





“Does brand personality mediate the link between social media usage and customer buying decisions on telecommunication’s products and services? Evidence from Ghana”

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DOES BRAND PERSONALITY MEDIATE THE LINK BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND CUSTOMER BUYING DECISIONS ON TELECOMMUNICATION'S PRODUCTS AND SERVICES? EVIDENCE FROM GHANA

Abstract

Social media marketing has vastly benefitted businesses, including the development of brand identity via solid communication channels. Innovative marketing tools have proven effective among service and non-service-based businesses. This study examines the impact of social media on customer buying decisions via brand personality attributes among telecom products (e.g., mobile phones, sim cards, and data subscriptions) in Ghana. A positivist research paradigm with a non-probability sampling were deployed to achieve study goals. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect the data from subscribers of the telecom giants (MTN, Vodafone, and Airtel-Tigo) in the capital of Ghana through a non-probability sampling technique (snowball/referral method). Both self-administered and online survey (link) were deployed with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols. A valid data set of 414 (representing 82% of response rate) from 507 responses was received for data processing. PLS-SEM was applied to analyze the study hypothesis. The study identified five main brand personality attributes (i.e., brand sincerity, brand excitement, brand competence, brand sophistication, and brand ruggedness) as mediators of the proposed framework. The study found that brand sincerity, brand excitement, and brand competence played a significant mediation effect on the relationship between social media usage and customer buying decisions, whereas brand sophistication and brand ruggedness did not. The findings suggest that brand management plays an interconnected role in customer decision-making in which brand practitioners should take a keynote regarding their strategic marketing decisions. Finally, the paper recommends that future research consider a mixed approach to offer an in-depth analysis.

Keywords innovative marketing, users, excitement, sincerity,
competence, PLS-SEM, service-based firm, Ghana

JEL Classification M15, M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

The growing domination of social media in the digital domain in the twenty-first century is generally acknowledged, and business organizations are capitalizing on this to increase their market shares. Consumers and businesses alike rely on telecommunications products daily. The telecommunications sector is of great interest to economists, governments, and individuals due to its enormous benefits to consumers and companies (Stone et al., 2019). Due to the increasing use and reliance on telecom services, businesses must target various consumers. Africa has had the greatest expansion in telecoms in the world over the last five years, transforming essential parts of social and corporate life as a result of improving economic conditions (Njikam et al., 2019). Mobile subscriber growth continues to be the fastest in the

world, benefiting both telecom markets and the broader African economy. As a result, telecommunications businesses are charged with developing marketing strategies that appeal to a broad range of potential customers and address a number of issues (Al-Weshah et al., 2019).

Given the significance of the telecommunications business to economies, governments, and consumers, it is critical to understand marketing strategies, specifically the brand personality concepts of telecom firms, to understand how these brand personality qualities affect consumers' purchasing decisions for telecom products or services. For example, in Ghana, Aryee (2021) asserts that AirtelTigo company branded itself as a leading agile brand that values client passion for being perceived as a dependable, economical, and good brand. According to Aryee (2021), AirtelTigo's perceived personality affected customers' purchasing decisions about the company's products and services.

Social media enables businesses to connect their brand to individuals, locations, events, and attitudes. They contribute to a company product's brand image by imprinting the brand in people's thoughts. Additionally, Japutra and Molinillo (2019) assert that brand personality has an effect on consumer choices for and usage of a product or service. As a result, while developing marketing strategies, businesses must consider factors that affect their customers' purchasing decisions. Aragoncillo and Sanclemente (2018) discovered that social media significantly affects customers' spontaneous purchases, owing to social media's potential to reawaken latent emotions. According to them, social media has influenced customers' post-purchase behavior, such as posting critical reviews about a product or firm.

Although extensive research has been conducted on the relationship between social media usage and purchase intention (Nguyen et al., 2020), yet demonstrating that social media usage and brand personality within the domain of the telecommunication industry is under-researched. Because of a dearth of research in the existing literature, this study tends to fill in the gap. In practice, this paper provides empirical information to management on strategically incorporating social media strategies in managing their company's brands. This study further enhances brand personality and consumer psychology research by evaluating the impact of social media on brand concepts in general.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Considering the relationship between social media, brand personality, and consumer buying decisions, Haenlein and Kaplan (2019) describe social media as "a set of web-based apps built on the conceptual and technical underpinnings of Web 2.0 and designed to facilitate the production and sharing of user-generated content." Web 2.0 is a web-based technology that allows people and organizations to collaborate on user-generated content creation, discussion, and modification. Social media websites are established using web 2.0 technologies, allowing users to produce shareable user-generated content. In an age of fast technological innovation and change, every business needs to understand its customers' purchasing intents to compete globally. Consequently, academic writers have started to grasp and explore topics relating to customer purchase intentions. This fact has led to a variety of client intentions to buy definitions.

