The Effect of Smartphone Brand Personality on Purchase Intention: The Mediation Role of Brand Identification and the Moderating Role of Self-Construal

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Abstract
The booming market for smartphone devices in developing countries requires a better understanding of the factors that influence consumer's decisions. To bring light to the factors, this study explores the role of brand personality on consumer’s purchase intention. Further, the mediating role of brand identification and the moderating effect of self-construal in brand personality and purchase intention relationship using social-identification theory to explain the model. Through a convenient sampling technique, we tested our theoretical model with a sample of 285 smartphone consumers in Cameroon. The findings revealed that sincerity was positively related to purchase intention, whilst excitement did not. We further found that brand identification mediated excitement and purchase intention relationships and sincerity and purchase intention relationships. Additionally, self-construal moderated the relationship between excitement and purchase intention but did not moderate the sincerity and purchase intention relationship. Practical implications and future research directions of the findings have been discussed.

Keywords: brand personality, purchase intention, brand identification, self-construal, Smartphone market in Cameroon.

1. Introduction
The exponential development of the information communication technology (ICT) industry and its expansion in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) has experienced tremendous growth over the past decades. This has increasingly drawn the attention of scholars to investigate how and why consumer-brand relationships develop in the market world of smartphone products and services dealings (Park et al., 2013; Yeh et al., 2016). Smartphone product offers a new strategy for marketers to advance efficiency and effectiveness in the marketing world (Filiieri & Lin, 2017; Martins et al., 2018) to influence consumer’s purchase intention and behavior (Martins et al., 2018; Park et al., 2014). Purchase intention refers to consumer’s willingness or inclination to buy a specific product or service in the future. Consumers’ purchase intention can be aroused by factors that are subjective, internal responses (such as sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses induced by brand-related factors that form part of brand’s design and identity (Brakus et al., 2009). Thus, purchase intention is a special cue triggered by brand related attributes, that is, purchase intention strongly rely on factors embedded in brands (Iglesias et al., 2011).

One prominent concept for brand uniqueness and experience, which significantly influence customers’ evaluation and decision process in the market domain is brand personality (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality is where a brand or product is frequently linked to a person’s characteristics (Aaker, 1997). A positive brand personality may influence consumer’s decisions towards purchase intentions by either increasing their preference or usage (Sirgy, 1982), fostering comfort and confidence in the minds of consumers (Aaker & Biel, 1993) and enhancing levels of loyalty and trust (Fournier, 1998; Keller, 1993, 2003). Because consumers choose brands that are congruent to their personality, brand personality has become one of the most market
concerns (Dick et al., 1990). Marketing practitioners have strived hard to build a clear and unique brand personality as a key factor in determining consumer’s choice, usage and intention to purchase (Foroudi et al., 2018; Keller, 1993).

It is worth noting that, studies that examine the effects of brand personality on consumer’s purchase intention have concentrated in Western countries. In effect, considerable research in this area exists in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially Cameroon. Cameroon, therefore, offers an intriguing and understudied setting for exploring brand personality and consumer’s purchase intention, where consumers are cultural oriented and smartphone markets are emerging. Therefore, given the emerging smartphone market and cultural values, this study examines the effect of brand personality on consumer purchase intention. Also, employs social-identification theory to explicate the mediating role of brand identification and moderating role of self-construal. This study makes a significant contribution to the literature on purchase intention in emerging economies. The primary empirical contribution of this study is to add to the marketing literature on sub-Saharan Africa in that it is one of the few attempts to investigate the relationship between brand personality and purchase intention, the mediating role of brand identification and moderating role of self-construal which can advance the insight on managers for market strategies as well as scholars to further investigate this issue.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Brand Personality and Purchase Intention

