

## **Examining the influence of brand personality dimension on consumer buying decision: evidence from Ghana**

**Cleophas ATTOR**

*Faculty of Management and Economics, Tomas Bata University in Zlin, Czech Republic  
attor@utb.cz*

**Abdul Bashiru JIBRIL**

*Rabat Business School, International University of Rabat, Rabat-Sale, Morocco  
jibril.abdulbashiru@uir.ac.ma*

**John AMOAH**

*Faculty of Management and Economics, Tomas Bata University in Zlin,  
Czech Republic/Takoradi Technical University, Ghana  
amoah@utb.cz*

**Miloslava CHOVANCOVA**

*Faculty of Management and Economics, Tomas Bata University in Zlin, Czech Republic  
chovancova@utb.cz*

**Abstract.** *With the advent of innovative marketing, the increasing use of brand personality concepts for the promotion of a brand or product has received scholarly work across the globe. Yet little is known in the literature about the dimensions of brand personality and its applicability in the telecommunication industry. Considering the known link between brand personality and customer purchase intent, this research sought to examine the impact of the brand personality dimension on customer buying decisions in the telecoms sector. A positivist research paradigm was used to attain the study goal(s) with valid data of 414 subscribers (customers) of telecom giants in Ghana. The result from the PLS-SEM technique identified five main attributes of brand personality (ie. sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) as antecedents of customer buying decisions in the research model. Findings revealed that brand sincerity, brand excitement, and brand competence have a significant relationship with customer buying decisions. Whereas brand sophistication and ruggedness were not. An effective brand increases its brand equity by having a consistent set of traits that a specific consumer segment enjoys. This article not only provides empirical insight into the brand personality literature but also serves as a source of information for managers in the telecom industry to successfully trigger strategic marketing practices that would help to optimize the usefulness of the brand personality concept. Limitations and future research directions are discussed.*

**Keywords:** Innovative marketing, Brand Personality, Customer, buying decision, subscribers, Telecommunication Industry, Ghana.

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## **Introduction**

The business has grown at a breakneck pace in the modern era. One example of this transformation is in terms of technology and people's lifestyles, which are inextricably linked to globalization's effect. In this day of globalization, the number of brands and goods competing in the market has increased dramatically, providing consumers with a plethora of options and alternatives for products and services that may meet their desires and requirements (Jibril et al., 2019). Nowadays, clients may quickly obtain further information about the numerous brands available on the market via the internet, and many customers want a brand that reflects their individuality. The more well-known a brand is, the more likely the product will be preferred by buyers. According to Mamangkey et al., (2018), for a business to succeed, it must have items that can meet the always-changing and growing consumer desires and requirements. Additionally, it is critical for the business to understand the ever-changing consumer behaviors, since this will influence their purchasing choice. Brand personality is a critical intangible asset that contributes significantly to the differentiation of a company's products and services. According to Sammut-Bonnici, (2015) brand may be defined as a collection of tangible and intangible characteristics that are used to generate awareness and identification of a product, service, person, place, or organization, as well as to establish its reputation. The goal of branding strategy is to differentiate brands from competitors, hence lowering perceived alternatives in the market, increasing-price elasticity, and boosting profitability.

Brand personality contributes to the strength of the relationship between brands and customers in relationship marketing (Jibril et al., 2019). Brand personality entails an awareness of how brands are connected with human personality attributes (Keller, 1993). There are studies on brand personality that have developed its implications in areas as diverse as brand value, attitude towards the brand, associations, and factors that contribute to the brand's relationship with customers, among others (Coelho et al., 2020; Louis & Lombart, 2010; Molinillo et al., 2017). Although research has been conducted to determine how brand personality affects buying intention or purchase decisions (Gordon et al., 2016; Ha & Janda, 2014), the attempt to unravel specific brand personality dimensions are relatively scarce in the context of a developing country. This study, therefore, with evidence from the Ghanaian telecommunication industry, examines the influence of the brand personality dimension on the consumer buying decision of Telcom products or services. The telecom industry would greatly benefit from this study's findings since it will help them to remain up to date on industry information and investigate new social marketing trends, which will enable them to successfully evaluate the realistic link between brand personality and customer buying decisions. Again, the study findings would also add more insights into the literature domain. The sections of the paper in this study are arranged as follows: literature review, methodology, findings/results, discussions, and conclusion.

## **Literature review**

There are currently over five billion mobile subscribers globally, with the fastest subscriber growth in Africa and Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to have 495 million mobile