Without a doubt, the phase during which a customer selects whether or not to acquire a specific product or service is referred to as the purchasing intention in marketing, selling, and advertising (de Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017).

According to Mangold and Faulds (2009 cited in Voramontri & Klieb, 2019), social media comprises blogs, discussion boards, forums, and social networks. The Internet is crammed with websites that serve a unique purpose and address a specific demographic. Unlike Facebook, LinkedIn is designed for business networking. This social media ecosystem includes YouTube, Picasa, Flickr, and blogging services like Blogspot and WordPress (Amoah & Jibril, 2020). While corporations gain the ability to share information with a broad audience, consumers have the right to post whatever material they choose, good or bad. Since new technology alters brand strategy, experts vary on the best course of action. Managers are worried

about how to handle several client touchpoints. Therefore, consumers now rely on interactive technology and social media to research, plan purchases, and share online shopping experiences. Brands and organizations cannot ignore the impact of social media on customer behavior and purchase choices. Social media is an essential aspect of current digital business developments. Almost every large corporation has discovered how to use social media to connect with its customers. This may influence customer perceptions of the product and brand (Botchway et al., 2019).

With the advent of innovative marketing, Voramontri and Klieb (2019) posited that social media use increases customer happiness during information search and alternative assessment and decreases satisfaction during final purchase choice and post-purchase evaluation. Several elements may mediate and influence either social media usage, customer behavior, purchase choices, or the brand itself. Brand connections are crucial in providing value and influencing consumer decision-making, according to Hutter et al. (2013). Telecommunications is one of Ghana's most competitive businesses. Currently, the country has six service providers with 27,551,503 customers (National Communication Authority, 2020). Notably, Ghana was one of the first African countries to liberalize and de-regulate telecommunications. This study examines the influence of social media on customer purchase choices for telecom goods, a sector that thrives on digital convergence.

Again, marketing academics and advertising professionals use the phrase "brand personality" to distinguish companies and build emotional components of a brand. Bairrada et al. (2019) define brand personality as a kind of brand association that describes consumers' symbolic consumption and emotional ties with a brand. This link between person and brand characteristics may help build and deepen connections. Bairrada et al. (2019) discuss the relevance of brand personality and how it helps customers express themselves via the usage of an affiliation with a brand.

Nonetheless, Davies et al. (2018) also claim that brand personality traits are strong determinants of customer purchase intent. Aaker's (1997) brand personality development includes five dimensions:

honesty, enthusiasm, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Many studies have been done on how brand personality affects a brand and its management (Bairrada et al., 2019). Perceptions of brand personality influence customers' propensity to interact with a brand, attitude toward a brand, and behavioral intentions, such as the intention to repeat purchase and stay a loyal customer. Positive sentiments indirectly affect customer brand attitude through brand personality evaluations, whereas negative ones directly harm brand attitude.

According to Stankevich (2017), a product goes through a purchasing decision process from a buyer's perspective. Social media may be utilized efficiently as part of the firm's role in influencing customer decisions. Social media enables consumers to share content, make recommendations, rate businesses, and more. Consumers trust recommendations from friends and family more than mass marketing. Focusing on social media marketing is critical since it affects the online marketing mix and social media features. Al-Akayleh (2021) asserts that social media advertising impacts customer purchasing decisions and reveals a strong influence of advertising and sales promotion on customer purchase choices.

Regarding brand sincerity, consumers use brand sincerity to assess brand commitment to its key values. Sincerity captures brand values. A customer may measure brand authenticity by its commercial inclination. According to McManus et al. (2022), ethical brands are more likely to build a friendship-based customer-business connection. They also indicated that brand personality dimensions like genuineness increase purchase intent for items including computers, shampoos, and soft beverages. Brand authenticity is also a powerful mediator between service quality and client trust. According to McManus et al. (2022), a necessity for improved brand connectedness is brand authenticity. When the "box" of honesty is managed, it may be utilized to launch other personality traits.

Cuevas (2016) discovered that customers see a company as authentic when their expectations for pleasant encounters are realized. According to Liang et al. (2021), personal selling and promises such as excellent service experiences and

promotional incentives contribute to the perceived authenticity of a business. In addition to passion and personalization, human brands like renowned writers and fashion bloggers typically demonstrate sincerity (Liang et al., 2021). Consequently, brand honesty influences customer involvement, as consumers gladly share their views through online comments or assessments. A decline in brand authenticity might provoke negative impacts and undermine customers' relationship with the brand, according to McManus et al. (2022).