Consumers are pretty familiar with characteristics of smartphones that are attributed to human nature (i.e., brand personality). Brand personality is defined as human characteristics associated with a specific product (Aaker, 1997). These characteristics include; excitement, sophistication, sincerity, competence, gentle and assertiveness. Maehle & Shneor (2010) argue that these characteristics bring light to brands in the market world, therefore companies that aspire to build a strong brand personality have to take into consideration those traits that are important to consumers and strong in merchandising (Park et al., 2014). Marketing literature demonstrates that brand personality plays a critical role in consumer’s attitudes and behavior. However, studies of such as nature have concentrated in the Western countries with little known in sub-Saharan African countries. Research demonstrates that brand personality influences consumers’ feelings, and preferences and shape their decision process (Mao et al., 2020). Additionally, brand personality allows a consumer to represent him or herself as an ideal self or aspect that is most suitable for using brands (Mao et al., 2020; Sundar & Noseworthy, 2016).

This study argues that when brand personality reflects a consumer’s desire, the consumer’s intention and loyalty to buying brand increases. On the one hand, sincerity (i.e., honesty, real, wholesome and original) of the brand creates a good image, and exhibit consistency, trustworthiness and dependable behavior in the world market (Aaker et al., 2004; Heding et al., 2020). Brand sincerity strengthens the image formed by consumers through an emotional and cognitive connection, thereby describing a brand with special meaning and connotations (Aaker et al., 2004). According to Khani et al. (2013), brand personality traits (i.e., sincere) strongly influence consumers in buying mobile phones. Similarly, Sundar & Noseworthy (2016) found that sincere brand muses consumers which influences their choice in the marketplace. On the other hand, brand excitement is the attractiveness and sophistication of products that elicit pleasurable feelings to (Zhang et al., 2021). Brand excitement generates a connection between brands and consumers through emotion, sophistication and enthusiasm. Wang et al. (2019) demonstrate that brands that have entertainment features attract consumers which in turn influence their decision on purchasing the product. Brand personality (i.e., excitement) greatly impacts consumers’ purchase intention (Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015; Zhang et al., 2021). For instance, Muya's (2011) study on the effects of brand personality on GlaxoSmithKline products (toothpaste) in Nairobi, Kenya found that brand personality dimension, thus, excitement affects consumers’ decision on purchasing toothpaste products. It is conceivable that the sincerity and excitement dimension of brand personality arouse consumer emotions and affection towards a product which may influence their purchase intention towards smartphones. Based on the above literature, the study hypothesizes that:

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H1a: Sincerity has a positive association with consumers’ purchase intention.
H1b: Excitement has a positive association with consumers’ purchase intention.

2.2 Social-Identification Theory

The idea of brand identification is derived from social identity theory and consumer-company identification (Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identification theory is an individual’s definition of their own identities regarding social groups and such identifications work to protect and bolster self-identification (Tajfel, 1978). According to social identity theory, joining a particular social group tends to strengthen people's sense of self and self-worth (Tajfel, 1978). Bhattacharya & Sen (2003) accentuated that client brand identification is either the degree to which the customer perceives his or her self-image as overlapping with the brand's image or the psychological condition of recognizing, feeling, and valuing one's belongingness to a brand. Through socially recognized relationships, consumers develop their sense of identity and express themselves (Keh & Xie, 2009). Therefore, if the brand identification is congruent with an individual’s self-concept, he will choose to stay in the group. And if the group does not meet these requirements, the consumer will dissociate himself from the group (Lam et al., 2013; Rubio et al., 2015).

2.3 The Mediating Role of Brand Identification

According to social identification theory (Tajfel, 1978), individuals have preferences for others or objects who/that are similar to themselves and have biases against individuals who are dissimilar to themselves. Consumer satisfies his or her demands for social identity and self-identification during the brand identification process. That is, consumers, patronize products that possess characteristics found in them. The brand with a stronger sense of identity has an advantage in influencing the attitudes and intentions of consumers. Therefore, this study argues that brand identification may mediate the relationship between brand personality and purchase intention.