subscribers by the end of 2020, an increase by nearly 20 million from 2019. Over 40% of the region's population is under the age of 15, and this demography will continue to be the key driver of development as more and more people get their first mobile phone. (GSMA, 2021). The power of mobile technology's disruptive innovation in conjunction with the potential of the fortune at the "bottom of the pyramid" (Adegbile & Sarpong, 2018) has resulted in rapid economic growth, with an effect of mobile devices being a necessary item rather than just a disposable or luxury item. In many African countries especially Ghana, mobile phones have gained much faster adoption than landline phones or even wired internet, owing to the lack of cable infrastructure which can be quite costly to set up in remote areas. The usage of mobile communication services is rapidly increasing among customers and the increased competition between mobile operators through promotional schemes, value-added services with local and international services, and competitive pricing, coupled with the ease of obtaining services, internal labor mobility, and increased incomes had been highlighted as some of the reasons of the changes in the sector (Daily FT, 2013; Mihalca et al., 2021). Ghana became one of the first African countries that moved from having a government-controlled Telecommunication market to a much more liberalized or competitive market, with well-organized private sector participation. Even as the industry moves closer to a fully private, competitive model, the Government has continued to play an active role in promoting the effective development of the Telecommunication sector (Osei-Owusu, 2015). The privatization of the telecommunication industry in Ghana has led to a very competitive market. Telecommunication companies in Ghana, therefore, by adopting brand personalities, have been able to encourage distinct products and services to achieve a competitive advantage. The telecommunications industry is one of the fastest-growing service-sector in the world. Behavioural changes are linked to activities, environments, and interactions (Omar & Atteya, 2020). Because of this, companies must consider how their clients' purchasing decisions are influenced while developing marketing strategies. Customers' purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by elements such as product quality, brand image, price, and social considerations, according to Darmawan, (2018). Customers' culture, personal characteristics, and loyalty all play a role in these factors (Wadera & Sharma, 2018). Customers cannot change external impacts, which are caused by variables outside of their control and have an impact on their behavior and decision-making directly.

### ***Consumer buying decision***

It is critical to understand the buying decision process of the average customer. The consumer purchasing decision process refers to the decision-making processes that begin with the consumer's intention to acquire products or services in exchange for money in the market and continue throughout the process of purchasing goods or services (Kotler et al., (2017). It assists the seller/marketer in the sale of their goods or services in the marketplace. If a marketer is effective in understanding customer behaviour as it relates to the consumer buying decision process toward a product or service, then the marketer will be successful in selling the product or service in question. Problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase choice, and post-purchase behavior are the five steps that comprise the consumer buying decision process. It demonstrates how a buyer begins to think about a product before making a purchase. During the decision-making process for a product, the buyer can employ any or all of the five stages. Buyers may choose to skip one or

more phases; it all depends on their state of mind at the time. In the case of Kotler et al., (2017), every human has a mind that is distinct from that of other humans. For example, a person who purchases his or her normal brand of milk daily as the need arises. As a result, the odds of ignoring information and evaluation are higher when compared to items that need a high level of engagement. Essentially, it is determined by the nature of the individual. However, in the situation of purchasing a car when there is a lot of engagement. When a consumer is in the process of purchasing an automobile, the client cannot skip any of the five steps. In the case of Kotler et al., (2017), this technique is particularly effective for new purchases when the customer is heavily involved. Some firms place a strong emphasis on understanding the user experience during learning, selection, use, and disposal of the product.

### ***Impacts of brand personality***

Because of its distinctiveness and relative difficulty to imitate, brand personality is believed to be a reflection of an organization's culture, values, and traits as well as the qualities of its shareholders. As a result of its uniqueness, this collection of human-like features are anticipated to assist a brand in distinguishing itself from other rivals in the market (Pantin-Sohier, 2004). As a result, it is advised that businesses employ their personalities as long-term competitive advantages in their product differentiation and positioning strategies (Ang & Lim, 2006). Coelho et al., (2019), revealed that brand personality is one of the most significant variables that have an influence on customers' choices based on their study findings. The reason is that brand personality is developed by associating a company's image with human-like emotions and qualities, as it may capture many features of real-life human character (Kim & Phua, 2020). Furthermore, support for this assertion may be found in Biel (1993), who asserts that customers are more likely to form emotional attachments to businesses that have relevant personality features. To avoid dealing with distrust and misunderstanding, it is widely acknowledged that individuals do not always react logically, but rather depend heavily on their instincts and experiences to make judgments in many situations (Temporal, 2014). As a result, the emotional connection that customers have with a brand will have a beneficial influence on their degree of trust and loyalty to the business (Solomon, 2009). Furthermore, brand personality demonstrates good characteristics that customers aspire to and encourages them to link with these characteristics (Aaker, 1996). When Nike encourages fitness and an active lifestyle, it ultimately attracts the attention of those who have similar interests or who aspire to the same ideal appearance. Having a set of well-developed brand personality features allows businesses to express their values to their target audiences more successfully than they otherwise would. As a consequence, marketing professionals today consider having "a clear and distinctive" brand identity to be a crucial information (Yaverbaum, 2001).

### ***Brand personality***

Consumers link human personality features with brands (Aaker et al., 2001). Azoulay & Kapferer, (2003) describe it as 'the collection of human personality attributes that are important to and applicable to brands'. Although some critics like (Avis, 2012; Oklevik et al., 2020) have criticized the concept, it has primarily attracted academics' and professionals' attention because it establishes and strengthens the relationship between the brand and the consumer (Kapoor & Banerjee, 2021), as well as affecting the brand's image and brand equity

