose a Motivation–Desire–Outcome framework, showing how masstige consumption is driven by aspirational motives and results in enhanced self-esteem and social recognition. Together, these studies highlight the psychological, cultural, and digital dimensions of masstige marketing.

2.1 Gap in Literature

Despite the growing body of work, there remains a consistent gap in understanding how local cultural values, rising middle-class aspirations, and digital consumption patterns uniquely shape masstige adoption in emerging economies such as India. Addressing this gap can enrich global knowledge and provide actionable insights for managers seeking to adapt masstige strategies to diverse markets.

3. Concept and Evolution of Masstige Marketing

Masstige marketing has evolved significantly between 2020 and 2025, driven by structural changes in consumer behaviour, digital consumption, and income dynamics. During this period, scholars increasingly conceptualized masstige as a *value-creation strategy* rather than a mere price-based compromise between mass and luxury markets. Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan (2020) argue that masstige brands derive strength from symbolic value and emotional resonance, allowing consumers to experience prestige without exclusivity constraints. The COVID-19 period (2020–2021) marked a critical turning point in the evolution of masstige marketing. As economic uncertainty increased, consumers became more value-conscious while still seeking aspirational consumption. Studies show that consumers shifted from traditional luxury toward masstige alternatives that offered psychological comfort, self-reward, and status reassurance at accessible prices (Baber et al., 2020). This period reinforced masstige as a resilient category capable of sustaining demand even during economic stress.

Between 2022 and 2023, digital acceleration further reshaped masstige evolution. Social media exposure, influencer-led branding, and live commerce normalized luxury aesthetics among mass consumers. Bilro, Loureiro, and dos Santos (2021) demonstrate that digital storytelling significantly enhances perceived prestige and emotional attachment in masstige brands. Lim, Das, and Paul (2023) further confirm that digital touchpoints have become central to masstige brand meaning creation, particularly among Gen Z and young millennials. From 2024 onward, masstige marketing increasingly integrated experiential, technological, and sustainability-oriented dimensions. Research indicates that consumers began associating prestige not only with brand symbolism but also with personalized experiences, ethical practices, and social responsibility (Jain & Mishra, 2024). Paul, Alagarsamy, and Mehroliya (2025) empirically establish that *brand happiness* mediates masstige purchase intention, while age moderates aspirational motivation, highlighting the maturity of masstige as a psychological consumption category.

In emerging economies such as India, the evolution of masstige marketing during 2020–2025 reflects broader socio-cultural transformation. Rising disposable incomes, urban professional lifestyles, and digital inclusion have positioned masstige brands as symbols of upward mobility and modern identity (Das et al., 2022). Recent evidence suggests that masstige consumption has shifted from occasional indulgence to routine lifestyle choice, particularly in beauty, fashion, and personal care segments. Overall, the 2020–2025 period illustrates that masstige marketing has

transitioned from *accessible luxury* to *aspirational normalcy*, where prestige is embedded in everyday consumption through perception, emotion, and digital visibility.

Table 1. Evolution of Masstige Marketing (2020–2025)

Period	Key Market Context	Dominant Masstige Focus	Supporting Studies
2020–2021	Economic uncertainty, pandemic impact	Value-conscious aspiration, emotional reassurance	Kumar et al. (2020); Baber et al. (2020)
2022	Digital acceleration	Social media prestige, influencer branding	Bilro et al. (2021)
2023	Mature consumption digital	Symbolic value & emotional attachment	Lim et al. (2023)
2024	Ethical & experiential shift	Sustainability, personalization	Jain & Mishra (2024)
2025	Psychological maturity	Brand happiness, age moderation	Paul et al. (2025)

Source: Compiled by the author based on prior studies (2020–2025).

