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**INFLUENCE OF BRAND PERSONALITY ON PURCHASE DECISION OF BUYERS OF SMARTPHONE IN UMUAHIA, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA****ADINDU, Chidinma Peace**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examined the influence of brand personality on purchase decision of buyers of Smartphones. Two key dimensions of brand personality (brand sincerity and brand excitement) were used in the study. The study collected primary data from 400 users of smartphone using a questionnaire. Simple regression was used as a method of data analysis. The study found that brand personality has positive and significant effect on purchase decision, through brand sincerity and brand excitement. The study concluded that brand personality affects purchase decision of buyers of Smartphone in Umuahia, Abia state, Nigeria; and recommends that Smartphone sellers of Smartphones, especially, brand managers and marketing managers that aspire to attract more purchase from buyers of Smartphones in Umuahia, Abia State, should incorporate brand personality traits like brand sincerity and brand excitement, as these have been observed to ignite buyers interest in product.

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The intensity of competition has increased in today's business-scape (Attor et al., 2022). This is mostly, in lieu the multiplicity of brands and goods competing for attention, patronage and consumption; thus providing consumers with a plethora of alternatives to meet their desires and requirements (Jibril et al., 2019). Businesses must offer products that meet customers' changing and growing requirements, if they must succeed (Mamangkey et al., 2018). It must also differentiate its product from those of competitors through branding (Attor et al., 2022). It is however, probable that the traditional criteria for differentiating brands, such as price and quality have been rendered impotent in today's market place due to increased competition (Marin & Ruiz, 2007). This is because competitors easily imitate products; and consumers easily perceive products with the same attributes as being of the same standard of quality (Van et al., 2006). In the seemingly overcrowded and noisy marketplace however, brand personality is seen as a key approach that aids firms' efforts to distinguish their products from those of competitors (Freling & Forbes, 2005).

Brand personality is the association of human characteristics and traits with a brand to which the customer can relate (Aashish, 2021). It comes into existence when human like adjectives such as unique, caring, funny, trustworthy, creative, etc. are assigned to a brand. The concept of brand personality is best understood when a brand is imagines to be a person. The most important aspect of brand personality is that it is imperative to differentiating products in consumers' mind

(Aashish, 2021). Brand personality contributes to the strength of relationship between brands and customers in relationship marketing (Jibril et al., 2019).

The current cut-throat competition in the Smartphone Industry has forced marketers to explore newer methods of differentiating their products and to influence customers' purchase decision. Brand personality is on unique approach these firms are adopting to differentiate their products (Freling & Forbes, 2005). However, brand personality influence on customers purchase decision remains largely under-defined and under-explored, especially in Nigeria. Mutinda (2011) examined the influence of brand personality on consumers' brand choice of television station, and found that brand sincerity, brand excitement, brand competence and brand sophistication influence consumers' choice of Television channels. In a similar study, Muya (2011) examined the effects of brand personality on purchase decision; and reports that the brand sincerity and brand excitement dimensions of brand personality affects purchase decision.

However, the findings of these studies cannot be generalized because they were case studies. There is thus a gap in literature that requires to be addressed. Hence, the current study sought to examine the effect of brand personality on consumers' purchase decision, using buyers of smartphone as the data base. The specific objectives of the study are to determine the influence of brand sincerity and brand excitement on purchase decision of buyers of Smartphone. The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

### 1.3 Research Hypotheses

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Brand sincerity has no significant influence on purchase decision of buyers of Smartphone in Umuahia, Abia State.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: Brand excitement has no significant influence on purchase decision of buyers of Smartphone in Umuahia, Abia State.

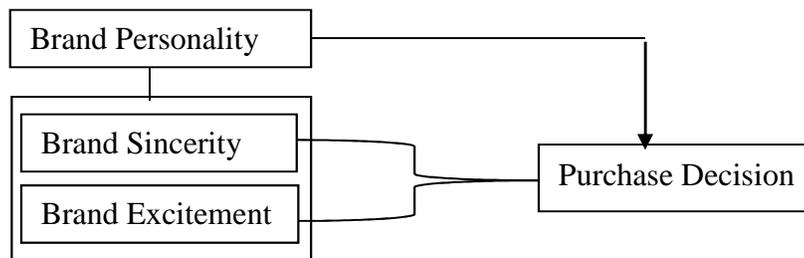


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researchers, 2022

## BRAND SINCERITY AND CUSTOMERS PURCHASE DECISION

Brand sincerity as a dimension of brand personality strongly relates to purchase decision. McManus et al. (2021) provide that businesses are more likely to develop business relationship based on how sincere consumers consider them be. Brand honesty may only be a required but not sufficient condition for stronger brand connectivity (McManus et al. 2021). In a study on brand personality in the blogosphere, Cuevas (2016) found that when customers' expectations for enjoyable experiences are met, they see a brand as genuine (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2021). Liang et al. (2021) states that personal selling and promises of good service encounters as well as promotional incentives have a positive effect on consumer brand choice. Trustworthiness enables