Cai and Mo (2020) describe excitement as elation and yearning for a product or brand. To be considered intriguing, a brand must be modern and bold. Excitement, for example, has been shown to influence customer perceptions, engagement, and, ultimately, brand choice (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2020). According to Hohenberger and Grohs (2020), sports organizations employ brand excitement to develop a "cutting-edge" brand for their specific programs. Schnurr (2017) shows that unusual product design significantly increases brand enthusiasm. That is a wonderful brand design that creates good brand excitement. Finally, Cai and Mo (2020) mention the power of a bold logo and a memorable brand.

According to Langstedt and Hunt (2017), brand excitement examines brand spirit, creativity, and currentness. However, Avery (2020) reports that despite innovative businesses being enticing and receiving much attention, they are still considered less genuine long-term partners. In contrast to the sincerity component, which creates impressions of partner quality and enhances long-term relationship strength, the thrilling dimension may have inherent downsides. According to Bajaj and Bond (2018), visual brand aspects affect brand enthusiasm. Brand excitement is defined by Kang et al. (2019) as total interest and passion for a brand. They show the benefits of brand excitement and that the emotional part of satisfaction is arousal. So intriguing businesses provide excellent experiences and ambitions. With each new encounter, customers want emotional fulfillment from the brand. Aberathna and Ubeyachandra (2017) found a modest positive influence of brand enthusiasm on emotional brand attachment in the Sri Lankan laptop sector.

According to Wu et al. (2017), brand competence is the capacity to induce intents. Brands that can stimulate intents are viewed as competent, while those that cannot are perceived as inept. The study argues that brand competency is measured in terms of quality, dependability, durability, and consistency. Portal et al. (2018) relate brand competency to brand warmth, finding that both notions help make businesses more approachable to customers. On the other hand, competence is sensed if the brand is thought to have the capacity and talents to carry out those aims. Portal et al. (2018) defined brand competency as consumers' reflections that a brand has the potential and talents to convene customers' intentions. Martin and Nasib (2021) consider it a brand's ability to solve issues and meet customer demands. A professional brand can understand and meet the demands of its consumers.

Brand competence is a significant trait that builds customer confidence. A brand must be different enough to satisfy customers. One sees it as extended behavior that creates customer confidence in a brand. In the mobile phone business, it was discovered that brand competency affects purchase intentions and brand loyalty. Exposure to competent companies raises customer self-ratings of sophistication (Wu et al., 2017). Ngwenya and Nyagura (2016) discovered competence as the most dominating personality among consumers in research on brand personality for Powertel Communications. Customers regard a business as competent due to its innovations and value-added services. Thus, a brand's connection to competence might affect purchase choices, particularly in highly competitive sectors like telecom.

With brand sophistication, Cleave et al. (2017) discovered a link between brand sophistication and social status attributes like upper-class, glamorous, or charming. According to their study, a rise in complexity may or may not be advantageous for brands, depending on how they want to be seen by consumers. Niros et al. (2020) state that brand sophistication is a fundamental guide to perceived quality, particularly in services. Kim and Phua (2020) found a link between brand sophistication and customer brand loyalty for mobile communications services in Sri Lanka. However, Liu et al. (2016) found no link between brand sophistication

and purchase intent. Despite this, the study recognizes that perceived brand complexity positively impacts brand expansion.

For purchase intents, Tahir et al. (2016) state that a sophisticated brand should be beautiful, good-looking, glamorous, and charming. The brand must also be positioned as high-end. A significant association exists between brand sophistication and a firm's supply chain procedure. Just as brand sophistication influences elements like brand credibility and supply chain, it may also be impacted by the user or product culture. Wang et al. (2019) found that brand sophistication positively influences brand sentiment and customer behavior intentions, mentioning Mercedes and BMW as examples. Holm and Ax (2020) claim that brand sophistication may improve customer service. Furthermore, Niros et al. (2020) discovered sophistication as a significant forerunner of brand image and consumer response to goods. Ladipo et al. (2021) discovered a modest association between sophistication and customer product choice in the telecom business. Sophistication as a characteristic of brand personality has a considerable beneficial influence on customer choice, according to Shukla et al. (2016).

Regarding brand ruggedness, it is critical to note that Tahir et al. (2016) state that brand ruggedness indicates its attraction to the wild and outgoing. According to Vahdati and Mousavi Nejad (2016), ruggedness relates to brand resistance and power. In Sri Lanka, Silva et al. (2017) found a positive association between brand ruggedness and customer brand loyalty. They claim that brand loyalty affects shop loyalty and influences customer brand loyalty. Khan (2020) found a good relationship between ethicality and tough-

ness in this study. According to Langstedt and Hunt (2017), ruggedness is a strong indicator of customer choice. They warn against using brand ruggedness as a component of brand personality since it does not apply to many items. Many results fail to analyze brand toughness, proving this assertion. Still, Choi et al. (2017) claim that ruggedness may boost brand reputation and help customers trust the company. In a survey of Samsung phone users, Teimouri et al. (2016) showed no link between ruggedness and consumer loyalty.