Figure 1 illustrates the evolution of masstige marketing from *price-accessible prestige (2020)* to *emotionally and digitally driven aspirational consumption (2025)*. The model highlights five progressive layers:

Affordability

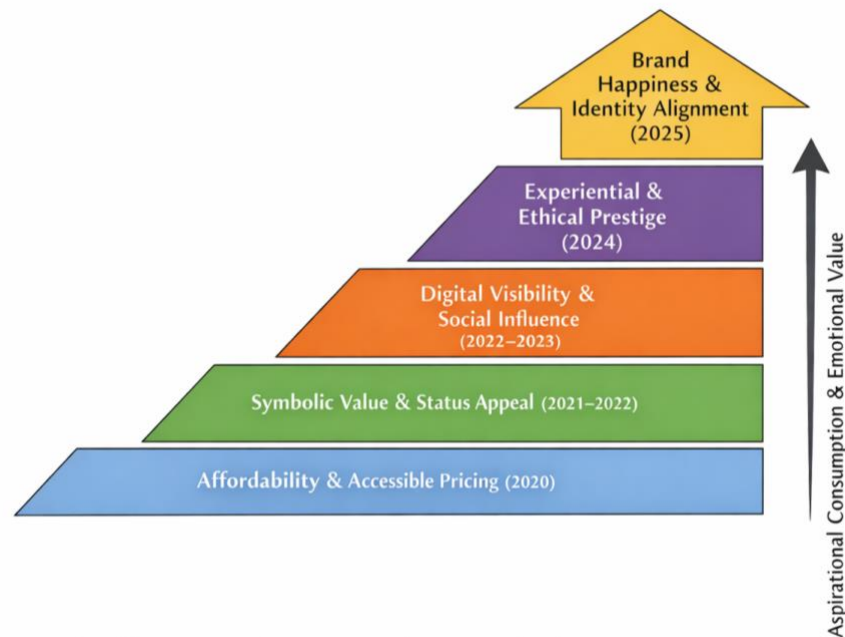
Symbolic Value

Digital Visibility

Experiential & Ethical Prestige

Brand Happiness and Identity Alignment

Figure 1. Conceptual Evolution of Masstige Marketing (2020–2025)



Source: Adapted from Kumar et al. (2020), Lim et al. (2023), Paul et al. (2025).

Masstige marketing literature provides strong theoretical support for the key dimensions of affordability, symbolic value, digital visibility, experiential and ethical prestige, and brand happiness with identity alignment. Scholars consistently emphasize that affordability is the foundational element distinguishing masstige from traditional luxury. According to Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan (2020), masstige brands strategically maintain accessible pricing while preserving premium symbolism, allowing consumers to experience prestige without financial strain. This perspective is reinforced by Baber et al. (2020), who find that in emerging markets, affordability reduces perceived purchase risk and positions masstige products as safe aspirational choices during periods of economic uncertainty. Beyond price, researchers highlight the importance of symbolic value in masstige consumption. Hennigs, Wiedmann, and Klarmann (2023) argue that consumers use masstige brands as symbols of success, status, and self-expression, deriving prestige from perceived meaning rather than exclusivity. Supporting this view, Das et al. (2022) demonstrate that in emerging economies, masstige brands function as indicators of upward social mobility and modern lifestyle orientation.

Recent studies further identify digital visibility as a critical driver of masstige brand value creation. Bilro, Loureiro, and dos Santos (2021) show that social media storytelling and online engagement amplify perceived prestige and emotional attachment, even in affordable luxury contexts. Similarly, Lim, Das, and Paul (2023) conclude that influencer marketing and peer visibility normalize aspirational consumption, making digital presence central to masstige brand success. The literature also reflects an evolution toward experiential and ethical prestige, where consumers

increasingly associate status with premium experiences and responsible brand behavior. Kapferer and Bastien (2023) explain that modern prestige is shaped through experiential elements such as packaging, brand rituals, and limited editions rather than product scarcity alone. Extending this argument, Jain and Mishra (2024) find that sustainability and ethical practices act as new prestige signals, particularly for younger consumers who value purpose-driven brands.

At the highest level of masstige engagement, scholars emphasize the role of brand happiness and identity alignment. Paul, Alagarsamy, and Mehroli (2025) empirically establish that brand happiness mediates the relationship between masstige branding and purchase intention, while age moderates this effect, indicating deeper emotional involvement over time. In a similar vein, Robertson et al. (2022) demonstrate that emotional bonding and brand love can emerge even in accessible luxury categories, leading to loyalty and long-term consumer–brand relationships. Collectively, these studies confirm that masstige marketing operates through a progression from affordability to emotional and identity-based value creation, making it a distinct and theoretically grounded branding strategy rather than a diluted form of luxury.