(Alam & Khan, 2019). Aaker, (1997) provides a five-dimensional model of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness which has been employed in several subsequent investigations. Geuens et al. (2009) critique Aaker's, (1997) brand personality scale (BPS) for three reasons: (1) it is a broad definition, it encompasses not just personality but also other human traits (for example, age, gender, etc); (2) its generalizability: it does not generalize to circumstances involving the brand-level analysis and/or situations involving customers as a source of distinction; and (3) its limited cross-cultural replication. In Spain, for example, just three of the five criteria appeared, whereas, in Japan, only four of them did (Aaker et al., 2001). Reliable and cross-culturally valid BPS is proposed by Geuens et al. (2009), which is similar to but separate from Aaker's Brand Personality Scale [BPS] (that is responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionally). In contrast to Aaker's scale, Geuens's BPS focuses solely on human personality qualities and does not include human attributes (Rauschnabel et al., 2016). Since the new BPS restricts brand personality to human personality qualities that are relevant and applicable to brands, it is more closely associated with human personalities [that is Big Five Personalities] (Geuens et al., 2009). Sincerity and excitement are widely accepted as the most important and relevant elements of Aaker's BPS, according to several kinds of research (Aaker et al., 2004; Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013; Hosany et al., 2006; Smit et al., 2007; Japutra & Molinillo, 2017). Three ideals are important in interpersonal relationships. Aaker et al. (2004) argue that *sincere* and *exciting* are interesting dimensions because they map onto the three ideals that are important in interpersonal relationships. Fletcher et al. (2004) argues about the importance of interpersonal relationships (Aaker, 1997; Japutra & Molinillo, 2017). The research examines the positive impact of brand personality on a variety of dimensions (Keller, 1993), brand attitude (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), brand preference (Branaghan & Hildebrand, 2011), brand associations (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Maehle et al., 2011), consumer commitment (Valette-Florence, 2020), purchase intention and brand choice (Gordon et al 2016; Khan & Fatma, 2017). Given the importance of brand personality in establishing a relationship between a brand and a consumer and in forecasting consumer behaviour (Gordon et al., 2016; Zhou & Yang, 2017; Swaminathan et al., 2009), there is a line of research that has concentrated on determining the primary interactional ramifications of brand personality (Louis & Lombart, 2010; Molinillo et al., 2017).

### ***Brand competence***

According to Wu et al., (2017), brand competence is seen as the capacity to elicit intents from customers and prospects. Brands that are successful in stimulating intents are viewed as competent, whereas brands that are unsuccessful in stimulating intentions are perceived as incompetent. Portal et al., (2018) emphasize that brand competence is assessed based on quality, dependability, durability, and consistency as evidenced by their study findings. To further develop the notion of brand competence, Portal et al. (2018) relate brand competence to brand warmth, stating that the two concepts work together to make businesses more approachable to customers. Brand warmth may be felt if the brand is viewed to have good intentions; brand competence can be felt if the brand is believed to have the capacity and skills to carry out those aims, according to the research of (Portal et al., 2018). Firms strive to develop their competence in a small number of essential sectors while also dealing with their brand in this sphere of influence. Marketing managers and experts, as a result, have a contractual obligation to meet the precise desires of customers. As a result, businesses would

not want to raise any questions about their brand competency in the eyes of their customers. In their study researchers defined brand competency as consumers' reflections that a brand had the capability and abilities to convene customers' intentions, and it indicates a brand's competitiveness, intelligence, and skillsets. It is defined by Martin & Nasib (2021) as the ability of a brand to overcome the difficulties of its customers while also satisfying their requirements. To be successful, a brand must be able to comprehend its clients' problems and meet their requirements. Brand competence is also a significant behaviour that contributes to the development of customer confidence in the brand. A brand's uniqueness must be such that it meets the demands of its target audience. According to Shaari & Salleh (2018), it is a comprehensive behaviour that increases customer confidence in the brand. In the mobile phone business, they discover that brand competence has a considerable impact on purchase intentions and helps to justify customer brand loyalty. The average consumer's self-perception of sophistication increases as a result of exposure to competent businesses, according to research of (Wu et al., 2017). Ngwenya & Nyagura (2016) conducted a study on the brand personality of Powertel Communications, a telecommunications firm, and discovered that competence was the most prominent personality among the customers. This was mostly because clients generally see the company as competent as a result of the firm's innovations and value-added services. Consequently, when a brand is associated with competence, it has the potential to influence purchase decisions. Building powerful brands is a vital success component, particularly for products in highly competitive marketplaces such as the telecommunications industry. The current study hypothesized that;

*H1: brand competence would have a positive relationship with customer buying decisions of telecoms' products and services.*

### ***Brand ruggedness***

According to Tahir et al. (2016), brand ruggedness demonstrates the brand's attraction to the *wild* and *extroverted*, suggesting that the brand is powerful and robust. Based on their findings, Vahdati & Nejad (2016) propose that ruggedness relates to the brand's ability to withstand and exert force. Several studies in Sri Lanka, including Silva & Langstedt (2017), found favourable association between brand ruggedness and customers' brand loyalty when it comes to mobile telephony services. Their findings indicate that consumer brand loyalty has a considerable impact on store loyalty and, as a result, has a positive connection with consumer brand loyalty. Khan (2020) also reported on a favourable relationship between ethicality and ruggedness that was discovered via this investigation. According to Silva et al., (2017), ruggedness is a strong indicator of customer decision-making in the product category. Neto et al., (2020) express caution about the use of brand roughness as a dimension of brand personality, stating that its relevance is restricted for many items and that it should be avoided for example, in case of telecommunications equipment. This argument is reinforced by a large number of results that frequently fail to gauge the toughness of a brand. To be sure, roughness may improve brand prestige and cause customers to regard a company as trustworthy and responsible as revealed by (Choi et al., 2017), who also believe that ruggedness can increase brand prestige. An investigation of the link between ruggedness and customer loyalty conducted by Teimouri et al., (2016) in a case study of Samsung mobile phone customers discovered that there is no such relationship. Given this, the study, hence, the hypothesized that;

*H2: brand ruggedness would have a positive relationship with customer buying decisions of telecoms' products and services.*