customers to freely share ideas through comments or reviews, authenticity and trustworthiness of a company are crucial variables in determining customer engagement (Gong et al. 2020, cited in Attor et al., 2022). Deficit in brand sincerity on the other hand, elicit unfavorable sentiments and weaken consumers' commitment to a brand while increased brand sincerity elicits positive affect from and forges deeper brand relationship (McManus et al., 2021). Attor et al. (2022) examined the influence of brand personality dimensions on consumer buying decision; and reports that brand sincerity have a significant relationship with buying decisions. Thus, there is ample evidence in literature that suggests the likelihood of influence of brand sincerity on purchase decision.

### **BRAND EXCITEMENT AND CUSTOMERS PURCHASE DECISION**

Brand excitement is also a dimension of brand personality (Aaker, 1997). Cai and Mo (2020) define excitement as the state of being excited and yearning for a certain good or brand. A brand's potential to be regarded as exciting is dependent on, its capacity to be both stylish and daring. According to research, feelings like enthusiasm play a significant role in customers' experience, influences impressions and triggers consumers' involvement; and eventually lead to brand preference (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2020). Sporting entities employ brand fervor to set themselves apart from competitors (Hohenberger & Grohs, 2020). The most notable factor that sports organizations employ to set themselves apart as "cutting-edge" brands is brand excitement (Hohenberger & Grohs 2020).

Kang et al. (2019) defined brand excitement as the overall amount of interest and love consumers have for a particular brand. Schnurr (2017) demonstrates how consumers' perceptions of brand fervor and loyalty are positively impacted by the typicality of a product's appearance. That brand has a great design, and great brand designs create a positive feeling of anticipation for the brand. Cai & Mo (2020) highlight the positive effects of a big logo and an alluring brand on consumer behavior. Langstedt and Hunt (2017) state that a brand's energy, creativity, and modernity are what define how enthusiastic consumers are about it. However, Avery (2020) opines that exciting brands are still viewed as less real over time, while being appealing and garnering a lot of attention, makes them capable of generating interest and trial.

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

This study is based on personality trait theory (McCrae et al., 1986; Allport, 1937). Personality trait theory emphasizes the uniqueness of individuals and the internal cognitive and motivational processes that influence behavior. The theory proposes that personality is biologically determined at birth and shaped by environment and experience. A Person's behavior in terms of thoughts and feelings are determined by their personality (Allport, 1961). Different researchers have different views about personality traits, some believe that personality traits are generated naturally and are stable while others believe that personality traits will continue to evolve (Sternberg, 2000).

Personality trait theory proves to be a fundamental approach of describing personality psychology. Scholars suggest that personality trait theory provides a more conclusive explanation of human psychology. Psychologists argue that trait theory can be categorized into two schools or thoughts. The first school believes that people have the same characteristics, however those characteristics are expressed differently and that is why people are different from

each other. The second school postulates that peoples' differences are attributable to combined traits which are different between different people (Sternberg, 2000). Aaker' brand personality dimensions follow the Big 5 of human personality dimensions. For example, brand sincerity and human agreeableness shares the characteristics of acceptance and friendliness, while brand excitement and human extraversion shares characteristics of sociability and coolness. Brand competence and human conscientiousness also shares characteristics of dependability and durableness.

## METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on examining the influence of brand personality on consumer purchase decision. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised buyers/users of Smartphones in Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria. Since the size of the population is unknown, the sample size was determined using:

$$n_r = \frac{4p}{d^2}$$

where  $n_r$  = required sample size

$p$  = Proportion of the calculation having the characteristics

$q = 1-p$  = Proportion of the calculation not having the characteristics

$d$  = The degree of freedom

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 p q}{d^2}$$

Using a 95% confidence level and margin error of +or\_ 5%

$$n = \frac{4p}{d^2}$$

$$n = \frac{4 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2}$$

$$= \frac{1}{0.025} = 400$$

Thus, the sample size of the study is 400.

The convenient sampling technique was used to arrive at the test units. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into 2 parts. The first part consists general questions like personal background of respondents; while the second part consists the study-specific questions. The researcher used closed – ended questions in the survey, meaning that the possible answer choices was set out in the questionnaire and the respondents select the answer choices that best accommodates their response. The questionnaire items were measured on a five point Likert Scale. The scale was as follows: Strongly Agreed (SA) = 5, Agreed (A)=4, Undecided (U)=1, Disagreed (D)=3, and Strongly Disagreed (SD)=2.