4. Key Dimensions of Masstige Marketing

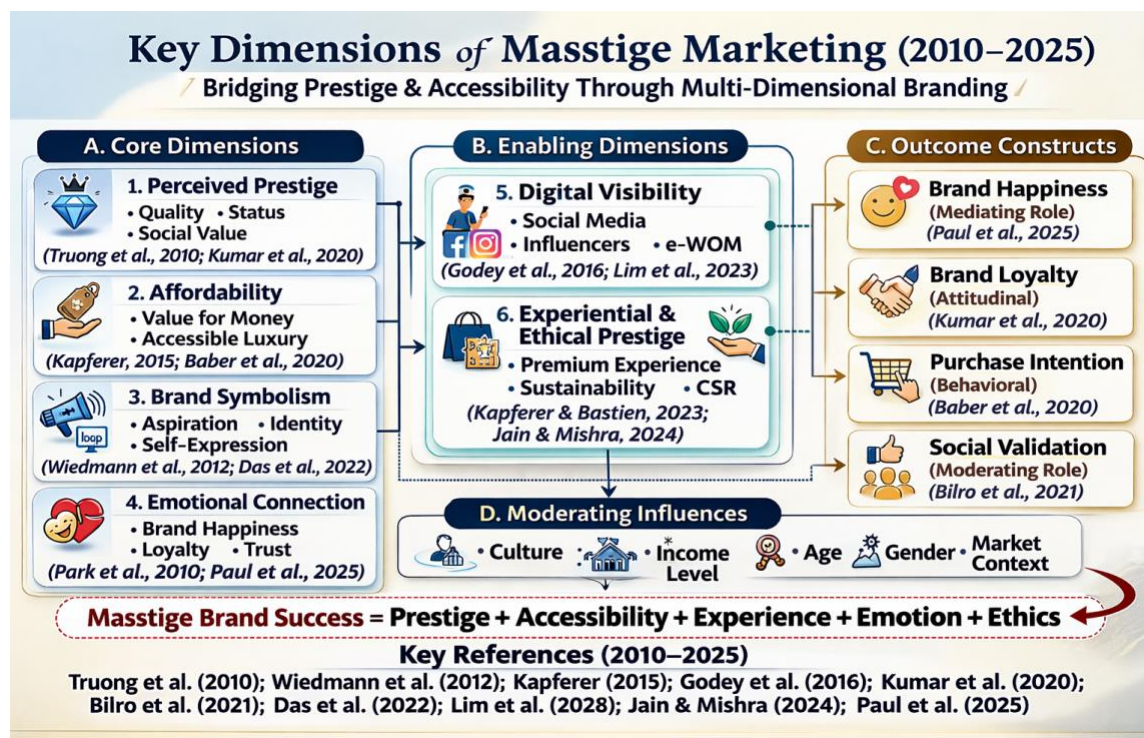
Masstige marketing is characterized by a unique combination of prestige and accessibility, supported by multiple interrelated dimensions identified in the literature over the past decade. Perceived prestige reflects a brand’s ability to convey superior quality and social status without relying on exclusivity. Early work by Truong, McColl, and Kitchen (2010) established that prestige perception can exist independently of high price, a view later reinforced by Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan (2020), who positioned perceived prestige as the cornerstone of masstige branding. Affordability differentiates masstige from traditional luxury by making aspirational products accessible to a wider audience. Kapferer (2015) argued that masstige brands strategically democratize luxury, while Baber et al. (2020) confirmed that affordable prestige significantly enhances purchase intention, particularly in emerging markets.

Another critical dimension is brand symbolism, which allows consumers to express aspirations, social mobility, and self-identity. Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2012) emphasized that symbolic value drives luxury-related consumption, a concept later extended to masstige by Das et al. (2022), who found that masstige brands act as symbolic markers of lifestyle advancement. Emotional connection and identity alignment further strengthen consumer–brand relationships by linking brand meaning with consumers’ self-concept. Park et al. (2010) highlighted the role of emotional bonding in brand relationships, while recent evidence by Paul, Alagarsamy, and Mehroli (2025) demonstrates that brand happiness mediates the relationship between masstige branding and loyalty outcomes.