### **Brand sophistication**

Lima (2017) discovered that brand sophistication (BS) was associated with characteristics that we tend to identify with high social standing, such as being upper-class, glamorous, or charming, among other things. As stated by Lima (2017), whether a rise in complexity is beneficial to a brand or not depends on how the brand wishes to be seen by the customer, and whether this is a positive or negative influence. According to Niros et al. (2017), brand sophistication serves as a fundamental guide to perceived quality, particularly in services, and it also serves to stimulate innovation and excitement in the marketplace. Kim & Phua (2020) found a favourable association between brand sophistication and customers' brand loyalty to mobile communications services in Sri Lanka, based on their research on brand sophistication. Liu et al. (2016), on the other hand, could not detect a link between brand sophistication and the desire to acquire a product. Despite this, the study indicates that perceived brand complexity has a statistically significant positive influence on the expansion of a brand (Liu et al., 2016). Tahir et al. (2016) discussed how a sophisticated brand should be beautiful, good-looking, glamorous, and engaging, and how this influences purchase intentions. In addition, the brand must be perceived as being of superior quality. Al Mashady et al. (2019) discovered that there is a strong link between a firm's supply chain procedure and the sophistication of the brand it represents. Nonetheless, much as brand sophistication has an impact on characteristics such as brand trust and supply chain, it may also be impacted by cultural elements on the side of the consumers or the product being marketed to. Wang et al. (2019) demonstrated that brand sophistication has a strong positive effect on brand attitude and customers' behavioural intentions, using examples of brands such as Mercedes and BMW to demonstrate their point of view. Furthermore, according to Holm & Ax (2020), brand sophistication can have a favorable impact on the delivery of excellent customer services. Niros et al. (2020) investigate the impact of sophistication on brand image and consumer reaction to goods in the telecommunications industry in Greece. A study conducted by Ladipo et al. (2021) found that there is no significant relationship between sophistication as a measure of brand personality and consumer product choice, indicating that sophistication is only moderately related to consumer product choice in the telecommunications industry. Under this, studies by Shukla et al. (2016) and Chung & Park (2017) found a statistically significant positive relationship between sophistication as a characteristic of brand personality and customer choice decisions. In this light, the present study proposed that;

*H3: brand sophistication (BS) would have a positive relationship with customer buying decisions of telecoms' products and services.*

### **Brand excitement**

Excitement, according to Cai & Mo (2020), is defined as the condition of being thrilled and craving a specific product or brand. A brand's ability to be considered exciting is based on its ability to be fashionable and adventurous, among other characteristics. Emotions like enthusiasm, according to research, plays an important part in the customer experience, impacting perceptions as well as consumer involvement and, ultimately, brand choice (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2020) Sporting organizations use brand excitement to differentiate themselves from the competition (Hohenberger & Grohs, 2020). Brand

excitement is the most notable dimension used by sports organizations to differentiate themselves as "cutting-edge" brands for their respective programs (Hohenberger & Grohs 2020). Schnurr (2017) illustrates that the typicality of a product's design has a favourable impact on consumers' perceptions of brand enthusiasm and loyalty. That is a brand with excellent design, and excellent brand designs produce a pleasant sense of anticipation about the brand. Cai & Mo (2020) point out, for example, the favourable influence of a large logo and an attractive brand on consumer behaviour. The amount of brand enthusiasm, according to Langstedt & Hunt (2017), is determined by the brand's level of spirit, imaginativeness, and how up-to-date they are. However, Avery (2020) and brand personality critics believe that while exciting brands seem appealing and receive a lot of attention, and so being highly capable of creating interest and trial, they are still perceived as less authentic long-term business partners. Although the exciting dimension is regarded as ideal in interpersonal relationships, this personality type may have inherent disadvantages when compared to the sincerity dimension, which fosters perceptions of partner quality and encourages long-term relationship strength in contrast to the exciting dimension (Avery, 2020). According to Bajaj & Bond (2018), visual brand aspects have an impact on perceptions of brand enthusiasm.

According to Kang et al., (2019), brand excitement is defined as the total amount of interest and affection that customers have for a certain brand. According to the findings of their study, the arousal and positive impacts of brand enthusiasm are considered as the emotional element of satisfaction. As a result, interesting businesses provide wonderful experiences while also meeting their objectives. Consumers continue to seek emotional fulfillment from the brand as a result of the accumulation of their encounters with it. According to Walter et al., (2019), brand associations can help to increase consumer excitement about a products and services. The capacity of potential customers to recall or recognize a given brand is defined as the level of brand enthusiasm. This is essential because it may serve as an incentive to develop a strong emotional tie to a specific brand. According to Kang et al. (2019), characteristics such as price acceptability and quality consciousness have a favorable impact on the level of brand enthusiasm. Aberathna & Ubeyachandra (2017) found a weak positive influence of brand enthusiasm on emotional brand attachment in the Sri Lankan laptop sector, which was studied in the context of brand personality and the technology industry. The current research, therefore, hypothesizes that;

*H4: brand excitement would have a positive relationship with customer buying decisions of telecoms' products.*