2. AIM, CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Considering the literature review, the paper asked the following questions to guide the study: 1) Does social media usage by service-based firms trigger brand personality attributes toward customer buying decisions? and 2) Do brand personality attributes play a mediation effect? Hence, the aim of the study is to examine the impact of social media on customer buying decisions via brand personality attributes among telecom products in the Ghanaian telecom industry.

The summary of the conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

In addition, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: Social media usage has a direct positive relationship with customer buying decisions on telecom products.*
- H2: Social media usage has a direct positive relationship with brand sincerity.*

Source: Authors' elaboration.

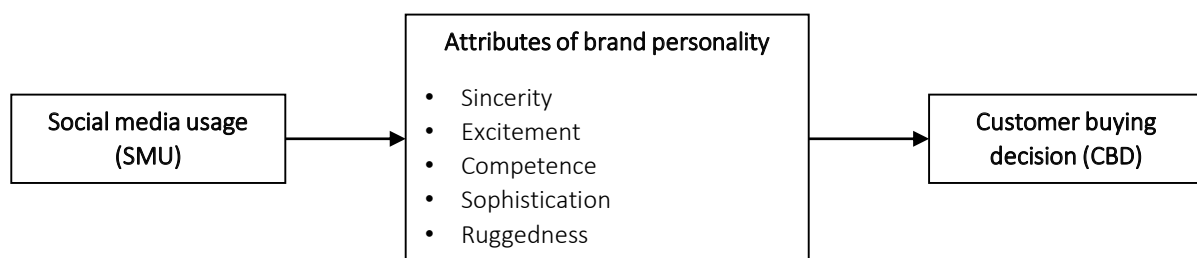


Figure 1. Conceptual model

- H3: *Social media usage has a direct positive relationship with brand excitement.*
- H4: *Social media usage has a direct positive relationship with brand ruggedness.*
- H5: *Social media usage has a direct positive relationship with brand competence.*
- H6: *Social media usage has a direct positive relationship with brand sophistication.*
- H7: *Brand sincerity positively mediates the relationship between social media usage and customer buying decisions.*
- H8: *Brand excitement positively mediates the relationship between social media usage and customer buying decisions.*
- H9: *Brand ruggedness positively mediates the relationship between social media usage and customer buying decisions.*
- H10: *Brand competence positively mediates the relationship between social media usage and customer buying decisions.*
- H11: *Brand sophistication positively mediates the relationship between social media usage and customer buying decisions.*

and most popular mobile networks. The current study used students and employees of GIMPA (Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration), a public postsecondary school in Greater Accra (Ghana's national capital). Given the study's focus on social media use and brand personality engagement, it is vital to recruiting people who fully grasp the issue. The study tried to acquire a representative sample using sound judgment, saving time and money (Al Buraiki & Rahman Khan, 2018). The snowball approach was used to help achieve a target number of participants who are active on social media networks. Participants might recommend others to participate in the current survey in this situation.

Due to Covid-19 protocols, caution was taken during data collection. Both hard and soft copy questionnaires were simultaneously used for the data collection process. A hard copy questionnaire was administered on campus through intercept, whereas a soft copy (link) was sent to participants upon request. Before the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 20 social media users who are subscribers of the abovementioned telecoms to clarify the variables (or constructs) under study. This, notwithstanding, helped to assess the reliability and validity of the chosen constructs using Cronbach's alpha values. The primary data collection took an average of four months (September to December 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sampling, data collection, and analytic technique

The study used non-random sampling approaches such as purposive and snowball sampling. First, it defined the study objective: evaluating the link between social media usage, brand personality, and customer purchasing behavior in Ghana's telecommunication business. Then, the paper used purposive selection to choose target respondents from six Ghanaian telecom providers: Express Telecom, Globacom (Glo Mobile), Vodafone Ghana, AirtelTigo, MTN Ghana, and Capital Telecom.

The analysis evaluated Vodafone Ghana, MTN Ghana, and Airtel-Tigo users as Ghana's biggest

At the end of the data collection, the final data set was determined after removing invalid responses due to anomalies such as duplication, empty fields, incomplete, and over-ambitious evaluations (Elgabry, 2019), yielding a final valid data set of 414 (representing 82% of response rate) from a total of 507 responses. Table 1 presents the respondents' characteristics. Regarding the data analytics, PLS-SEM (partial least squares and structural equation modeling) technique was employed to test the conceptual framework with the corresponding hypotheses. This was aided by leveraging the ADANCO software version 2.2.1 (Henseler, 2017). The descriptive statistics were done using SPSS software.

