



What makes consumers happy? The role of FoMO, brand-person congruence and emotional marketing in a multi-gender model

¿Qué hace feliz al consumidor? El rol del FoMO, la congruencia marca-persona y el marketing emocional en un modelo multigénero

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of brand-person congruence (BPC) and the fear of missing out (FoMO) on consumer happiness, considering the mediating role of emotional marketing (EM) and gender-based structural differences. Drawing on self-congruence theory and the Differential Emotion Processing Theory, a relational model integrating identity, social and affective variables is proposed. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed to analyse data collected from 360 young consumers via an online, structured questionnaire. The model was estimated using covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) and multigroup analysis (MGA-SEM). Results indicate that both BPC and FoMO significantly affect EM, which acts as a key mediator linking identity and social factors to consumer happiness. Gender differences were observed: among men, BPC directly influences happiness, whereas among women, FoMO exerts a direct impact. EM emerges as an emotional translator that transforms symbolic congruence and social tensions into subjective happiness. The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of consumer happiness as a relational outcome shaped by identity-related and social dynamics and influenced by emotional mechanisms. From a managerial standpoint, the study offers practical insights for developing ethical, emotionally responsible, and happiness-oriented marketing strategies in digital consumption contexts.

Keywords: Consumer happiness; Emotional marketing; Brand-person congruence; FoMO; Gender differences.

R E S U M E N

El propósito de este estudio es analizar cómo la congruencia marca-persona (CMP) y el miedo a perderse experiencias valiosas (FoMO) influyen en la felicidad del consumidor, considerando el papel mediador del marketing emocional (ME) y las diferencias estructurales por género. Con base en la teoría de la auto-congruencia y la teoría del procesamiento diferencial de emociones, se propone un modelo relacional que integra variables identitarias, sociales y afectivas. La investigación se desarrolló con enfoque cuantitativo y diseño transversal, aplicando un cuestionario estructurado a una muestra de 360 jóvenes consumidores. El modelo fue estimado mediante ecuaciones estructurales basadas en covarianzas (CB-SEM) y análisis multigrupo (MGA-SEM). Los resultados evidencian que la CMP y el FoMO influyen significativamente en el ME, y que este último actúa como mediador clave entre los factores identitarios y sociales y la felicidad del consumidor. Se observan diferencias de género: en los hombres, la CMP impacta directamente en la felicidad, mientras que en las mujeres el FoMO ejerce una influencia directa sobre ella. El ME emerge como un traductor emocional que convierte la congruencia simbólica y las tensiones sociales en felicidad subjetiva. Los hallazgos contribuyen a la comprensión teórica de la felicidad del consumidor como un resultado contextual de consumo, configurado por factores relacionales e influido por mecanismos emocionales. En el ámbito gerencial, ofrece pautas para desarrollar un marketing emocional ético y orientado a la felicidad en entornos digitales.

Palabras clave: Felicidad del consumidor; Marketing emocional; Congruencia marca-persona; FoMO, Diferencias de género.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amid contemporary social, technological, and economic disruptions, understanding the triggers of consumer happiness has become a priority for marketing research, driven by the behavioural sciences' shift towards more human, experiential, and relational approaches (Agarwal & Khandelwal, 2024; Lima & Belk, 2022). In the digital era, consumption transcends its functional dimension to be conceived as a symbolic and emotional experience that contributes to the construction of identity, belonging, and life meaning (Liu & Zhao, 2024). Consequently, consumer happiness has emerged as a strategic concept, integrating hedonic, affective, and identity-related dimensions of behaviour, shifting the focus from transactional satisfaction towards a more holistic understanding of subjective wellbeing (Salazar-Altamirano *et al.*, 2025a; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2023).

Following this line of reasoning, data from the World Happiness Report (WHR, 2024) indicate that more than 70% of consumers associate their personal happiness with positive emotional experiences with brands, and 64% prioritise those that generate meaning or personal connection over those that merely satisfy functional needs. This phenomenon is particularly salient among younger consumers, who are deeply embedded in digital environments and exhibit higher levels of engagement with social media and emotionally driven consumption experiences, making them especially sensitive to identity construction, social comparison, and affective stimuli in consumption processes (Fumagalli *et al.*, 2021). This context highlights the importance of understanding how emotions, symbolic values, and personal identity intersect in shaping contemporary consumer happiness (Saikia & Bhattacharjee, 2024).

Under this premise, the literature has shown that consumption experiences consistent with an individual's identity have a positive and lasting effect on happiness, as they facilitate processes of self-expression and authenticity (Issock *et al.*, 2023). In this regard, brand–person congruence (BPC), understood as the perceived alignment between the consumer's self-concept and the brand's symbolic personality, is associated with higher levels of emotional attachment, satisfaction, and loyalty (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). This effect occurs because BPC reinforces the coherence between the “real self” and the “ideal self”, acting as an identity validation mechanism that promotes psychological wellbeing derived from consumption (Spiga, 2025). In this direction, Sato *et al.* (2023) emphasise that brand identification predicts up to 37% of subjective happiness in experiential consumption contexts.

Nevertheless, this potential of consumption as a source of happiness coexists with tensions derived from digital hyperconnectivity. Within this ecosystem, the fear of missing out (FoMO) represents a psychosocial phenomenon that undermines consumer happiness (Tandon *et al.*, 2021). Conceived as the anxiety caused by the possibility of social exclusion or disconnection, FoMO has been linked to impulsivity, social comparison, and a reduction in the genuine enjoyment of consumption experiences (Littman-Ovadia & Russo-Netzer, 2024). The empirical corpus supporting this field shows that 58% of global social media users experience moderate or high levels of FoMO, and that this phenomenon accounts for approximately 31% of the variance in

indicators of anxiety and digital fatigue (Hayran & Anik, 2021), confirming its relevance as a complex psychosocial variable.

In this scenario, emotional marketing (EM) emerges as a strategic resource capable of counteracting the affective tensions generated by FoMO and strengthening the consumer–brand emotional bond (Bin, 2023). This approach, centred on the orchestration of sensory, symbolic, and narrative experiences, seeks to mobilise positive emotions (such as empathy, inspiration, or pride) to create experiential value and authentic relationships (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Consistent with this perspective, Thamilselvan and Rakeshyanand (2024) demonstrate that EM enhances affective brand connection, increases consumer happiness, and reinforces loyalty, consolidating its role as a key mechanism for promoting happiness in highly digitalised markets.

Together, these perspectives suggest that identity alignment and social pressure represent two complementary forces shaping contemporary consumption experiences. In digitally hyperconnected environments, where individuals constantly observe, compare and share consumption experiences, BPC reflects the identity-based dimension of consumption while FoMO captures the social pressures intensified by continuous social exposure. In this context, EM acts as the affective mechanism through which these forces can be translated into emotionally meaningful experiences that ultimately influence consumer happiness.