### **Brand sincerity (BST)**

A consumer's perception of the sincerity of a brand is the dimension through which he or she determines whether or not the brand is true to its essential values. Sincerity encapsulates the brand's core values and guiding ideas. As a result, a customer can determine if those fundamentals have a commercial orientation based on the genuineness of the brand. According to McManus et al., (2021), brand sincerity and relatedness needs are closely related, provided those businesses are more likely to build a friendship-based customer-business connection. In their study, McManus et al. (2021) speculate that brand honesty may only be a necessary but not sufficient condition for stronger brand connectedness. In other words, when the "box" of sincerity is regulated, it can serve as a springboard for the development of other personality traits. Cuevas (2016) conducted a study on brand personality in the blogosphere and discovered that when customers' expectations for



pleasant experiences are achieved, they see a brand as authentic (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2021). Personal selling and guarantees such as positive customer service experiences as well as promotional incentives, according to Liang et al., (2021), were found to positively affect consumer brand choice. In addition to passion and customization, sincerity is produced via the use of human brands such as renowned writers and fashion bloggers who demonstrate these characteristics (Liang et al., 2021). The sincerity and trustworthiness of a brand are therefore important factors in determining customer engagement since trustworthiness encourages consumers to readily express their ideas through comments or assessments on the internet (Gong et al., 2020). For example, increasing brand sincerity elicits positive impacts from and forges a deeper self-brand relationship with favourable companies (McManus et al., 2021), while reduced brand sincerity, on the other hand, can elicit unpleasant emotions and undermine customers' attachment to a particular brand. The present study proposes that;

*H5: brand sincerity would have a positive relationship with customer buying decisions of telecoms' products.*

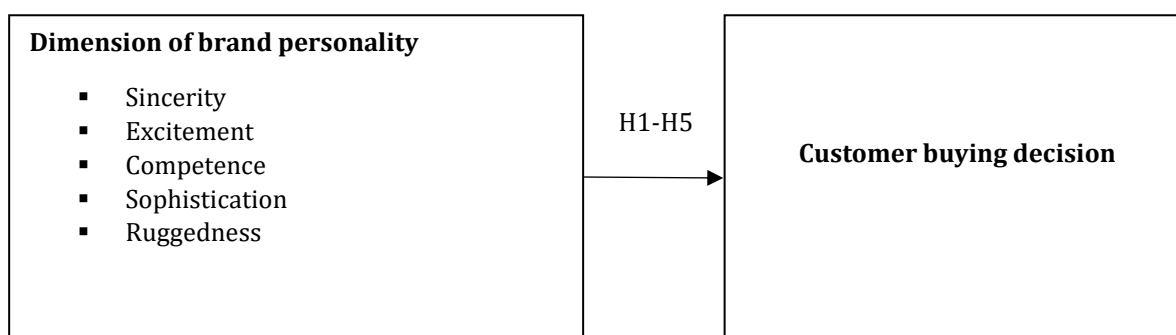


Figure 1. Research model

Source: Authors' own.

## Methodology

### *Sampling and data*

The research used non-random sampling approaches, particularly the referral method (snowball sampling). Firstly, defining the study objective: evaluating the link between social media use, brand personality, and customer purchasing behavior in Ghana's telecommunications business. The research 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. Our analysis evaluated Vodafone Ghana, MTN Ghana, and Airtel-Tigo users to be the biggest and most popular mobile networks in Ghana. 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). This sampling approach is used when the researcher chooses the participants for the sample. Given the study's focus on social media use and brand personality engagement, it's vital to recruit people who fully grasp the issue. Scientists think they can acquire a representative sample using sound judgment, saving time and money (Al Buraiki & Khan, 2018; Black, 2019; Etikan et al., 2016). The snowball approach was used to help achieve a target number of participants who are active on social media networks. In this situation, participants might recommend others to participate in the

current survey. Due to Covid-19 protocols, caution was taken during data collection. Both hard and soft copy questionnaire was simultaneously used for the data collection process. The hard copy questionnaire was administered on campus through intercept whereas the 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 studied to clarify the variables (or constructs) under study. This, notwithstanding, helped to assess the reliability and validity of the chosen constructs using Cronbach alpha values. The main data collection took an average of four months (December to March 2021). 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 of the final data set. 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 that 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*

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
<b>Sample size (n)</b>		<b>414</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Authors' field data from Ghana (December to March 2022).

### ***Construct measurement***

The research constructs were drawn from the extant literature, particularly articles related to the above-mentioned theme. The study comprises five (5) research constructs. Notably, the brand personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) and the outcome variable (customer buying decision). 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). With '1' indicating "completely disagree" and '5' indicating "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.

### ***Common method bias***

The study initially examines the presence of CMB (common method bias). We followed the research by Bagozzi & Yi, (1988), in which the construct 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, such that, they could opt out of the research whenever they wanted. Furthermore, to strengthen our claim, we performed a full multicollinearity test, specifically, on 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) (see Alin, 2010; Kock & Hadaya, 2018; Podsakoff et al., 2003; Salmerón et al., 2020). Finally, the concerns about CMB are minimal, hence the potential CMB concerns are low (see table 3).