Consumers tend to identify themselves with a particular smartphone that appears with human characteristics. According to (Berrozpe et al., 2018), when a brand produces a sense of pleasure, it influences consumers’ experience and repertoire, which in turn affects the affective and behavioral responses. Brand sincerity and excitement offer a consumer an opportunity to evaluate and identify a product according to his or her symbolic, relational, cultural and historic representations (Berrozpe et al., 2017; So et al., 2017). As a matter of fact, brand identification fulfils the needs for social identification and self-identification (Brewer, 1991). Research demonstrates that brand personality has a strong influence on brand identification (Carlson et al., 2009; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010). For instance, Polyorat (2011) argues that brand personality dimensions such as sincerity and competence for university brands have a significant influence on brand identification. Similarly, Aaker (1997) demonstrates that among the five dimensions of brand personality scales, sincerity and excitement explain the largest variance in brand personality.

Brand identification refers to one’s self-concept such as one’s abilities, interests, and social identity in reflection with group classifications (So et al., 2013). Consumer perceives a brand that holds personal or social acceptable characteristics as a perfect fit or match (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). This positive evaluation influences consumers’ purchase intention towards smartphones (Berrozpe et al., 2017; Martins et al., 2018). Research demonstrates that consumer brand identification influences satisfaction (Nam et al., 2011), commitment (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2016), loyalty (So et al., 2013), purchase intention (Park et al., 2014), positive word of mouth (Tuškej et al., 2013), and willingness to pay more (Akturan & Bozbay, 2018). According to social identification theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 2004), when consumers strongly identify brands through evaluations, they are more likely to incline to purchase intention (McGowan et al., 2017). It is conceivable that consumers form brand identification through cognitive, emotional and social experiences from brand personality, which may influence purchase intention (Keller, 1993). That is brand sincerity and excitement impact brand identification, which in turn influences purchase intention. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:
H2a: Brand sincerity has a positive influence on purchase intention through the mediating role of brand identification

H2b: Brand excitement has a positive influence on purchase intention through the mediating role of brand identification

2.4 The Moderating Effect of Self-Construal

Self-construal is one of the most important concepts studied in marketing research. Self-construal is broadly defined as “how individuals define and make meaning of the self” (Cross et al., 2011, p. 143). In other words, self-construal, thus, the presentation of oneself in public (Cross et al., 2011) has been conceptualized into two namely; independent and interdependent (Markus et al., 1991). Considering the strong influence of culture on individual development and actions, this present study argues that the interdependent self-construal moderates the relationship between brand personality and purchase intention.

Interdependent self-construal refers to socially embeddedness, with “a sense that the self and others are intertwined” (Singelis, 1994, p. 581). A consumer who is inclined to interdependent self-construal perceives him/herself as a member of a group, tries to gain social support, and upholds one’s social image (Markus et al., 1991). Previous research demonstrates that self-construal guides consumer preferences (Das & Roy, 2019). The authors, thus, emphasize that self-construal influences individual information processing styles toward purchase decisions. Highly interdependent self-construal consumers hold an interpretation of self as an association with society which defines their emotions and feeling towards a product (Kim & Johnson, 2014). Recent evidence shows that when brand sincerity and excitement reflect consumers’ social status they are more likely to purchase the product (Jebarajakirthy & Das, 2020). Joe et al. (2021) and Zhang et al. (2021) found that self-construal amplifies the relationship between brand excitement and consumers’ decision toward purchase intention. Additionally, Jäger & Weber (2020) demonstrate that high self-construal increases brand credibility to impact purchase intention. It is worth noting that, when consumers’ social status consumption (i.e., interdependent self-construal) is highly identified, brand sincerity and excitement greatly impact purchase intention. Given the reasoning put forward, this study hypothesizes that:

H3a: Consumer self-construal moderates the relationship between brand excitement and purchase intention.

H3b: Consumer self-construal moderates the relationship between brand sincerity and purchase intention.