Furthermore, gender differences introduce an additional layer of complexity in understanding these dynamics. Empirical evidence suggests that men and women process emotional stimuli and social pressures associated with consumption differently: women tend to exhibit greater empathic responsiveness, while men are more oriented towards symbolic coherence and identity projection (Luo *et al.*, 2025). These divergences underscore the importance of a multigroup analysis that examines structural heterogeneity in the emotional pathways leading to consumer happiness (Satinover Nichols & Wehr Holt, 2023). By incorporating a comparative structural analysis, this study seeks to identify whether the relationships among brand–person congruence, FoMO, EM, and consumer happiness differ between men and women, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of how emotional and psychosocial mechanisms operate across gender groups.

Despite prior advances, the literature still presents relevant gaps. Although the positive effect of BPC and the negative impact of FoMO on happiness have been demonstrated, few studies have integrated both phenomena simultaneously within a single explanatory model, considering their opposing influences on consumer happiness (Zogaj *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, the mediating role of EM remains incipient, and it has not yet been clarified how affective experiences can enhance the positive identity-based effects of congruence or mitigate the negative socioemotional impacts of FoMO (Michel *et al.*, 2022). Finally, research on gender heterogeneity remains limited, despite evidence of differences in consumption symbolism and emotional response (Tandon *et al.*, 2021).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyse how FoMO and BPC influence consumer happiness, considering the mediating effect of EM and structural gender differences. In doing so, the study explores whether identity alignment and socially driven pressures shape consumer happiness primarily through

emotional mechanisms rather than through direct effects. It also examines whether these emotional pathways differ across gender groups within digitally mediated consumption environments. This focus is particularly relevant given that young consumers' digital engagement intensifies identity construction, social comparison, and emotionally driven consumption dynamics.

This study aims to contribute to the marketing literature from three complementary perspectives: (1) theoretical, by integrating psychosocial and affective variables traditionally studied separately; (2) empirical, through a multigroup model based on structural equation modelling; and (3) managerial, by offering guidelines for ethical, inclusive, and happiness-oriented EM. Thus, the study aims to contribute to both the theoretical understanding of consumer happiness and the development of an empirical framework valuable for brand management in an emotional and digital economy.

Finally, the remaining sections of this manuscript are organised as follows: Section 2 presents the literature review and conceptual model; Section 3 describes the methodology and analytical techniques; Section 4 reports the empirical results, including the multigroup analysis; Section 5 discusses the findings and their theoretical and practical implications; Section 6 outlines the study's limitations and future research lines; and finally, Section 7 presents the main conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section develops the theoretical framework underpinning the proposed model, integrating the conceptual and empirical foundations of the variables included in the study. First, it addresses consumer happiness as the central construct, representing the manifestation of subjective wellbeing derived from consumption experiences (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2023). Subsequently, the antecedents and effects of BPC, FoMO, and EM are examined, establishing their theoretical and empirical interrelations. Finally, the study's theoretical contribution is reviewed, and its relevance and originality within the marketing and consumer behaviour literature are outlined, justifying its significance.

In this context, the proposed conceptual framework integrates identity-related, social, and emotional mechanisms to explain the formation of consumer happiness in digital consumption environments. On the one hand, BPC reflects the alignment between the consumer's self-concept and the symbolic identity of the brand, which fosters feelings of authenticity, identification, and psychological coherence. On the other hand, FoMO represents a socially driven psychological tension that emerges from the perception of being excluded from rewarding experiences shared by others in digital environments, aligning with its conceptualisation as a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski *et al.*, 2013).

Although these constructs originate from different psychological processes, one associated with identity affirmation and the other with social comparison, both generate emotional responses that shape how consumers experience brands and consumption activities. From this perspective, EM can be understood as a central affective mechanism through which these identity-based and socially driven dynamics shape consumer

happiness in contemporary digital markets, as it seeks to generate emotional resonance and strengthen the psychological connection between consumers and brands (Bin, 2023).

2.1. Consumer happiness

The study of consumer happiness originates from the convergence of positive psychology and relational marketing, which, since the late twentieth century, has begun to shift the analytical focus from transactional satisfaction to the subjective wellbeing associated with consumption (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2025; Sirgy *et al.*, 2007). In general terms, consumer happiness is conceived as the extent to which consumption experiences contribute to both hedonic (pleasure, enjoyment) and eudaimonic (meaning, self-realisation) wellbeing (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2024a). This perspective recognises that consumption is not limited to the acquisition of goods or services but constitutes a symbolic practice that shapes personal identity and the perception of life purpose (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2023).

Historically, consumer happiness has emerged as a response to the need to understand how emotional experiences derived from consumption can enhance psychological wellbeing (Salazar-Altamirano *et al.*, 2025b; Sato *et al.*, 2023). Early contributions by Richins (2013) and Nicolao *et al.* (2009) demonstrated that experiential purchases, rather than material ones, have a more lasting impact on happiness, as they strengthen social connection and the sense of belonging. More recently, the literature has expanded this line of inquiry, emphasising that consumer happiness is determined by emotional variables (pleasure, pride, gratitude), identity-related dimensions (authenticity, self-congruence), and relational factors (brand and community attachment) (Bhardwaj & Kalro, 2023). Recent research suggests that consumer happiness has reached a strategic centrality in brand management literature, as it represents an integrated indicator of emotional value and wellbeing (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2021).

From a marketing standpoint, consumer happiness represents the point of convergence between symbolic and emotional value (Dodds *et al.*, 2021). In this regard, Kalogeras and Mejri (2025) argue that positive experiences derived from brands directly influence personal wellbeing while strengthening loyalty, word of mouth, and brand advocacy, thereby creating a virtuous cycle between wellbeing and responsible consumption behaviour. Consequently, the study of consumer happiness seeks to transcend superficial approaches by addressing the inherent complexity of the affective and symbolic mechanisms linking individuals to brands. It thus constitutes the structural foundation that organises the interaction among the remaining variables within the model.

In this sense, consumer happiness cannot be understood solely as an individual psychological outcome but rather as the result of multiple symbolic, social, and emotional mechanisms operating within contemporary consumption environments. Identity alignment between consumers and brands, the social pressures derived from digitally mediated interactions, and the emotional experiences orchestrated by marketing strategies all shape how individuals derive wellbeing from consumption. Therefore, understanding consumer happiness requires examining how identity-based factors such as brand-person congruence, socially

driven dynamics such as FoMO, and affective mechanisms such as EM interact to shape the emotional outcomes associated with consumption.