## **Empirical results**

### ***Model measurement***

The constructs' reliability and validity were vigorously measured through Dijkstra-Henseler's rho with Cronbach alpha coefficients as the researchers were motivated by the PLS-SEM application literature of scholarly works (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019). Since the values of the coefficients are all above 0.5 thresholds (see table 2 below), it indicates the strongest of the coefficients of the constructs as established by (Bagozzi & Yi, 1998; Hair et al., 2019). The adoption of the ADANCO 2.0 version was used in assessing the psychometric properties concerning the underlying items of the research constructs. Again, the composite reliability of constructs as shown in (table 2) recorded 0.7 and 0.8 minimum and maximum thresholds concerning Jöreskog's rho ( $\rho_c$ ) and Dijkstra-Henseler's rho ( $\rho_A$ ) which fulfills the basic requirements. With regards to Dijkstra-Henseler rho ( $\rho_A$ ), 0.8429 and 0.9221 were respectively recorded as coefficients constructs reliability and finally, a minimum threshold of 0.5 was recorded regarding the average variance extracted (AVE) which stands for convergent validity as revealed in table 2. As revealed in the literature of Bagozzi & Yi, (1998), all the factor loadings of the constructs were importantly assessed and loaded to their respective positions and also meant the requirement of 0.6 which shows how best the indicator is. In the below table, the coefficients of the respective constructs were all above 0.6 showing 0.6172 as the minimum and 0.9125 maximum loadings respectively. The details of the research constructs with their corresponding loadings are all shown in table 2 above. Also. The issue of multicollinearity was of great concern to the researchers and detected with

the help of common method variance (CMV) through the scale measurements of variance inflation factor (VIF). As per the works of (Amoah et al., 2021; Kwarteng et al., 2020; Amoah et al., 2021), CMV is not an issue since the VIF is less than five as against a maximum threshold of ten. The factor loadings of the research constructs are therefore shown in table 2 above.

*Table 2. Construct reliability, validity, and factor loadings*

Constructs/	VIF	Factor loadings	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho ( $\rho_A$ )	Jöreskog's rho ( $\rho_C$ )	Cronbach's alpha( $\alpha$ )	The Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Customer-Decision</b>			0.8429	0.8264	0.8246	0.5484
CBD1	1.4672	0.6172				
CBD2	1.8549	0.6407				
CBD3	2.1133	0.8311				
CBD4	1.9871	0.8433				
<b>Brand Sincerity (BST)</b>			0.9221	0.9406	0.9160	0.7984
BRS1	2.7101	0.8764				
BRS2	2.7726	0.8767				
BRS3	3.2790	0.9071				
BRS4	3.4406	0.9133				
<b>Brand Excitement</b>			0.9111	0.9323	0.9094	0.7338
BRE1	2.5282	0.8534				
BRE2	2.8751	0.8568				
BRE3	3.0648	0.8830				
BRE4	2.2757	0.8395				
BRE5	2.3764	0.8497				
<b>Brand Ruggedness</b>			0.8783	0.9051	0.8676	0.6581
RUG1	1.7499	0.7731				
RUG2	2.6045	0.8616				
RUG3	2.6001	0.8619				
RUG4	1.4772	0.6754				
RUG5	2.4746	0.8669				
<b>Brand Competence</b>			0.8685	0.9190	0.8674	0.7909
COM1	1.8881	0.8539				
COM2	2.8892	0.9125				
COM3	2.6036	0.9006				
<b>Brand Sophistication (BS)</b>			0.8519	0.9069	0.8462	0.7647
SOP1	1.8460	0.8439				
SOP2	2.2173	0.8870				
SOP3	2.1559	0.8917				

Source: Authors' processing from ADANCO 2.2.1 version.

Notwithstanding, Henseler et al., (2015) inspired the researchers to evaluate the existence of the discriminant validity of the latent variables through Fornell-Larcker (1981). As established by experts like (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015), all the values in the diagonal form (bold) exceed the minimum requirement of greater than 0.5 which reveals the

average variance extracted (AVE) of the measured constructs (see table 3 below). Fornell-Larcker's criterion of the discriminant validity shows the basic and stringent assumptions of the research constructs were established once each construct of AVE must be higher coefficients (both column and row position) over the other constructs.

*Table 3. Test of Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Larcker criterion*

Construct	Customer-Decision	Brand Sincerity	Brand Excitement	Brand Ruggedness	Brand Competence	Brand Sophistication
Cust. Decision	<b>0.5484</b>					
Brand Sincerity-BST	0.3825	<b>0.7984</b>				
Brand Excitement	0.3870	0.5246	<b>0.7338</b>			
Brand Ruggedness	0.3358	0.4112	0.4860	<b>0.6581</b>		
Brand Competence	0.4755	0.4956	0.4921	0.4734	<b>0.7909</b>	
Brand Sophistication (BS)	0.3619	0.4123	0.4281	0.4466	0.6150	<b>0.7647</b>

Source: Authors' processing from ADANCO 2.2.1 version.

### ***Structural modeling-path analysis***

The researchers saw the essence of the path analysis otherwise called the structural modeling in this current study which concerns the model fit. The significance of this analysis is to reveal the causal effect of the research constructs. Therefore, the findings of the study significantly show that Customer Decision (CD) has a potential effect or impact on the current research constructs such as Brand Sincerity (BST), Brand Excitement (BE), Brand ruggedness (BR), Brand Sophistication (BS) and Brand Competence (BC). Table 5 below therefore shows the regression coefficients of Beta ( $\beta$ ), significant values; T-values  $>1.96$  (or P-values  $< 0.05$ ) concerning the research model. Additionally, the predictive power which concerns the research model of the values determination of the regression model was also evaluated. Hence, the  $R^2$  of the predictive variable (Customer Decision) of 53 percent was established as seen in the table and figure below.