With the rise of digital platforms, digital visibility has emerged as a significant enabler of masstige success. Godey et al. (2016) established the influence of social media on luxury brand perception, and later studies by Bilro, Loureiro, and dos Santos (2021) and Lim, Das, and Paul (2023)

confirmed that online visibility amplifies perceived prestige and social validation in masstige contexts. Finally, contemporary literature highlights experiential and ethical prestige as emerging dimensions. Kapferer and Bastien (2023) argue that modern prestige is increasingly experience-driven, while Jain and Mishra (2024) demonstrate that sustainability and ethical practices function as new status signals among younger consumers. Collectively, these dimensions position masstige marketing as a distinct and evolving strategy that bridges mass accessibility with symbolic and emotional prestige.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Key Dimensions of Masstige Marketing



Source: Developed by the author based on Truong et al. (2010), Wiedmann et al. (2012), Kapferer (2015), Kumar et al. (2020), Bilro et al. (2021), Das et al. (2022), Lim et al. (2023), Jain and Mishra (2024), and Paul et al. (2026).

5. Masstige Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour in masstige marketing is shaped by aspiration, self-expression, symbolic value, and perceived affordability. Unlike traditional luxury consumption, which is driven by exclusivity and high economic barriers, masstige consumption enables consumers to experience prestige in an accessible and socially acceptable manner. Consumers are attracted to masstige brands because these brands allow them to associate with premium lifestyles without incurring the prohibitive costs associated with luxury products. Truong, McColl, and Kitchen (2010) explain

that aspirational motivation is central to masstige consumption, as consumers seek emotional satisfaction and symbolic elevation rather than functional superiority alone.

A key behavioural driver in masstige marketing is self-expression through symbolic value. Masstige brands function as symbolic tools that help consumers communicate their identity, success, and social position. According to Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2012), symbolic and emotional values are critical in prestige-related consumption, as brands enhance self-esteem and social recognition. In emerging markets, masstige brands further act as indicators of upward social mobility and modern lifestyle orientation (Das et al., 2022). Consumers therefore use masstige products not only for personal gratification but also for social signaling. Affordability plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour by reducing perceived financial and psychological risk. Kapferer (2015) conceptualizes masstige as the democratization of luxury, where prestige becomes attainable for a broader consumer base. Lower price barriers encourage consumers to experiment with masstige products, leading to increased trial behaviour. Empirical evidence suggests that affordability positively influences purchase intention and repeat buying behaviour when consumers perceive high value for money (Baber et al., 2020).

Beyond rational considerations, emotional outcomes such as brand happiness and emotional attachment significantly influence masstige consumer behaviour. Park et al. (2010) argue that emotional bonding strengthens consumer–brand relationships and enhances commitment. Recent research by Paul, Alagarsamy, and Mehroliya (2025) confirms that brand happiness mediates the relationship between masstige perceptions and loyalty intentions. Additionally, digital exposure and social validation through online platforms reinforce aspirational appeal and normalize prestige consumption (Godey et al., 2016). Consequently, consumer behaviour in masstige marketing reflects a dynamic process in which aspiration initiates trial, symbolic value reinforces self-expression, affordability reduces risk, and emotional attachment fosters long-term loyalty.

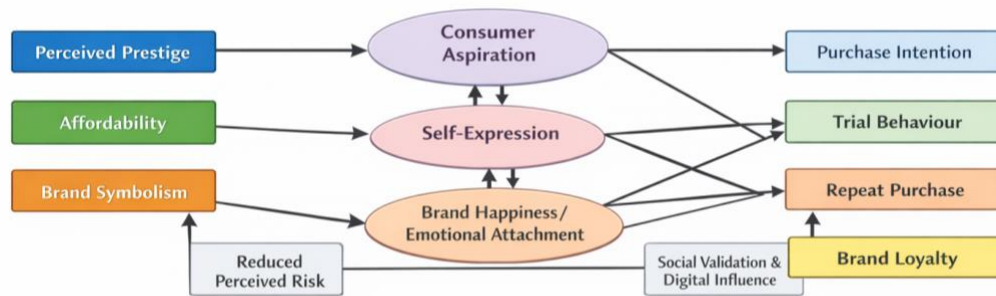
5.1 Conceptual Model of Masstige Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Based on the above discussion, the present study proposes a conceptual model that explains how masstige marketing influences consumer behaviour through psychological and emotional mechanisms. The model conceptualizes masstige marketing as a multidimensional construct consisting of perceived prestige, affordability, and brand symbolism as key antecedents (Truong et al., 2010; Wiedmann et al., 2012; Kumar et al., 2020). These antecedents influence consumer behaviour through mediating variables, namely consumer aspiration, self-expression, and brand happiness or emotional attachment. Masstige brands stimulate aspiration by enabling consumers to associate with premium lifestyles, while symbolic value facilitates identity expression and social recognition (Kapferer, 2015; Das et al., 2022). Affordability reduces perceived purchase risk, thereby encouraging trial behaviour and repeat consumption (Baber et al., 2020).