In recent years, the concept of happiness management has gained increasing attention as a complementary perspective for understanding how wellbeing can be strategically fostered through organizational and relational practices (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2021). In line with the evolution of the consumer happiness construct, recent studies suggest that both approaches share a common foundation centred on the role of emotions, value alignment, and human experiences in shaping wellbeing (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2023). From this perspective, consumer happiness can be understood as the manifestation of happiness management principles within consumption contexts, where brands act as agents capable of designing emotionally meaningful and ethically grounded experiences. Thus, integrating these perspectives provides a broader conceptual framework for analysing how identity-based, social, and affective mechanisms interact to influence subjective wellbeing in contemporary consumption environments.

2.2. Brand–Person Congruence (BPC)

The study of BPC has its origins in Sirgy's (1982) self-congruence theory, which proposes that consumers prefer brands whose perceived image aligns with their self-concept (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2017). Since then, this approach has evolved towards a multidimensional understanding that incorporates aspects such as personality, values, social roles, and personal aspirations, consolidating BPC as the core of symbolic consumption behaviour (Fens *et al.*, 2022). Recent research continues to highlight the relevance of self-congruence processes in shaping consumers' emotional and relational responses toward brands. For instance, Shimul and Phau (2023) show that brand self-congruence strengthens emotional attachment and brand advocacy, while Kumagai (2024) demonstrates that congruence between the consumer's self-concept and brand attributes significantly influences brand affect and evaluation mechanisms. These findings suggest that identity congruence not only shapes symbolic brand evaluations but also activates emotional processes that are central to consumers' interactions with brands.

The relationship between BPC and EM is based on the premise that the symbolic correspondence between the consumer's self and the brand's identity enhances affective activation during the consumption experience. When consumers perceive coherence between their personal values and those of the brand, positive emotions such as pride, inspiration, and empathy arise, thereby strengthening EM strategies (Aliarte *et al.*, 2024). In this regard, Rizkautami and Tuti (2025) empirically demonstrated that BPC significantly influences the effectiveness of emotional branding, as a manifestation of EM, by generating greater affective resonance and increasing consumers' predisposition towards advertising campaigns.

However, other studies question the universality of this relationship. Michel *et al.* (2022), for example, found that excessive congruence may reduce perceived emotional novelty and limit self-expansion, since consumers may perceive it as redundant or lacking symbolic stimulation. According to these authors, a certain degree of ideal incongruence, understood as a moderate

aspirational gap between the brand and the authentic self, can evoke emotions of challenge and personal growth, enriching the impact of EM.

The evidence presented above suggests that BPC represents a relevant antecedent of EM, as the symbolic alignment between consumers and brands facilitates affective activation and strengthens emotionally driven brand interactions. Accordingly, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: Brand-person congruence positively influences emotional marketing.

Beyond its relational role, BPC may also influence subjective wellbeing and consumer happiness. From a psychological perspective, the correspondence between personal identity and brand symbolism generates feelings of authenticity, belonging, and internal coherence, all of which are central components of both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing (Sato *et al.*, 2023). In their study of experiential consumers, these authors found that brand identification mediated the relationship between experiential consumption and happiness, accounting for 42% of the variance in subjective wellbeing. Similarly, Rodrigues *et al.* (2023) showed that congruence between the consumer's image and that of the chef or restaurant, as a human brand, enhances hedonic and novelty-related emotions, which in turn lead to greater happiness. These results reinforce the notion that symbolic congruence serves as an emotional catalyst, transforming brand interaction into a source of personal happiness (Williams *et al.*, 2022).

Nevertheless, not all studies confirm this positive relationship. Attiq *et al.* (2022) found that functional and symbolic self-incongruence can elicit negative emotions, such as frustration or rejection, thereby reducing consumer happiness. This finding suggests that perceived incongruence, particularly when it contradicts deeply held identity values, erodes the affective bond with the brand and undermines the individual's emotional balance, leading to rejection or disengagement responses.

As a result, BPC emerges as a determinant of consumer happiness. Its presence can foster positive emotions, authenticity, and wellbeing, while its absence may lead to discomfort and a detachment from the brand. Accordingly, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: Brand-person congruence has a positive influence on consumer happiness.

2.3. Fear of Missing Out (FoMo)

FoMO has been established as a theoretical basis for understanding consumer behaviour in both digital and offline environments (Alfina *et al.*, 2023). This phenomenon, defined as the anxiety that arises from perceiving that others are enjoying rewarding experiences in one's absence, reflects a persistent need for connection and social validation (Reisenwitz & Fowler, 2023). Recent studies also emphasise that FoMO is associated with psychological mechanisms related to social comparison and the desire to remain continuously connected with others (Gupta & Sharma, 2021).

In consumption contexts, FoMO has been shown to influence consumer decision-making processes and increase the like-

likelihood of engaging in experiences perceived as socially relevant or difficult to access. Specifically, FoMO can be triggered by social interactions or marketing stimuli that highlight the possibility of missing rewarding experiences, thereby motivating consumers to act in order to avoid regret or social exclusion (Good & Hyman, 2020). In the current ecosystem characterised by hyperconnectivity and consumption dynamics mediated by digital platforms, FoMO operates as a psychological force capable of influencing both interactions with brands and the emotional patterns associated with consumption, thereby reinforcing the need to advance its study (Habib & Almamy, 2025; Rangel-Lyne & Salazar-Altamirano, 2025).

In this context, the link between FoMO and EM is grounded in the strategic use of urgency, exclusivity and perceived scarcity as emotional triggers in brand communication. Pane *et al.* (2024) demonstrated that campaigns activating FoMO significantly increase emotional engagement and purchase intention by eliciting feelings of excitement and a sense of belonging within digital communities. These findings suggest that FoMO can serve as an effective accelerator, intensifying emotional responses towards brands and thereby enhancing their visibility and engagement.

However, such emotional activation can also have counterproductive effects. Hakim and Farid (2025) caution that FoMO-based strategies, such as flash sales or time-limited promotions, can generate anxiety, social pressure and post-purchase regret, thereby undermining consumer trust and long-term happiness. In this regard, FoMO represents a double-edged construct: while it may enhance the short-term effectiveness of EM, it simultaneously threatens the authenticity and emotional sustainability of the consumer–brand relationship. Accordingly, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: FoMO has a negative influence on emotional marketing.

Regarding consumer happiness, FoMO tends to produce ambivalent effects. From a positive perspective, Lee *et al.* (2021) found that exposure to influencer-related activities on social media, mediated by FoMO, can increase perceived happiness among some consumers by providing a sense of connection and social belonging. The authors note that, in specific contexts, FoMO acts as an interaction enhancer, reinforcing positive emotions derived from symbolic consumption.

Nevertheless, the predominant evidence points to adverse effects. Bartosiak *et al.* (2025), in a study involving more than 800 young adults, confirmed that FoMO is directly associated with lower levels of psychological, social and financial wellbeing, serving as a predictor of emotional fatigue and affective dissonance. These findings demonstrate that constant exposure to narratives of social comparison and perceived exclusion generates emotional imbalance, which diminishes consumer happiness.