A preliminary result from the respondents' profiles shows that female participants in the survey were more (64%) than their male counterparts.

Again, regarding the age range, most (45%) of the participants are below the age of twenty-five years, indicating most of them are undergraduate students. Interesting, 78 percent of the respondents were subscribers and frequently transacted with the most popular network (MTN) compared to other rival firms in the market.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of study participants

Source: Authors' field data from Ghana (September to December 2021).

	Details	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex	Female	266	64.3
	Male	140	33.8
	Prefer not to say	8	1.9
Age	Below 25 yrs	186	44.9
	26-35 yrs	116	28.0
	36-45 yrs	92	22.2
	Above 46 yrs	20	4.8
Educational level	First degree/ Undergraduate	286	69.1
	Master's/ Postgraduate	92	22.2
	Others	36	8.7
Occupational status	Employed	190	45.9
	Unemployed	43	10.4
	Student	172	41.5
	Retired	9	2.2
Network subscription	MTN	326	78.7
	Vodafone	68	16.4
	Airtel-Tigo	20	4.8
Monthly/daily subscription offer	Bundle (Call credit)	25	6.0
	Bundle (Mobile data)	90	21.7
	Bundle for both calls and data	294	71.0
	None	5	1.2
Sample size (n)		414	100

3.2. Construct measurement

The research constructs were drawn from the extant literature, particularly articles related to the abovementioned theme. The study comprises seven (7) research constructs. A five-point Likert scale was used, as it is easier for respondents and takes less time to complete than open-ended questions (Leung, 2011). 1 indicated “completely disagree” and 5 indicated “completely agree” in the statements asked. All the constructs were adopted from the literature, while the items were adapted to suit the current research context.

3.3. Common method bias

The study initially examines the presence of CMB (common method bias). The paper followed Bagozzi and Yi (1988); namely, the constructs' items were carefully designed with an inscription on the title page of the questionnaire that respondents will be treated with strict confidence. Simply put, the survey was designed to ensure that respondents remained anonymous, so they could opt out of the research whenever they wanted. Furthermore, to strengthen the claim, the study performed a full multicollinearity test, specifically VIF (variance inflation factor), to assess the evidence of common method variance (CMV). The results of these estimates indicated that CMV is not an issue since the computed VIFs are less than the threshold of ten (10) (Alin, 2010). Finally, the concerns about CMB are minimal; hence the potential CMB concerns are low (Table 3).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Assessment of model appropriateness

The paper undertook the two main assessments of measurements in quantitative research; notably, the reliability and validity tests were achieved. More importantly, this criterion has been recommended in the methodology literature (Jakada et al., 2020; Shiau et al., 2019). Table 2 shows the tests of the internal consistency and reliability of measures. The α -value (Cronbach's alpha) for all the constructs exceeded 0.7. In other words, all the constructs met the minimum threshold of reliability and validity. In checking the composite reliability of the latent constructs, the paper used Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A) and Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c); they were all above 0.7 (Hair Jr et al., 2020). With average variance extracted (AVE), the values were above the cut-off value of 0.5 (Table 2). To ascertain the sampling adequacy for the model, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) for sampling adequacy was used and which should not be below 0.5. The KMO result revealed a coefficient of 0.82, which is considered optimal for further analysis. Again, Bartlett's test of correlation showed a significance level at 0.000; hence, it is good as it is below 0.05 (p-value).

Table 2. Validity and reliability of research construct

Source: Authors' processing from ADANCO 2.2.1 and SPSS software.

Construct	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A)	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c)	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Social media usage	0.7533	0.8199	0.7095	0.5399
Customer buying decision	0.8427	0.8834	0.8246	0.6557
Sincerity	0.9214	0.9406	0.9160	0.7985
Excitement	0.9111	0.9324	0.9094	0.7339
Ruggedness	0.8733	0.9052	0.8676	0.6580
Competence	0.8708	0.9190	0.8674	0.7909
Sophistication	0.8493	0.9070	0.8462	0.7649
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy → 0.8166 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity → Approx. Chi-Square → 6116.517 df → 528 Sig. → 000				

Regarding factor loading, items loaded above 0.50 is strong enough to measure the corresponding construct; this confirms a successful convergent and discriminant validity (Kwarteng et al., 2020). The fifth item of the “social media usage” construct (SMU5)

and the first item of the “consumer buying decision” construct (CBD1) was dropped because they fell short of the threshold value of 0.5 (Table 3). The variance inflation factor (VIF) was estimated to take care of collinearity (variances) presence among the

Table 3. Construct items, loading, and variance inflation factor (VIF)

Source: Authors' processing from ADANCO 2.2.1 software.