The ultimate outcomes of the model include purchase intention, trial behaviour, repeat purchase, and brand loyalty, which represent key behavioural responses in masstige consumption. The model

also acknowledges the role of social validation and digital influence in reinforcing aspirational and emotional value, thereby strengthening loyalty outcomes (Godey et al., 2016; Paul et al., 2025). Overall, the proposed conceptual model presents masstige marketing as a structured process through which accessible prestige translates into sustained consumer engagement and loyalty.

Figure 3. Conceptual Model of Masstige Marketing and Consumer Behaviour



Source: Developed by the author based on Truong et al. (2010); Wiedmann et al. (2012); Kapferer (2015); Godey et al. (2016); Baber et al. (2020); Kumar et al. (2020); Das et al. (2022); and Paul et al. (2026)

6. Managerial Implications with Author Support

Prior research highlights that the core managerial challenge in masstige marketing lies in balancing prestige with affordability. According to Jean-Noël Kapferer (2015), brands risk dilution when accessibility undermines symbolic value. Managers should therefore design pricing and product strategies that lower entry barriers while retaining premium cues such as superior aesthetics, controlled availability, and aspirational communication. This balance enables masstige brands to remain desirable without losing their prestige positioning. From a behavioural perspective, masstige consumption is strongly driven by aspiration and identity expression. Goutam Das et al. (2022) demonstrate that consumers engage with masstige brands to associate themselves with premium lifestyles and enhance social recognition. Managers should thus focus on lifestyle-oriented branding, storytelling, and symbolic messaging that allow consumers to express their desired identities through brand consumption. Such strategies help strengthen self-expression and emotional relevance. Affordability plays a crucial role in reducing perceived purchase risk and encouraging trial behaviour. Empirical findings by Hina Baber et al. (2020) indicate that affordable pricing, combined with positive digital word-of-mouth, increases consumers' willingness to experiment with masstige brands and subsequently engage in repeat purchases. Managers should leverage introductory pricing, value packs, and online reviews to facilitate trial while maintaining consistent brand quality.

Emotional outcomes such as brand happiness and attachment further transform initial trial into long-term loyalty. Justin Paul et al. (2026) emphasize that emotional gratification derived from masstige consumption enhances repeat buying and loyalty intentions. Managers should therefore invest in experiential marketing, personalized engagement, and post-purchase interactions that reinforce emotional bonds and consumer satisfaction.

Finally, digital platforms serve as powerful amplifiers of aspirational and emotional value. Bruno Godey et al. (2016) highlight that social media and influencer marketing strengthen brand equity by reinforcing social validation and aspirational appeal. Managers should strategically employ influencers, user-generated content, and online communities to enhance engagement and sustain long-term brand relationships. Overall, by integrating insights from prior research, managers can effectively translate accessible prestige into sustained consumer engagement, repeat purchase behaviour, and brand loyalty. A strategic focus on symbolism, emotional connection, affordability, and digital influence enables masstige brands to achieve differentiation and long-term competitive advantage.

Table 3. Managerial Dimensions and Implications

Managerial Dimension	Key Author Insight	Explanation from Literature	Managerial Implication
Prestige–Affordability Balance	Kapferer (2015)	Prestige may erode if accessibility weakens symbolic value.	Maintain premium design, selective distribution, and aspirational communication while offering affordable entry points.
Aspiration & Identity Expression	Das et al. (2022)	Consumers use masstige brands to signal lifestyle and social identity.	Develop lifestyle branding, storytelling, and symbolic messaging that support self-expression.
Affordability & Trial Behaviour	Baber et al. (2020)	Affordable pricing reduces perceived risk and encourages experimentation.	Use entry-level pricing, value packs, and positive online reviews to stimulate trial and repeat purchase.