Overall, recent literature suggests that although FoMO can momentarily induce positive emotions through social connection, its sustained effects tend to be unpleasant, eroding satisfaction and the happiness derived from consumption. From this, the following research hypothesis is formulated:

H₄: FoMO has a negative influence on consumer happiness.

2.4. Emotional Marketing (EM)

EM has gained widespread acceptance as a practical approach for fostering deep and meaningful connections between consumers and brands (He *et al.*, 2022). EM strategies seek to stimulate consumers' affective states by appealing to their feelings, aspirations and personal experiences, thereby strengthening the emotional bond between consumers and brands (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). Unlike approaches that focus solely on functional attributes, EM appeals to emotions, aspirations, and symbolic values, fostering enduring affective relationships (Thamilselvan & Rakeshyanand, 2024). In a context characterised by information overload and digital fatigue, understanding EM becomes crucial, as the ability of brands to connect emotionally with users has become a competitive differentiator that directly influences consumer experience, loyalty and happiness (Bruckberger *et al.*, 2023). EM operates by eliciting affective responses that shape consumers' perceptions, attitudes and behavioural intentions toward brands (Guo, 2024).

Empirical evidence indicates that EM strategies and consumption experiences with a positive emotional load are associated with higher levels of subjective happiness. Recent empirical studies also show that EM in digital environments significantly influences consumer behaviour by activating psychological mechanisms such as trust, attachment and emotional engagement (Bin, 2023). For instance, Sarmad and Ali (2022) demonstrated that emotional brand experiences, particularly those linked to sensory pleasure and positive affect, directly influence consumers' happiness orientation, mediating the relationship between brand experience and overall wellbeing. Similarly, Khandai *et al.* (2024) showed that brands capable of evoking emotions such as pride, moral satisfaction or purpose (for example, sustainable brands) generate "brand happiness," which in turn drives recommendation and advocacy behaviours.

However, not all effects of EM are uniformly positive. Tresna (2025) warns that the overuse of emotional stimuli, typical of EM, or appeals to scarcity and urgency, may lead to emotional fatigue or affective dissonance, thereby reducing perceived happiness. This author argues that emotional strategies must be balanced with authenticity and ethical integrity to prevent affective manipulation from producing adverse effects on consumer happiness.

Therefore, EM can act as an emotional catalyst capable of transforming symbolic experiences into subjective happiness, provided that the emotions induced are perceived as authentic and consistent with the consumer's personal values. Based on the evidence presented, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H₅: Emotional marketing positively influences consumer happiness.

Moreover, EM may directly affect consumer happiness while simultaneously mediating the relationship between identity- or socially based variables and emotional wellbeing (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2024b).

First, regarding BPC, Rizkautami and Tuti (2025) demonstrated that emotional branding, as a product of EM, mediates the relationship between identity congruence and purchase

intention by transforming symbolic correspondence into positive affective experiences that strengthen the consumer–brand connection. Similarly, Kumagai (2024) found that symbolic congruence between brand and consumer increases subjective happiness through emotional mechanisms of trust and symbolic appreciation. These findings support the mediating role of EM as the mechanism through which BPC translates into lasting happiness and satisfaction.

Second, in relation to FoMO, recent research suggests that emotions generated by digital marketing strategies can either mitigate or amplify the effects of this phenomenon on happiness. Azhari and Roosdhani (2025) found that social media marketing activities that appropriately manage emotional engagement and the sense of belonging can buffer the negative impact of FoMO on consumption decisions and perceived happiness. In contrast, Abas *et al.* (2025) caution that the excessive use of FoMO as an emotional activation tool can erode both happiness and brand trust, confirming the mediating and bidirectional role of EM in such psychological processes.

Consequently, EM emerges as a mediating variable that can translate symbolic congruence or social tension into either constructive or unpleasant emotions, thereby determining the level of consumer happiness. Considering the empirical foundations outlined above, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H₆: Emotional marketing mediates the relationship between brand–person congruence and consumer happiness.

H₇: Emotional marketing mediates the relationship between FoMO and consumer happiness.

2.5. Gender Differences and Theoretical Contribution

Gender differences represent a key, though historically underexplored, area in understanding the emotional and symbolic processes that shape consumer behaviour (Truong, 2025). From the perspective of the Differential Emotion Processing Theory (Fischer & Manstead, 2016), men and women differ in the activation, expression, and regulation of emotions, resulting in distinct responses to brand stimuli, marketing strategies, and consumption experiences. This theory posits that women tend to experience and express emotions with greater intensity and empathy. In contrast, men tend to orient their affective responses towards self-definition and symbolic coherence, resulting in differentiated cognitive and emotional pathways (Fischer *et al.*, 2018).

Current academic production converges in supporting this approach. Empirical evidence from Truong (2025), which utilised a neuro-emotional analysis of consumers on e-commerce platforms, demonstrated significant differences between men and women in emotional valence, arousal, and dominance dimensions, confirming that affective experiences are processed differently by gender. Complementarily, Marsasi and Yuanita (2023) found that gender disparities affect the intensity of attachment to luxury brands and the relationship between hedonic motivations and emotional attachment, suggesting that identity- and emotion-based variables (such as BPC or EM) are not structurally equivalent across genders (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2024c).

Despite these advances, a systematic review of the literature conducted by the authors for this study, based on searches in

Scopus, Web of Science and PubMed (as of October 2025), reveals the absence of studies that comprehensively analyse structural gender differences within a model integrating BPC, FoMO, EM and consumer happiness. The literature tends to address these phenomena in isolation, without exploring their interaction within a multigroup framework. This empirical gap justifies the relevance of the present study and reinforces its pioneering character in incorporating a multigender analysis within an affective model of consumer happiness.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study seeks to extend the Differential Emotion Processing Theory to the field of EM by proposing that differences in emotional intensity, direction and regulation between men and women may alter the psychological pathways linking identity-related (BPC), social (FoMO) and affective (EM) variables with consumer happiness. In doing so, it aims to identify an innovative explanatory framework that integrates perspectives from emotional psychology, self-congruence theory and experiential marketing into a relational multigroup model. Accordingly, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H₈: There are significant differences between men and women in the relationships among brand–person congruence, FoMO, emotional marketing and consumer happiness.

Figure 1 presents the proposed theoretical model, derived from the empirical evidence outlined in the conceptual framework, as well as the hypothetical relationships guiding the development of this research.