The validity of the instrument was determined by subjecting it to three experts in the field of marketing to ascertain whether the items are related to the objectives of the study and to find out if the questionnaire covers all the intended dimensions of the study. Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability was to determine the reliability of instrument. The reliability for brand sincerity scale was 0.702 while the reliability of brand excitement scale was 0.771. Consumer purchase decision polled a reliability score of 0.757. Data collected was analyzed using simple linear regression, relying on E-views version 20.0.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Table 1: Result of OLS-based regression of effect of brand personality sincerity on customer purchase decision of Smartphone**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
BPS	0.272595	0.118034	2.309459	0.0236
C	3.315506	0.356191	9.308220	0.0000
R-squared	0.064003	Mean dependent var		4.125250
Adjusted R-squared	0.052003	S.D. dependent var		0.576423
S.E. of regression	0.561235	Akaike info criterion		1.707328
Sum squared resid	24.56879	Schwarz criterion		1.766878
Log likelihood	-66.29310	Hannan-Quinn criter.		1.731203
F-statistic	5.333600	Durbin-Watson stat		1.987794
Prob(F-statistic)	0.023565			

Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision (PD)

Independent Variable: Brand Sincerity (BS)

Source: Result of regression analysis using E-views (2022)

Table 1 presents the results of test of influence of brand sincerity on purchase decision. The partial slope coefficient of 0.273 measures the elasticity of purchase decision with respect to brand sincerity. Based on the result on Table 1, it could be seen that brand sincerity has a coefficient of 0.273, which suggests that brand sincerity has a positive effect on purchase decision. This implies that a unit change in purchase decision is as a result of 0.273 changes in brand sincerity. That is, a unit increase in brand sincerity will lead to 0.273 increases in purchase decision. The test also produced a PV of 0.0236 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis, and restates that brand sincerity has a significant effect on purchase decision of buyers of Smartphones in Umuahia, Abia State.

This result is consistent with the result of Mohd (2012) contends that laptop users associate themselves with sincerity, while Laptop non-users associate this brand with ruggedness. The finding also aligns with the report of Linn and Peter (2014) that brand sincerity positively relates to purchase decision. The results also support the findings of Sajad et al. (2013) opines that brand sincerity have significant impact on purchase of mobile phones. Brand sincerity has influence on purchase decision because, when products are branded as wholesome, genuine, wonderful or friendly, customers feel special if they have such products.

**Table 2: Result of OLS-based regression of effect of brand personality excitement on Consumer patronage.**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
BPE	0.246459	0.077367	3.185598	0.0021
C	3.398104	0.236273	14.38210	0.0000
R-squared	0.115125	Mean dependent var		4.125250
Adjusted R-squared	0.103780	S.D. dependent var		0.576423
S.E. of regression	0.545693	Akaike info criterion		1.651162
Sum squared resid	23.22691	Schwarz criterion		1.710712
Log likelihood	-64.04647	Hannan-Quinn criter.		1.675037
F-statistic	10.14803	Durbin-Watson stat		1.924188
Prob(F-statistic)	0.002078			

Dependent Variable: Customer Purchase Decision (CPD)

Independent Variable: Brand Personality Excitement (BPE)

Source: Result of regression analysis using E-views (2022)

Table 2 presents the results of test of influence of brand excitement on purchase decision. The partial slope coefficient of 0.246 measures the elasticity of purchase decision with respect to the brand excitement. The results show that brand excitement has a coefficient of 0.246, suggesting that brand excitement has a positive effect on purchase decision. This implies that a unit change in purchase decision is as a result of 0.246 changes in brand excitement. That is, a unit increase in brand excitement will lead to 0.246 increase in purchase decision. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This finding is consistent with the report of Liang and Lee (2010) that brand excitement has distinctive characteristics over mineral water drinks. Customers feel good when mineral water is associated with excitement characteristics. The results also cohere with the position of Anja et al. (2011) says that brand excitement explain brand trust and preference of Apple, Nike, Ikea and Mercedes Benz better. The finding is also in agreement with the report of Plavini (2011) posits that brand excitement not only affects brand preference but also purchase decision. Brand excitement has influence on purchase decision because, products seems to be more appealing especially when they are associated excitement characteristics as fashionable, advanced or outstanding in terms of usage.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consumers' purchase is a key ingredient of business success. This study examined the influence of brand personality on purchase decision of buyers of Smartphone in Abia State. Based on the findings of the study and the discussions that followed, the study concludes that brand personality through brand sincerity and brand excitement, has a positive and statistically significant influence on purchase decision of buyers of Smartphone. The study therefore recommends that sellers of smartphone, especially brand managers and marketing managers, that aspire to attract more purchase from buyers of Smartphones in Umuahia, Abia State, should incorporate brand personality traits like brand sincerity and brand excitement, as these have been observed to ignite buyers interest in product. They should also formulate appropriate marketing

policies that lead to making informed decisions and actions will create sincere and exciting personality for their products.

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