Managerial Dimension	Key Author Insight	Explanation from Literature	Managerial Implication
Emotional Engagement & Loyalty	Paul et al. (2025)	Brand happiness and emotional gratification drive loyalty outcomes.	Invest in experiential marketing, personalization, and post-purchase engagement strategies.
Digital & Social Influence	Godey et al. (2016)	Digital platforms reinforce aspirational and emotional value.	Leverage influencers, user-generated content, and online communities to sustain engagement and loyalty.

7. Masstige Marketing in Emerging Economies

Emerging economies present a uniquely fertile context for masstige marketing, as rapid economic development coexists with strong aspirational consumption. Expanding middle-class populations, increasing urbanization, and rising disposable incomes have transformed consumer expectations, particularly in countries such as India. Consumers in these markets increasingly desire products that symbolize modernity, success, and social mobility, yet remain financially attainable. Masstige marketing effectively responds to this dual demand by offering brands that combine elements of prestige with affordability.

From a theoretical standpoint, masstige consumption in emerging economies is deeply rooted in aspiration rather than ownership of traditional luxury. Jean-Noël Kapferer (2015) emphasizes that prestige does not solely stem from exclusivity, but also from symbolic meaning and emotional resonance. In emerging markets, where luxury consumption is often constrained by income limitations, masstige brands allow consumers to psychologically associate with premium lifestyles without incurring prohibitive costs. As a result, masstige becomes a powerful vehicle for identity construction and social signaling. Empirical studies further suggest that aspiration in emerging economies often exceeds actual purchasing power, making accessible prestige particularly attractive. Justin Paul, Kumar, and Unnithan (2020) argue that masstige strategies succeed by bridging the aspiration–affordability gap, enabling consumers to participate in prestige consumption while remaining within economic constraints. This dynamic is especially pronounced in emerging markets, where consumption decisions are strongly influenced by the desire for upward social mobility and lifestyle advancement.

Cultural and social contexts further shape masstige adoption in emerging economies. According to Goutam Das et al. (2022), consumers in such markets actively use masstige brands to express

identity, gain social recognition, and align themselves with contemporary global lifestyles. However, successful masstige branding requires careful localization. Brands that adapt global prestige cues to local cultural values, aesthetics, and consumption habits are more likely to achieve acceptance and long-term loyalty.

Digitalization has significantly accelerated the diffusion of masstige consumption in emerging markets. Exposure to global luxury imagery through social media, influencers, and digital communities intensifies aspirational desire and reduces informational barriers. As highlighted by Bruno Godey et al. (2016), digital platforms reinforce social validation and emotional engagement, making masstige brands more visible, desirable, and socially endorsed. In emerging economies, where peer influence and visibility play a crucial role in consumption decisions, digital engagement further strengthens masstige appeal. Overall, masstige marketing in emerging economies represents a strategic convergence of aspiration, affordability, and emotional value. By enabling consumers to experience symbolic prestige within realistic economic boundaries, masstige brands foster strong psychological connections and sustained engagement. Consequently, emerging markets not only offer significant growth opportunities for masstige brands but also provide critical contexts for advancing theoretical understanding of aspirational consumption and consumer behaviour.

8. Conclusion

Masstige marketing has evolved into more than just a clever branding tactic—it is a cultural and economic phenomenon that bridges the gap between exclusivity and accessibility. By blending the symbolic prestige of luxury with the affordability of mass-market products, masstige brands empower consumers to express identity, aspiration, and modern lifestyles without financial strain. The rise of digital platforms, influencer-driven communication, and shifting consumer values has accelerated this transformation, making masstige consumption a mainstream reality across industries such as fashion, beauty, electronics, and automobiles. Importantly, emerging economies like India illustrate how rising middle-class aspirations and disposable incomes create fertile ground for masstige strategies, positioning them as both socially relevant and commercially viable. For managers, the challenge lies in maintaining the delicate balance between prestige and mass appeal. Strategic pricing, controlled distribution, and authentic storytelling are essential to avoid brand dilution while sustaining aspirational value. At the same time, emotional connections and symbolic cues remain central to fostering loyalty and long-term consumer engagement. Ultimately, masstige marketing represents a democratization of luxury—making prestige attainable for the many rather than the few. It reflects contemporary consumer desires for status, self-expression, and cultural belonging, while offering firms meaningful opportunities for growth in diverse markets. As global consumption patterns continue to evolve, masstige will remain a powerful strategy for brands seeking to align with modern aspirations and redefine what luxury means in everyday life.



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