Figure 1: conceptual framework
3. Method
3.1 Study context

Cameroon, had an estimated population of 27.57 million in January 2022, with 26.6 million households covered by mobile connections, representing a connectivity penetration rate of around 36.5% between 2020 and 2022 (Kemp, 2022). Today, the shipment of foreign and Chinese smartphones over Cameroon has experienced positive growth in terms of market size, significantly affecting the lifestyle of Cameroonian consumers; becoming more inclined toward personal development and self-expression. Thus, with the diversity of foreign and Chinese Smartphones in Cameroon such as Samsung occupying 19.78% of the market share; followed by Apple at 13.97%, Xiaomi at 3.76%, Huawei 5.74% etc., (Statcounter, 2022), the number of households equipped with Smartphone also increased from 43% to 72.2% in the second half of 2016 and 44% by 2021 (Njodze & Fobang, 2019). As Cameroonians day in day out consumes smartphones, the market tends to be emerging across the nation, and has significantly changed Cameroonian consumers’ lifestyles, which are increasingly oriented toward self-actualization and self-expression in purchase intention. Thus, smartphones have changed how individuals interact with one another and are now almost indispensable in both personal and professional lives (Derks et al., 2016). The exponential proliferation of smartphones has attracted academic interest to understand the driving forces behind smartphone purchase intention (Park et al., 2013; Yeh et al., 2016). Therefore, factors that influence Cameroonians’ purchase intention is an intriguing phenomenon to research.

3.2 Participants and Procedure

The present study used a cross-section self-reported dataset collected from smartphone consumers in Cameroon. To achieve the research goal, this paper conveniently recruited participants through an online structured questionnaire developed using Google Forms from November 2021 to January 2022. The questionnaire link was sent to friends, classmates, and relatives through WhatsApp and Facebook to forward to anybody of reach on their consent. In addition, to reward participants after the process, the researcher sends a symbolic communication credit transfer as a gift to the respondent who took part in the questionnaire. A final sample of 285 used for the study comprised 169(59.3%) males and 116(40.7%) females. The majority of the participants are 34 years and below 196(68.8%), college students or workers 175(61.4%), use Samsung or Apple phones 167(58.6%) and are willing to purchase smartphone 216(75.8%).

3.3 Measures

**Brand personality:** Brand personality was measured with Aaker’s (1997) scale. This present study used two sub-dimensions namely; sincerity-consisting of four items (e.g., Down to earth), and excitement-comprising five items (e.g., Cheerful). The two subscales were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= not at all to 7= extremely. The scale has been found reliable and value at (Kiriri, 2019, sincerity= .88 & excitement= .75)

**Brand identification:** Brand identification was adapted and measured with Berrozpe et al. (2018) scale. Five (5) items (e.g., When someone speaks well about my phone brand, I feel as if they were speaking well of me) were used to measure brand identification on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1= disagree to 5= agree. This study found the scale reliable at α=. 91 see Table 2.

**Purchasing intention:** The purchase intention scale developed by (Dodds et al., 1991) was adapted. The scale consists of 5 items (e.g., The probability I would consider buying this ....... brand is high). The scale was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. The scale has been found reliable at α=. .88 see Table 2.

**Self-construal:** Self-construal was assessed using an interdependent subscale of self-construal developed by Singelis (1994). The interdependent sub-construct consists of 12 items (e.g., I have respect for authority figures with whom I interact). Consumers responded on a 7-point Likert type scale from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. The scale has been found reliable (Grace & Cramer, 2003, α= .72).

**Covariate:** Consumers sociodemographic was examined as control variable in the model because of their impact on decision towards (ref) These variables include: gender (1=Male & 2=Female), age (1= ≤21, 2=22-35, 3= 36-50 & 4=51 and above), social status (1= High school and lower, 2=College student3= Worker, 4=...
Businessman and 5= Other), phone type (1= Samsung, 2= Apple, 3= VIVO, 4= Xiaomi, 5= Huawei, 6= OPPO and 7= Other smartphone), and willingness to purchase (1= Yes and 2= No) See Table 1 for detailed participants’ information.