Construct	Indicator	Loading	VIF
Social media usage	SMU1: Social media is essential in promoting brands/products and services.	0.8508	2.5992
	SMU2: Social media share authentic information on their social network platforms.	0.8355	2.5959
	SMU3: Social media platform helps reach out to those who are far and near.	0.6672	1.4874
	SMU4: Social media activists and bloggers are objective in what they churn out about their industry to the public.	0.5408	1.3711
Customer buying decision making	CBD2: Purchasing any of the products from preferred telecoms contributes immensely to national employment.	0.7120	1.4672
	CBD3: Product quality is the most important consideration in choosing a preferred network.	0.8083	1.8549
	CBD4: Chosen network has voice and data clarity and quality.	0.8628	2.1133
	CBD5: Preferred network is innovative, creative, and different from the competition.	0.8475	1.9871
	BRS1: Selected network is down-to-earth.	0.8765	2.7101
Brand sincerity	BRS2: Selected network is honest.	0.8776	2.7726
	BRS3: Selected network is wholesome (wonderful).	0.9070	3.2790
	BRS4: Selected network is cheerful.	0.9127	3.4406
	BREX1: Selected network is daring.	0.8555	2.5282
Brand excitement	BREX2: Selected network is spirited.	0.8579	2.8751
	BREX3: Selected network is imaginative.	0.8844	3.0648
	BREX4: Selected network is up-to-date.	0.8389	2.2757
	BREX5: Selected network is loving.	0.8460	2.3764
	RUG1: Selected network is leisure (outdoorsy).	0.7754	1.7499
Brand ruggedness	RUG2: Selected network is powerful (masculine).	0.8555	2.6045
	RUG3: Selected network is western (not local).	0.8576	2.6001
	RUG4: Selected network is unbreakable (tough).	0.6866	1.4772
	RUG5: Selected network is rugged (strong).	0.8659	2.4746
	COM1: Selected network is reliable.	0.8490	1.8881
Brand competence	COM2: Selected network is intelligent.	0.9138	2.8892
	COM3: Selected network is successful.	0.9039	2.6036
	SOP1: Selected network is upper class (higher standard).	0.8487	1.8460
Brand sophistication	SOP2: Selected network is charming (delightful).	0.8851	2.2173
	SOP3: Selected network is smooth (user friendly).	0.8893	2.1559

Table 4. Discriminant validity using HTMT

Source: Authors' processing from ADANCO 2.2.1 software.

Construct	SMU	CBD	Sincerity	Excitement	Ruggedness	Competence	Sophistication
Soc-Media-Usage							
Cons-Buy-Decision	0.5874						
Sincerity	0.3915	0.6385					
Excitement	0.4545	0.6492	0.7902				
Ruggedness	0.4121	0.6199	0.7092	0.7802			
Competence	0.4136	0.7384	0.7853	0.7862	0.7919		
Sophistication	0.4173	0.6494	0.7254	0.7430	0.7769	0.8138	

items used in measuring the construct. Hence, a VIF less than ten is a better value.

Additionally, discriminant validity was subsequently assessed based on the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations approach (Henseler et al., 2015). The findings from this computation indicated that none of the corresponding correlation coefficients exceeded the minimum cut-off value of 0.85. Hence, the conclusion of the evidence of discriminant validity is shown in Table 4.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

Following the model assessment, the paper proceeded with structural modeling, thus, testing the hypothetical relationships among constructs at this stage of analysis (Adzovie et al., 2020; Hair Jr

et al., 2020). The statistical estimates were accorded by the regression coefficients (β), and the significant values; T-values > 1.96 (or P-values < 0.05) of the research constructs. Eleven hypotheses were tested (H1-H11). Six hypotheses were classified as having direct relationships with the outcome variable, while the remaining were moderating (indirect) hypotheses. Table 5 summarizes the hypothetical paths (relationships) in which all the six direct hypotheses were significant while only two hypotheses of the mediation effects were not. Interestingly, all the hypothetical paths have a positive relationship, suggesting that social media usage positively affects consumer buying decisions despite any brand attributes that a customer may be attributed to.

Furthermore, the result also showed the coefficients of determination- R^2 (predictive power) regarding the research model (particularly the de-

Table 5. Hypothesis testing

Source: Authors' processing from ADANCO 2.2.1 and SPSS software.