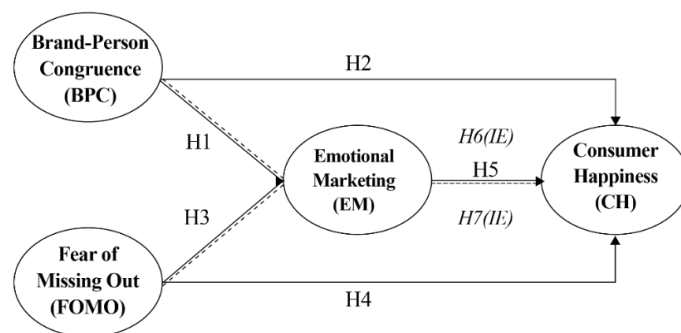


Figure 1
Proposed model

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample and Data Collection Procedure

The study employed a quantitative approach with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design, aiming to analyse the structural relationships among the proposed constructs using structural equation modelling (SEM). Data were collected through a structured digital questionnaire distributed to a non-probabilistic convenience sample of young consumers in Mexico, a context characterised by high levels of digital engagement and intensive

social media use. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity and confidentiality were always ensured, in accordance with the ethical principles of social science research.

Regarding ethical compliance, the study was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013) and the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association. All participants were informed in advance about the general objectives of the research, the anonymous and confidential nature of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Participation was entirely voluntary, and submitting the completed questionnaire was considered an expression of informed consent.

To assess potential non-response bias, early and late respondents were compared following the procedure proposed by Armstrong and Overton (1977). Independent sample t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences between the two groups ($p > 0.10$), suggesting that non-response bias is unlikely to affect the validity of the results.

The final sample consisted of 360 participants, which allowed for the estimation of the overall structural model and the performance of multigroup analyses using SEM (MGA-SEM). In terms of sociodemographic composition, 56.9% of participants identified as male and 43.1% as female. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, with a mean of 20.0 years and a standard deviation of 1.02, indicating a predominantly young and relatively homogeneous population. This group is particularly relevant for the aims of this study, as young consumers tend to display higher emotional involvement in consumption processes and greater exposure to digital environments, key factors for analysing emotion-based, happiness-oriented and experiential consumption models (Bag et al., 2021; Fumagalli et al., 2021).

3.2. Instruments

The research employed a structured questionnaire composed of previously validated scales from the literature to measure the constructs of the proposed model (see Appendix Table A.1). BPC was assessed using an adaptation of the scale developed by Escalas and Bettman (2003), which examines the extent to which consumers perceive similarity and alignment between their personal identity and the identity of brands. An example item from this scale is: *"I identify with brands that share my way of thinking or my values."*

Similarly, FoMO was measured using the scale proposed by Hayran and Anik (2021), designed to capture the emotional discomfort and consumption motivation derived from the perception of social exclusion. A representative item from this scale is: *"It bothers me to see others enjoying products or experiences that I do not have."*

Consumer happiness was measured using the scale developed by Cuesta-Valiño et al. (2023), which evaluates wellbeing, emotional satisfaction, and positive emotions experienced during the purchasing process. An example item from this scale is: *"I feel that my purchases contribute to my overall happiness."*

Finally, EM was assessed through an adaptation of the scale proposed by Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005), which captures the degree of emotional connection, attachment and affective enjoyment that consumers experience towards brands

and consumption experiences. An illustrative item is: *"I feel an emotional connection with certain consumption experiences."* All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponded to "strongly disagree" and 5 to "strongly agree."

3.3. Data analysis technique

Data analysis was conducted using Jamovi software (version 2.3.28), which was selected for its suitability in processing statistical information in quantitative studies and its compatibility with advanced analytical techniques. As an initial step, a preliminary statistical review of the variables included in the study was conducted, calculating descriptive indicators such as means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis. This analysis enabled an examination of data behaviour and confirmed that their characteristics were suitable for the application of subsequent multivariate techniques (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

To rule out potential bias resulting from standard method variance, Harman's single-factor test was applied, following the methodological recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003). The unrotated exploratory factor analysis revealed the existence of four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, with the first factor accounting for 29.4% of the total variance, a value well below the 50% threshold typically considered indicative of risk. This result confirms that there is no substantial evidence of common method bias in the collected data. Complementary procedural measures were also adopted, including ensuring complete anonymity of responses, employing validated scales and formulating items neutrally, to mitigate potential shared variance effects.

Once statistical assumptions were verified, the proposed model was estimated using covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM), complemented by multigroup analysis (MGA-SEM) to assess potential structural differences between the groups under consideration. This procedure is particularly suitable for testing the stability of theoretical relationships and exploring differential effects across subsamples (Cheah et al., 2020). The selection of CB-SEM was based on the theoretical robustness of the model and the adequacy of the sample size for this type of analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

The overall model fit was assessed using several indices widely accepted in the literature, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), following the criteria proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999), to ensure the consistency and reliability of the results obtained.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Structural equation modelling

To empirically test the proposed theoretical model and analyse the relationships among the study constructs, a covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) approach was employed, estimated using Jamovi software (version 2.3.28). This procedure allowed for a simultaneous assessment of the overall model fit, construct validity and robustness of the hypothesised structural relationships.

A multigroup analysis (MGA-SEM) was also conducted, taking participant gender into account, to identify potential differences in the strength and significance of structural effects between groups. This approach facilitated the examination of both direct and indirect effects, as well as the verification of the theoretical model's stability, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the emotional and relational mechanisms underlying consumer happiness and purchasing behaviour.

4.1.1. CONVERGENT AND DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

The convergent validity of the measurement model was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) indicators for the constructs

BPC, FoMO, Consumer Happiness, and EM, considering both the total sample and the multigroup analysis by gender (see Table 1).

The results indicate high levels of internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.88 in all cases, both for the full sample and for the female and male subgroups, well above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Consistently, CR values were greater than 0.88 across all constructs, confirming the robustness and stability of the measurement model. Likewise, AVE values surpassed the minimum criterion of 0.50 for all variables and groups analysed, indicating that each construct explains an adequate proportion of the variance of its indicators, thereby supporting the convergent validity of the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1
Convergent and discriminant validity

		Cronbach's Alpha			Composite Reliability			AVE		
		Full sample	Female	Male	Full sample	Female	Male	Full sample	Female	Male
1	Brand-Person Congruence	0.931	0.935	0.927	0.929	0.934	0.927	0.620	0.635	0.608
2	Fear of Missing Out	0.911	0.922	0.900	0.911	0.923	0.902	0.719	0.746	0.695
3	Consumer Happiness	0.921	0.941	0.919	0.928	0.942	0.921	0.562	0.613	0.530
4	Emotional Marketing	0.882	0.884	0.880	0.881	0.880	0.882	0.553	0.545	0.552
HTMT Criterion					Fornell-Larcker Criterion					
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
1	Brand-Person Congruence	—				0.787				
2	Fear of Missing Out	0.432	—			0.414	0.848			
3	Consumer Happiness	0.554	0.536	—		0.651	0.532	0.750		
4	Emotional Marketing	0.599	0.507	0.832	—	0.696	0.501	0.844	0.744	

Source: Own elaboration.