3.4 Statistical analysis
To achieve the aims of this study, several analyses were conducted. First, the measurement model was conducted utilizing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the reliability and validity as well as the partial correlation matrix of the constructs. Second, a structural equation model estimating maximum likelihood was conducted to test the direct and indirect relationships between brand personality and purchase intention. Last, moderating mechanism was estimated to examine the interaction effect of self-construal in the brand personality and purchase intention link. All analyses were conducted utilizing IBM AMOS version 24.

Table 1: Participants’ sociodemographic statistics (N=285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>169 (59.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>116 (40.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;21 years</td>
<td>14 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 34 years</td>
<td>182 (63.9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 – 49 years</td>
<td>70 (24.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 65 years</td>
<td>14 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65 years</td>
<td>5 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school and lower</td>
<td>40 (14.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>College student</td>
<td>86 (30.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>89 (31.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>44 (15.4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26 (9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung</td>
<td>64 (22.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>103 (36.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVO</td>
<td>11 (3.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiaomi</td>
<td>18 (6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huawei</td>
<td>25 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPPO</td>
<td>19 (6.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other smartphones</td>
<td>45 (15.8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willingness to Purchase</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>216 (75.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>69 (24.2%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Results
4.1 Measurement Model

The five constructs were validated with CFA. The item’s co-variance patterns were examined for structural modelling. The matrix produced was examined and assessed to check the consistency through the goodness of fit for model fit (Hair et al., 2019). Initial results of the analysis indicated that the model fit could be improved (Chi-square=792.879, df=271, p-value=0.000, RMSEA=.08). The observed fit for the adjusted model was fairly accepted($\chi^2 = [444.33]$, df=254, $p=.000$, $\chi^2/df=1.75$), NFI=.93, SRMR=.04, CFI/TLI=.97/.96, RMSEA=.06). The model exceeded the normally accepted criteria of .96 for CFI (Hair et al., 2019), and is within the criteria of RMSEA≤.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and approached the CFI=.97 guideline of ≥.90 (Hair et al., 2019). Overall, the model has a good fit for the number of parameters showing that the measurement model fitted the data (Hair et al., 2019).
Further, the validity and reliability of the construct variables’ reliability assessment were examined. The predictive strength and internal consistency within the measurement items were examined for convergent validity, discriminant validity, composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha. Average Variance Extracted (AVEs) with (.57 ≤ AVEs ≤ .70), were greater than MSVs (.18 ≤ MSVs ≤ .51), and the square roots of AVEs (.75 ≤√AVEs ≤ .84). MSVs and ASVs were computed, examined and compared to assess convergent and discriminant validity. The observed AVE values were above .50 and the diagonal estimates for the variable correlations were greater than the correlation coefficients among inter-factors. The MSV and ASV estimates were less than the AVE values, indicating the constructs’ good discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). Again, the composite reliability (CR) estimates (.87 ≤ CR ≤ .92), and Chronbach’s alpha ratios ranged from .88 to .91, indicating good internal reliability for all the constructs (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics, reliability and validity and partial correlation matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CR(α)</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>MSV</th>
<th>MaxR(H)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>SOS</th>
<th>PH</th>
<th>Pur</th>
<th>Sincere</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>Excite</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Self-cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.87(0.88)</td>
<td>0.631</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.904</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>0.794</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.46</td>
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<td>SOS</td>
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<td>PH</td>
<td>.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>0.89(0.89)</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.72***</td>
<td>0.51***</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>.90(0.88)</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Excite</td>
<td>0.92(0.91)</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>0.922</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>0.45***</td>
<td>0.62***</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-constr</td>
<td>0.91(0.91)</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>0.42***</td>
<td>0.38***</td>
<td>0.35***</td>
<td>0.754</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: Excite= brand excitement; Sincere= brand sincerity; Brand= brand identification; PI= purchase intention; Self-cons= self-construal; SOS= social status; PH= phone type, Pur= willingness to purchase; CR= composite reliability; (α)= Cronbach’s alpha; AVE= average variance explained; MSV= maximum shared variance; and MaxR(H)= maximum reliability.