*Table 4. Hypothetical path coefficient sources*

Relationship	Beta ( $\beta$ )	Standard bootstrap results					Empirical remarks
		Mean value	SD error	t-value	Effect size (Cohen's $f^2$ )	P-value	
H1:BC-> CD	0.3737	0.3745	0.0768	4.8635	0.0863	0.0000	Accepted
H2:BR-> CD	0.0748	0.0742	0.0690	1.0828	0.0049	0.1396	Not Accepted
H3:BS-> CD	0.1590	0.1569	0.0580	2.7422	0.0209	0.2191	Not Accepted
H4:BE-> CD	0.1579	0.1595	0.0690	2.2866	0.0189	0.0112	Accepted
H5:BST-> CD	0.0532	0.0545	0.0686	0.7757	0.0021	0.0031	Accepted
Dependent Variable	Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ )			Adjusted $R^2$			

Customer Decision	0.5296	0.5238
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Source: Author's processing from ADANCO 2.2.1 version.

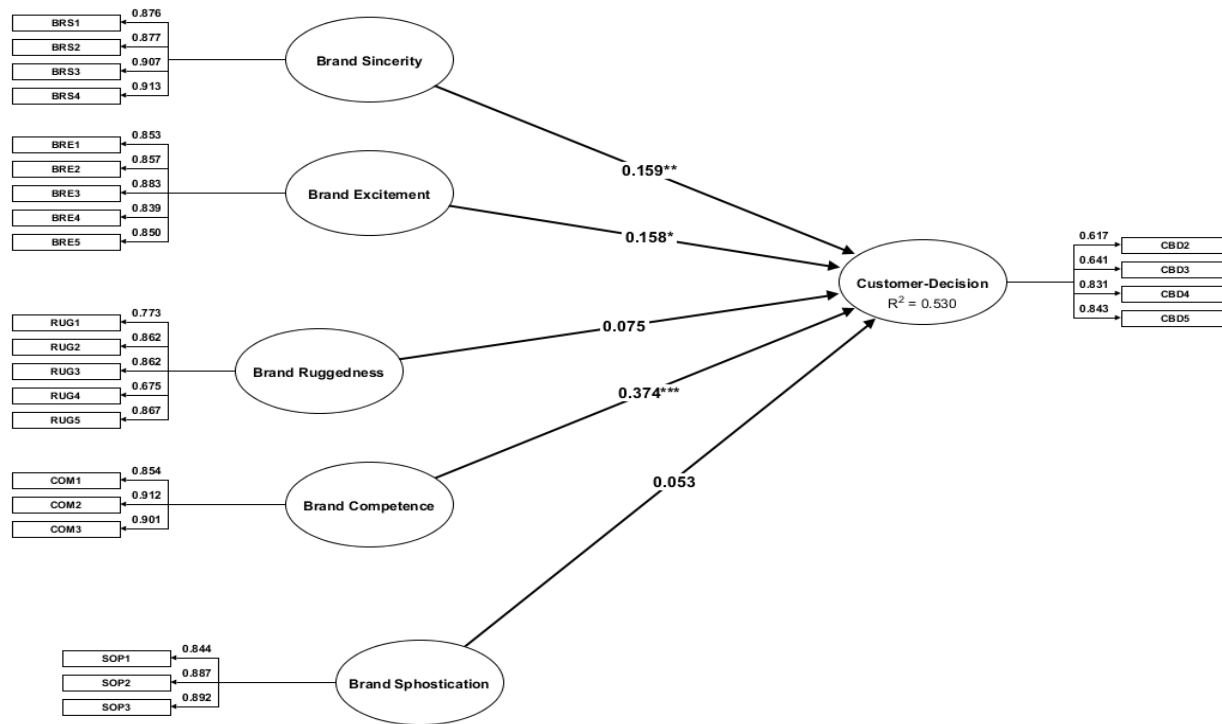


Figure 2. Estimated research model

Source: Authors' own representation.

## Discussion

The study considered five dimensions of brand personality particularly: brand excitement, brand sincerity, brand sophistication, brand ruggedness, and brand competence against consumer buying decisions regarding consumption of telecom products and services. Research on branding continues to be an important factor or issue in customers' decisions on products and services consumption. The discussion of this study's results particularly outlines the significant impact that branding contributes to customer decisions taking into consideration brand personality dimensions (brand sincerity, brand excitement, brand sophistication, brand competence, and brand ruggedness). The five proposed hypotheses were tested.

Concerning hypothesis (H1); *brand competence would have a positive relationship with customer buying decision of telecoms' products* established a positive correlation that supports the hypothesis with a p-value of (0.000) and ( $\beta$ ) of (0.3737). Thus, brand competence greatly influences the brand personality on consumer buying decisions. This study finding collaborates with the works of (Ghaderi & Agell, 2017; Karakaya & Barnes, 2010) where the results obtained induces that brand competence posits the products and services in the minds of the customers through brand familiarity level, product category, and brand age. Also, a similar study by McManus et al, (2021) centered on: "Do women customers love to talk about financial brands?" Empirical evidence on the mediated service responsiveness and brand sincerity in creating a positive word of mouth confirmed the findings of our results and revealed that brand competence performs a unique role in

defining the personality brand of consumers' consumption of products and services (Hultman et al., 2015). On this basis, quality, dependability, durability, and consistency must be the hallmark of brand competence since they facilitate or influences the behaviour of consumer buying decisions positively. Brand competence, therefore, has a significant effect on brand personality which may demonstrate distinctive aspects of Ghana telecom products and services.