Effect	Beta (β)	Standard bootstrap results					Decision
		Mean value	Standard error	t-value	p-value (2-sided)		
Direct effect							
H1: SMU → CBD	0.2545	0.2600	0.0405	6.2787	0.0000	Supported	
H2: SMU → sincerity	0.3139	0.3162	0.0483	6.4987	0.0000	Supported	
H3: SMU → excitement	0.3756	0.3787	0.0502	7.4784	0.0000	Supported	
H4: SMU → ruggedness	0.3267	0.3282	0.0536	6.0909	0.0000	Supported	
H5: SMU → competence	0.3377	0.3399	0.0498	6.7803	0.0000	Supported	
H6: SMU → sophistication	0.3267	0.3291	0.0459	7.1204	0.0000	Supported	
Mediating effect							
H7: SMU → sincerity → CBD	0.1466	0.1450	0.0534	2.7470	0.0061	Supported	
H8: SMU → excitement → CBD	0.1445	0.1458	0.0633	2.2842	0.0226	Supported	
H9: SMU → ruggedness → CBD	0.0696	0.0690	0.0634	1.0983	0.2723	Not supported	
H10: SMU → competence → CBD	0.3427	0.3438	0.0709	4.8345	0.0000	Supported	
H11: SMU → sophistication → CBD	0.0482	0.0491	0.0630	0.7649	0.4445	Not supported	
Construct		Coefficient of determination (R^2)			Adjusted R^2		
Consumer buying decision		0.4462			0.4394		

Note: SMU = social media usage, CBD = customer buying decision.

Source: Authors' processing from ADANCO 2.2.1 software.

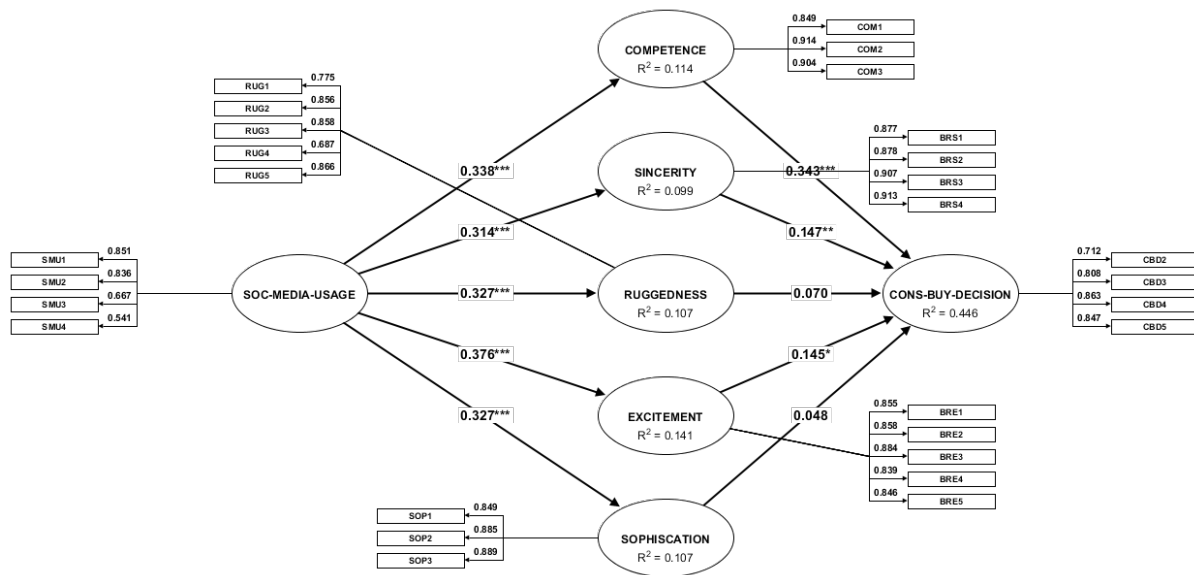


Figure 2. Estimated research model

pendent variable). The coefficients indicate the percentage of variation in the dependent variable as explained by the independent variable. The predictive variables explain the outcome variable (consumer buying decision) by approximately 45 percent (Table 5 and Figure 2).

5. DISCUSSION AND STUDY IMPLICATIONS

The telecommunication enterprise is one of the fastest-growing service-sector in any nation. As such, research by practitioners and academics cannot be overlooked. For example, Omar (2020) acknowledges that behavioral changes are associated with activities, habitats, and interactions. Hence, organizations must consider what influences their customers buying behavior when identifying marketing strategies.

Customers' purchasing decisions are influenced by a variety of elements, including the quality of goods, brand image, price, and social influences (Darmawan, 2017). Customers' culture, personal characteristics, and loyalty all play a role in these factors. Customer behavior and decision-making are directly influenced by external circumstances outside the customer's control.