Discriminant validity was examined through the joint application of the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the HTMT (Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio) criterion. According to the Fornell–Larcker approach, the square root of the AVE of each construct was compared with the inter-construct correlations. Although relatively high associations were observed between Consumer Happiness and EM, this finding is conceptually coherent, given the theoretical closeness between the two constructs in the context of emotional consumption.

Nevertheless, the HTMT analysis indicated that all values remained below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming an adequate level of distinction among the model variables (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). Taken together, these findings provide sufficient evidence of discriminant validity, indicating that the constructs analysed represent conceptually distinct dimensions that are appropriate for inclusion within the structural model.

4.1.2. MODEL FIT INDICES

The fit of the structural model was evaluated using absolute, incremental and parsimony indices for both the total sample and the multigroup analysis (see Table 2). Regarding the absolute fit

indicators, the CMIN statistic yielded values of 862 for the full sample and 1328 for the MGA model. In both cases, the associated p-value was less than 0.001, indicating a marginal fit. However, this result is typical in models estimated with moderate or large sample sizes, as the chi-square test is susceptible to sample size (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

In contrast, the SRMR and RMSEA indices exhibited values within the recommended ranges, remaining below 0.08 in both models, indicating an adequate correspondence between the observed and estimated matrices (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Regarding the incremental fit indices, the values obtained for the CFI, IFI, and TLI exceeded the recommended minimum threshold of 0.90 for both the total sample and the multigroup analysis, indicating a satisfactory fit of the structural model (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, the parsimony indicators confirmed the robustness of the model, with CMIN/DF values below three and PGFI values above 0.50 in both cases, suggesting an appropriate balance between model fit and complexity (Mulaik *et al.*, 1989).

The results presented in Table 2, therefore, provide sufficient empirical evidence to conclude that the proposed model demonstrates an acceptable and stable overall fit, both for the general sample and for the MGA analysis.

Table 2
Measures of fit

Type of fit	Fit measure	Acceptance level	Full sample	MGA	Acceptability
Absolute or global	CMIN	CMIN = double of DF	862	1328	Marginal
	P value	> 0.05	< .001	< .001	Marginal
	SRMR	< 0.08	0.044	0.054	Acceptable
	RMSEA	< 0.08	0.067	0.075	Acceptable
Incremental	CFI	> 0.900	0.922	0.907	Acceptable
	IFI	> 0.900	0.923	0.908	Acceptable
	TLI	> 0.900	0.914	0.897	Acceptable
Parsimony	PGFI	> 0.500	0.729	0.708	Acceptable
	CMIN/DF	< 3	2.520	1.94	Acceptable

Source: Own elaboration.

4.2. Multigroup Analysis (MGA)

To examine whether the relationships proposed in the structural model remain stable between men and women, a multigroup analysis was conducted using structural equation modelling (MGA-SEM). This procedure allowed the identification of potential differences in the strength and significance of the structural effects according to gender, thereby providing a more detailed understanding of the role played by sociodemographic

characteristics in the emotional and happiness-related processes associated with consumption.

To ensure that the comparisons between groups were valid and not affected by measurement bias, the measurement invariance of the model was assessed prior to testing the structural paths. The results of this analysis are described below.

4.2.1. MEASUREMENT INVARIANCE ANALYSIS

Measurement invariance was assessed sequentially at the configural, metric, and scalar levels, comparing model fit across men and women (see Table 3). Firstly, the configural model exhibited acceptable fit indices (CFI = 0.907, RMSEA = 0.075, SRMR = 0.054), indicating that the basic factorial structure was equivalent across both groups.

Subsequently, the metric model maintained virtually identical CFI values ($\Delta\text{CFI} = 0$) and only minimal variation in RMSEA ($\Delta\text{RMSEA} = 0.001$), suggesting that the factor loadings can be considered equivalent between men and women. Finally, the scalar model showed minor changes in the fit indices ($\Delta\text{CFI} = 0.003$; $\Delta\text{RMSEA} = 0$), remaining within the recommended thresholds reported in the literature.

According to the criteria proposed by Chen (2007), variations in CFI below 0.01 and in RMSEA below 0.015 indicate that invariance is maintained. These results therefore confirm that the comparisons conducted in the multigroup analysis reflect genuine differences in structural relationships rather than artefacts arising from measurement issues.

Table 3
Fit indices for invariance models

Model	X ²	ΔX^2	CFI	ΔCFI	RMSEA	ΔRMSEA	SRMR	AIC	BIC
Configural	1328		0.907		0.075		0.054	24159.823	24761.073
Metric	1348	-20	0.907	0	0.074	0.001	0.057	24132.046	24741.829
Scalar	1397	-49	0.904	0.003	0.074	0	0.059	24132.931	24651.246

Source: Own elaboration.

4.2.2. HYPOTHESES TESTING

The results of the structural model and the multigroup analysis (MGA-SEM) are presented in Table 4, which reports both direct and indirect effects for the total sample and by gender. Regarding H₁, BPC exhibited a positive and highly significant effect on EM for the total sample as well as for both men and women. Although the coefficient was slightly higher among women, the difference between groups was minimal ($\Delta = -0.034$), indicating that this relationship remains stable regardless of gender.

For H₂, which examines the direct effect of BPC on consumer happiness, the hypothesis was supported only within the male group ($\beta = 0.202$, $p < 0.01$). In contrast, the effect did not reach statistical significance in the total sample or among women. This finding suggests a gender-specific pattern in the direct influence of symbolic congruence on consumer happiness.

With respect to H₃, the results indicate that FoMO exerts a positive and significant effect on EM in the total sample and across both gender groups. However, the magnitude of the effect was greater among men ($\beta = 0.318$, $p < 0.001$) than among women ($\beta = 0.183$, $p < 0.01$), with a moderate difference between groups ($\Delta = 0.135$). This result suggests that men are more sensitive to social stimuli when forming emotional bonds with brands.

In contrast, H₄ showed that the direct effect of FoMO on consumer happiness was significant only among women ($\beta = 0.181$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, the effect was not statistically significant in the male group and the total sample. These findings highlight gender differences in how negative social emotions influence happiness associated with consumption.

Finally, H₅ confirmed a strong, positive and significant effect of EM on consumer happiness across the total sample and both groups, with the effect being more pronounced among

women ($\beta = 0.815$, $p < 0.001$) than among men ($\beta = 0.598$, $p < 0.001$), representing a substantial difference between groups ($\Delta = -0.217$).

Regarding the indirect effects, the results confirmed the mediating role of EM in the proposed relationships. Specifically, H_6 demonstrated that BPC indirectly influences consumer happiness through EM, with significant effects for both men and women, though with greater intensity among women ($\Delta = -0.150$).

Similarly, H_7 revealed that FoMO indirectly affects consumer happiness via EM in both groups, with a minor difference between men and women ($\Delta = 0.041$).