Nevertheless, *H2: brand ruggedness would have a positive relationship with customer buying decision of telecoms' product* do not support the findings of the results. This means that the p-value obtained in response to H2 ( $\beta = 0.1396$ ) exceeds the normal estimation of 0.05 which makes the hypothesis not supported. However, in similar studies conducted by (Kim & Zhao, 2014): "Chinese Consumers' Brand Loyalty for Consumer Products: Importance of Brand Personality as a major antecedent of brand loyalty" where brand ruggedness was one of the treated constructs was accepted. Brand ruggedness serves as one of the dimensions of brand personality. Although, the current study's results were unaccepted as per the results obtained, however, (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Sung & Kim, 2010) findings confirmed that brand ruggedness is useful and has a positive influence or significant effect on brand personality. Hence, the brand ruggedness dimension of brand personality establishes a solid brand-consumer relationship that addresses the communication and advertisement of name-brand products in telecom products and services, since this feature of brand personality largely creates brand trust among consumers (see Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Additionally, brand sophistication as another dimension of brand personality was deduced as not having a significant impact or influence on the customer buying decision of telecom products and services based on ( $\beta = 0.1590$  and a p-value (0.2191) indicating that the findings of the results were not supported. This means that *H3: brand sophistication would have a positive relationship with customer buying decision of telecoms' product* was not confirmed. Relatedly, the findings of (Coulter & Coulter, 2002) established that brand sophistication relates positively to consumers' perceptions of brand knowledge and contributes to the satisfaction of consumers' needs and wants. Again, brand sophistication features such as refined, lavish, and pricey attract a specific group of customers to positively associate themselves with the level of brand personality on the customer buying decision of telecom products and services. Hence, the analyses of brand sophistication indicate that consumers of telecom products and services may have a sufficient level of trust in the sophistication of the selected brands.

Again, *H4: brand excitement would have a positive relationship with customer buying decision of telecoms' product* is supported by the current findings as also revealed by (Jin & Phua, 2015; Sung & Kim, 2010). Brand excitement with customer buying decisions on telecom products in this work had a p-value of less than ( $<0.0112$  and Beta ( $\beta$ )= 0.1579). It suggests that brand excitement contributes significantly to the decision of customers on telecom products and services. The features of brand excitement like vitality, uniqueness, and independence offer consumers exhilarating experiences and fulfill consumers' aspirations to be perceived as exciting.

Finally, the findings of the research empirically further supported that there is a positive relationship between brand sincerity and customer buying decision. Thus, the hypothesis (H5) is: *brand sincerity would have a positive relationship with customer buying decision of telecoms' products* ( $p = 0.0031$  and  $\beta = 0.52320$ ). This implies that the findings

agree with that of (McManus et al, 2021; Zaman & Anjam, 2021; Braunstein & Ross, 2010; Demirel & Erdogmus, 2016). Relatedly, the findings of the study posit that brand sincerity serves as a significant impact on customer decisions in terms of product/brand selection. It thus implies that brand sincerity establishes a warm-fuzziest relationship with customers, trust and belief, high morals and values, and hence contribute to the success of most salespersons (Perepelkin & Di Zhang, 2014; Maehle et al., 2011). Again, brand sincerity often induces most organizations' involvement in Corporate Social Responsibilities programs which translates into a sincere brand personality (Mandal et al., 2021).

### ***Research Implications and Conclusion***

Theoretically, this finding helps to discover a general and impartial view of brand personality research, and it reveals the most relevant contributions of brand concepts to the academic world in terms of diversified authors, context-specific, and applicable journal suitability. The study findings indicated that the concept under study has received considerable attention from scholars, yet its applicability among firms in developing countries could be intensified by researchers in the brand management field. Hence, the proposed framework catalyzes for scholars to reapply it in other jurisdictions.

Practically, this work espouses the relevance of brand personality as well as those dimensions that would be helpful to improve the effectiveness of the promotion of brands and products. The analyses offer a strategic marketing tool for brand practitioners, particularly, on where to leverage in terms of their advertisement strategy. This will help the firm to maximize sales through new customers and retention. The concept of brand personality offers brand managers a practical tool that allows them to interpret competitive brand issues in an easy way among rival brands/products. To add, brand personality also supports businesses in establishing a competitive strategy via positioning a brand/product, i.e. differentiation of product/brand among rival firms.

Conclusively, there have been important contributions of brand personality concepts to brand management literature, yet work is still required to enhance the marketing relevance of the concept. The study, therefore, analyses the impact of brand personality dimensions on customer buying decision-making regarding product selection in the telecom industry of Ghana. A non-randomized-quantitative method was deployed to accomplish the research goal(s). The study found that the brand personality dimensions such as brand sincerity, brand excitement, and brand competence play a significant role in informing the decision-makers (customers) in their quest to select their preferred product/brand among their service providers, thus, telecom firms. The study, hence, admonished marketers and brand practitioners to understand the current trend of brand expectations from the customer viewpoint so far as the brand personality dimension is concerned.

The research was limited to the following: To begin with, the sample size was small relative to the number of subscribers in Ghana. Hence, it would be interesting if the future study could consider a larger sample to test the reliability and the validity of the model. Secondly, the study is quantitative, as such, it only considered opinions from subscribers of the selected telecoms in Ghana. Therefore, the authors will welcome any future study that considers a mixed approach. Last but not the least, the study may have overlooked other dimensions of brand personality, we, therefore, call on interested scholars to discover other variables that are considered relevant to the theme under study.



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