This study corroborated Aragoncillo and Sanclemente (2018), who found that social media

have a significant impact on impulse buying by consumers, owing to the ability of social media to stimulate dormant emotions. Social media, according to them, has affected customer behavior at all stages of the buying cycle, from gathering information to expressing discontent with a product or a firm. Positive information from social media, on the other hand, can influence customer behavior significantly.

The influence of communication as a marketing technique lies at the heart of the interaction between social media and customer purchasing behavior. The study confirms Voramontri and Klieb (2019) that social media usage increases customer happiness in the stages of information search and alternative evaluation, with satisfaction magnified as the consumer advances toward the final buy choice and post-purchase evaluations. However, the findings are similar to those of Xie and Lee (2015), who studied the impact of social media on consumer behavior, albeit not from the perspective of the decision process. They showed that brand personality on social media would resultantly trigger attitudes and behavioral intentions toward a specific brand.

The study reinforces Chivandi et al. (2019) that social media platforms are increasingly and successfully raising brand awareness and influencing customers' purchasing decisions, which leads

to repeat purchases and long-term customer loyalty. The study confirms these findings. Labafi et al. (2020) found that social media innovation influenced customer preferences by allowing them to see what other people in their social networks think of a product, leading to a preference for one brand over another. As a result, millennials are more likely to influence one other's purchasing decisions through social media, leading to brand loyalty and preference. Foxall (2015) demonstrated that customers' purchasing decisions are influenced by social media posts about the companies they have seen on their feeds.

The importance of this paper was determined via a variety of lenses. First, social media has a significant and favorable impact on attention, interest, and search of consumers who follow telecom product-related social media accounts (Fannani & Najib, 2020). Consumers may learn about companies via discussions, reviews, and dialogues posted by those who have already connected with the brand. This may influence customer perceptions of the product and, subsequently, brand selection. In basic words, brands have the same impact on consumer choice that customers do on other customers. Finally, it will help practitioners under-

stand how the rise of social media has reshaped the communication environment, and how this has affected marketing communications. WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are just some of the social media tools revolutionizing the buyer-seller market every day (Statista, 2022).

This study's findings may help company owners make better use of their social media accounts (or networks). The viewpoint is that existing literature will be enhanced, and new aspects of how social media involvement relates to brand experience, personality, and purchase choices of customers will be introduced. The results will influence companies' policy and strategy reviews, as well as social media advertising regulations. The telecom industry will find the content of this study extremely beneficial. It will help them stay current with industry knowledge and explore new social marketing trends, enabling them to effectively determine the realistic relationship between social media usage and customer purchasing decisions. Again, stakeholder comprehension of e-marketing methods and approaches aids in cementing pre-existing ties while enabling makers of social media applications to expand their exploits by incorporating new features into their expertise.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Given the growth of social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram, companies have commenced engaging with customers in this newly emerged digital space. This study investigates the role of brand personality in the social media space. Following the advent and mass consumption of digital products and services, practitioners are leveraging to optimize revenue through effective and efficient marketing communication strategies. Hence, the study investigated how social media plays a significant role on brand personality concepts given the interplay of consumer behavior in the virtual space. The study found that brand personality attributes had a significant impact on social media marketing. It recommends that service providers in the industry should intensify their marketing communication networks since brand ambassadors who play brand personality roles contribute largely to their market share in the medium to long-term operation.

The study is not without limitations. First, the sample is relatively meager. It would be interesting if future studies could consider a large sample since the larger the sample, the better the terms of reliability. Secondly, the study is quantitative in nature; as such, it only considered only a fraction of the segment (subscribers) of the selected telecoms in Ghana. Hence, future studies may consider a mixed approach. Last but not the least, the study may have overlooked other dimensions of brand personality; therefore, the paper calls on interested scholars to research other hidden variables deemed relevant to this present study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Cleophas Attor, Abdul Bashiru Jibril, Miloslava Chovancova.
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 Investigation: Cleophas Attor, Abdul Bashiru Jibril.
 Methodology: Cleophas Attor, Abdul Bashiru Jibril.
 Project administration: Abdul Bashiru Jibril, Miloslava Chovancova.
 Resources: Abdul Bashiru Jibril, Miloslava Chovancova.
 Software: Abdul Bashiru Jibril.
 Supervision: Abdul Bashiru Jibril, Miloslava Chovancova.
 Validation: Cleophas Attor, Abdul Bashiru Jibril.
 Visualization: Abdul Bashiru Jibril, Miloslava Chovancova.
 Writing – original draft: Cleophas Attor, Abdul Bashiru Jibril.
 Writing – review & editing: Cleophas Attor, Abdul Bashiru Jibril, Miloslava Chovancova.

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