Overall, these findings support the proposed theoretical model and underscore the relevance of EM as a central mediating mechanism linking identity-related and social factors to consumer happiness, while also evidencing gender-based differences in some of the structural relationships analysed.

Table 4
Hypothesis testing

Direct effects										
Hypothesis		Variable			Full Sample	Female	Male	MGA Difference	Contrast	
H1	BPC	-->	EM		0.589***	0.597***	0.563***	−0.034	Validated (both groups)	
H2	BPC	-->	CH		0.106	0.024	0.202**	0.178	Validated only in males	
H3	FOMO	-->	EM		0.257***	0.183**	0.318***	0.135	Validated (both groups)	
H4	FOMO	-->	CH		0.136**	0.181***	0.114	−0.067	Validated only in females	
H5	EM	-->	CH		0.702***	0.815***	0.598***	−0.217	Validated (both groups)	
Indirect effects										
H6	BPC	-->	EM	-->	CH	0.414***	0.486***	0.336***	−0.150	Validated (both groups)
H7	FOMO	-->	EM	-->	CH	0.181***	0.149**	0.190***	0.041	Validated (both groups)

Note: $p < 0.05$ (*), $p < 0.01$ (**), $p < 0.001$ (***).

Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2 presents the structural model estimated for the total sample, illustrating the direct and indirect effects among BPC, FoMO, EM and consumer happiness. The relationships depicted confirm the central role of EM as a mediating variable through which identity-related and social factors influence happiness associated with consumption experiences. The model exhibits a coherent structure that is consistent with the proposed theoretical framework, highlighting the relevance of emotions as an explanatory mechanism in generating consumer happiness.

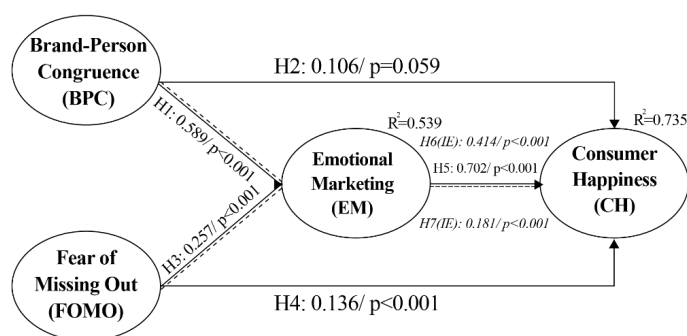


Figure 2
Structural model (Total sample)

Source: Own elaboration.

In terms of explanatory capacity, the R^2 values indicate that the model demonstrates strong predictive power. Specifically, consumer happiness reached an $R^2 = 0.735$, implying that 73.5% of its variance is explained by the variables included in the model, reflecting a high level of explanatory strength. EM showed an

$R^2 = 0.539$, suggesting a moderate-to-high explanatory capacity. According to the criteria proposed by Chin (1998), R^2 values above 0.67 can be considered high, while those between 0.50 and 0.67 are regarded as moderate. These results reinforce the empirical robustness of the model and confirm the pivotal role of EM as the connecting mechanism linking BPC, FoMO and consumer happiness.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings provide robust evidence of the joint role of BPC, FoMO and EM in shaping consumer happiness.

The results indicate that brand-person congruence (BPC) exerts a positive and significant effect on emotional marketing (EM) in the total sample and across both gender groups. This finding supports self-congruence theory (Escalas & Bettman, 2003) and recent studies identifying symbolic coherence as a catalyst for affective resonance in consumption (Issock et al., 2023; Spiga, 2025). When a brand reflects consumers' identities or personal values, emotional activation during consumption is facilitated regardless of gender.

Interestingly, the relationship between BPC and consumer happiness was observed only among men, suggesting that symbolic identification does not automatically translate into subjective wellbeing. This result aligns with studies indicating that identity congruence must be emotionally channelled to generate authentic happiness outcomes (Michel & Torelli, 2022). It also reinforces evidence showing that men tend to associate happiness more directly with identity coherence and symbolic self-projection (Fischer & Manstead, 2016; Luo et al., 2025).

The findings also reveal that FoMO significantly increases EM in both groups, with stronger effects among men, confirming its role as an emotional accelerator driven by social comparison and digital pressures (Tandon *et al.*, 2021; Pane *et al.*, 2024). However, its direct effect on happiness is significant only among women. This pattern is consistent with studies linking women's emotional processing to greater empathic and relational responsiveness (Fischer *et al.*, 2018; Truong, 2025). Consequently, FoMO emerges as an ambivalent phenomenon that may simultaneously stimulate connection and emotional tension (Littman-Ovadia & Russo-Netzer, 2024; Bartosiak *et al.*, 2025).

The analysis further highlights the mediating role of EM. Its strong effect on consumer happiness indicates that emotions elicited by brands transform symbolic experiences into subjective fulfilment (Thamilselvan & Rakeshyanand, 2024; Zhang *et al.*, 2022). In this sense, both BPC and FoMO influence happiness primarily when channelled through EM, reinforcing its role as the affective mechanism linking identity-based and social stimuli with emotional outcomes (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2021; Michel & Torelli, 2022).

Overall, consumer happiness emerges as a relational phenomenon. It depends less on symbolic identification or social pressure alone and more on brands' capacity to transform these forces into authentic emotional experiences shaped by gender and digital context.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Theoretical implications

From an academic perspective, this study integrates identity-based, social and emotional variables into a single model, which have traditionally been examined separately. The findings extend the understanding of consumer happiness as a relational outcome shaped by identity-based, social, and emotional mechanisms, providing empirical support for Self-Congruence Theory (Sirgy, 1982) reinforcing its relevance in explaining identity-based mechanisms in consumer happiness.

Moreover, the gender-based structural differences provide empirical support for the Differential Emotion Processing Theory, indicating that emotional pathways to happiness are not homogeneous. The model presented here contributes to consolidating EM as a theoretical bridge between symbolic identity and consumer happiness, opening new lines of inquiry into the interaction between emotion, gender and symbolism in digital consumption contexts.

6.2. Practical implications

The findings provide clear strategic guidance for brand management. The evidence suggests that consumer happiness is primarily built through authentic emotional experiences rather than through isolated identity-based or social stimuli. Therefore, companies should design EM strategies grounded in empathy, symbolic coherence and experiential authenticity, prioritising sustained emotional connection over immediate persuasion.

Furthermore, the mediating role of EM demonstrates that BPC and FoMO contribute positively to consumer happiness only when managed ethically, avoiding narratives that intensify anxiety or social comparison. Brands should focus their efforts on creating narratives of balanced emotional belonging, where identity and digital connection enhance rather than distort the consumer's experience of happiness.

For example, instead of framing limited campaigns around pressure-driven messages that emphasise scarcity or exclusion, brands may promote participation through positive emotional cues such as shared experiences, community engagement, or symbolic identification with brand values. In practice, this may involve presenting limited offers as opportunities for collective enjoyment or meaningful interaction with the brand rather than as situations that consumers risk missing. Such approaches allow firms to activate emotional engagement and digital interaction while protecting consumer wellbeing and sustaining long-term brand relationships.

6.3. Social implications

At the societal level, the results underline the need to foster emotionally healthy consumption practices. While FoMO can enhance social connection, it may also lead to emotional distress if not correctly managed. Therefore, both brands and institutions should promote emotional and digital literacy that enables consumers to maintain more conscious, balanced and human relationships with brands.

Ethical EM can serve as a socially relevant tool for fostering both individual and collective happiness, mitigating the adverse effects of hyperconnectivity and social comparison.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study presents several limitations that offer valuable opportunities for future research. Firstly, the use of a non-probabilistic and predominantly young sample limits the generalisability of the findings to other population segments. It is therefore recommended that the model be replicated across different age groups and cultural contexts.

Secondly, the cross-sectional and self-reported design prevents the establishment of definitive causal relationships and may be subject to social desirability bias or situational emotional states. Future research could incorporate longitudinal or experimental designs, as well as physiological or neuro-emotional measures, to further validate affective responses.

Moreover, although the multigroup analysis allowed for the observation of gender-based differences, other factors, such as culture, socioeconomic status, and digital literacy, may also influence the emotional pathways towards happiness. Including these variables in future models would enrich the understanding of the emotional mechanisms underlying consumption.

Finally, a promising line of inquiry lies in the development and validation of a Happy Brands Scale, designed to capture how consumers perceive, experience and attribute happiness to

brands. Such an instrument would enable a more in-depth empirical assessment of consumer happiness and its relationship with emotional brand management, thereby contributing to the consolidation of this emerging research field.

8. CONCLUSION

This study examined how identity alignment with brands and socially driven pressures interact to shape consumer happiness in contemporary digitally mediated consumption environments. In an increasingly hyperconnected consumption environment, the findings confirm that consumer happiness is primarily generated through emotional and relational processes. EM acts as a transformative mechanism that converts BPC and FoMO into experiences of happiness, positioning emotions at the core of consumption decisions, in line with prior research on EM and consumer wellbeing (Thamilselvan & Rakeshyanand, 2024; Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

The findings further indicate that the influence of identity-based and social factors is neither direct nor uniform but must be channelled through authentic emotional experiences. BPC strengthens the affective bond with brands, while FoMO operates as an ambivalent stimulus whose impact depends on the context and the consumer's profile, consistent with previous studies on identity congruence and socially driven consumption dynamics (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Tandon *et al.*, 2021). The observed gender differences invite a reconsideration of traditional consumer behaviour models from a perspective more attuned to emotional diversity.

Taken together, the findings highlight the need to guide brand management towards emotionally responsible and human-centred strategies capable of balancing social pressure with the genuine pursuit of consumer happiness. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the consumer behaviour literature by integrating identity-based dynamics, socially driven pressures and EM mechanisms within a single explanatory framework of consumer happiness, extending recent theoretical discussions on happiness management and consumer wellbeing (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2021; Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2023).

This study reaffirms that, even in digitalised economies, emotions, values and authenticity remain at the heart of the relationship between consumers and brands, consolidating EM as both a strategic and ethical pillar in fostering brand-related happiness.

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10. DECLARATION ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence tools were used in the writing, analysis, or interpretation of the results of this study. Such tools were employed solely for the purpose of reviewing grammar and enhancing linguistic clarity in the English text. All conceptual content, empirical data, statistical analyses and conclusions are the exclusive work of the authors.

11. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that could have influenced the results, interpretation, or publication of this study.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1
Constructs and indicators

Construct	Code	Indicator	Authors
Brand-Person Congruence	BPC1	I feel closer to brands that resemble me.	Adapted from Escalas & Bettman (2003).
	BPC2	I identify with brands that share my way of thinking or my values.	
	BPC3	When a brand represents me, I feel more comfortable buying it.	
	BPC4	I like when a brand reflects who I am or how I feel.	
	BPC5	I prefer brands that help me express my style or personality.	
	BPC6	Sometimes I feel certain brands understand me better than others.	
	BPC7	I connect more easily with brands that fit my personality.	
	BPC8	It is easier to trust brands that align with my way of seeing life.	
	BPC9	I am attracted to brands that make me feel “this is so me”.	
Fear of Missing Out	FOMO1	I feel uncomfortable when I see others enjoying products or experiences that I do not have.	Adapted from Hayran & Anik (2021).
	FOMO2	I would like to purchase the same things I see others enjoying.	
	FOMO3	I feel frustrated if I cannot take part in experiences that other people share.	
	FOMO4	When I see promotions or product launches that others take advantage of and I do not, I feel excluded.	
	FOMO5	I feel tempted to acquire products simply because I see others doing so.	
	FOMO6	I find it difficult to ignore the things I am missing out on by not consuming what others do.	
	FOMO7	It bothers me to be left out of trends or fashionable experiences.	
	FOMO8	Sometimes, I consume certain products just to avoid feeling disconnected from others.	
Consumer Happiness	CH1	I feel satisfied with the purchasing decisions I make.	Adapted from Cuesta-Valiño <i>et al.</i> (2023).
	CH2	Shopping is a gratifying experience for me.	
	CH3	I feel that my purchases contribute to my overall happiness.	
	CH4	I believe what I buy enhances my quality of life.	
	CH5	I enjoy shopping for things I like.	
	CH6	I get excited when making certain purchases.	
	CH7	Shopping sometimes helps me relieve stress.	
	CH8	Buying what I desire helps me forget about my worries for a while.	
	CH9	Some shopping experiences completely absorb my attention.	
	CH10	When I’m shopping, time often flies.	
	CH11	Treating myself to certain purchases makes my effort feel worthwhile.	
	CH12	Buying things I value makes me feel fortunate.	
	CH13	Sometimes I feel that my purchases can also benefit others.	
	CH14	Being able to buy what I desire motivates me to keep striving.	
Emotional Marketing	EM1	I feel an emotional connection with certain consumption experiences.	Adapted from Thomson, MacInnis & Park (2005).
	EM2	Some brands or products make me feel a special connection.	
	EM3	At times, I feel emotionally involved with what I purchase.	
	EM4	Sometimes, I feel genuine passion for what I consume.	
	EM5	Certain products or experiences create a strong emotional attachment in me.	
	EM6	Consuming certain products makes me feel happy.	
	EM7	I feel emotional enjoyment when buying things I like.	
	EM8	Buying things that matter to me makes me feel secure.	
	EM9	I feel more confident when consuming products that emotionally move me.	

Source: Own elaboration.