*p < .050, **p < .010, and ***p < .001.

4.2 Testing hypotheses
4.3 Mediation analysis

IBM AMOS version 24 (Arbuckle, 2019), and structural equation modelling (SEM) were used to test the hypotheses. The mediation model was performed to test the indirect effect of excitement and sincerity on consumers purchase intention through brand, utilizing a biased-corrected bootstrapped method with a 95% confidence interval (CI). The model fitted to the data (X² = 251.187, df = 173, X²/df = 1.45, NFI = .92, CFI/TLI = .98/.97, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04). First, the direct associations were examined revealing that sincerity (b= .26, SE= .12, p < .05), and brand identification (b= .26, SE= .10, p < .05) had significant association with purchase intention, but excitement had nonsignificant...
association with purchase intention (b= .16, SE= .11, p > .05). Again, excitement had significant positive
association with brand identification (b= .78, SE= .08, p < .05), but sincerity was not significant with brand
identification (b= .14, SE= .10, p > .05). The model revealed 43% variability on brand identification and 36%
variability on purchase intention see Figure 2.

Further, the indirect effect of excitement and sincerity on consumers purchase intention through brand
identification revealed a significant positive effect of excitement on purchase intention (b= .18, SE= .07, 95%
[.078, .300]) and sincere on purchase intention (b= .05, SE= .03, 95% [.002, .137]) through brand identification.
The mediation revealed that brand identification fully mediates the relationship between excitement and
purchase intention whilst partially mediating the relationship between sincerity and purchase intention.

Table 3: Indirect effect of excitement and sincerity on purchase intention, via brand identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Brand Identification Standardized estimates (SE)</th>
<th>Purchase Intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>-.09(11)</td>
<td>.09(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.13*(.08)</td>
<td>.06(.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social status</td>
<td>-.06(.05)</td>
<td>.09(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone type</td>
<td>.08(.03)</td>
<td>.08(.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Purchase</td>
<td>-.02(13)</td>
<td>.03(.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Excitement</td>
<td>.78***(.08)</td>
<td>.16(.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand sincerity</td>
<td>.14(.10)</td>
<td>.26**(12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brand identification &.26**(10)
R² .43 .36

Indirect paths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect paths</th>
<th>Unstandardized (SE)</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand excitement --&gt; Brand identification --&gt; Purchase intention</td>
<td>.18**(07)</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand sincerity --&gt; Brand identification --&gt; Purchase intention</td>
<td>.05*(03)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SE= standard error; CI= confidence interval
*p < .050, **p < .010, and ***p < .001.

4.4 Moderation Analysis
Moderation analysis was examined by introducing self-construal into the direct relationship between excitement, sincerity and purchase intention. The model provided a fit to the data (X² = 78.98, df = 25, X²/df = 3.16, NFI = .91, CFI/TLI = .96/.95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06). The results revealed a significant interaction effect of self-construal and excitement on purchase intention (b = .13, SE = .05, p < .05), but interaction effect of self-construal and sincerity on purchase intention was not significant (b = .04, SE = .03, p > .05). This indicates that, there is a strong positive relation between excitement and purchase intention among people with high self-construal (+1 SD above the mean) than those with low self-construal (-1 SD below the mean).

Figure 3: self-construal strengthens the positive relationship between excitement and Purchase Intention

**Table 4: Moderation affect results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Standardized estimates (SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct effects Purchase Intention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>.09(.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.01(.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social status</td>
<td>.09(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone type</td>
<td>.05(.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to purchase</td>
<td>.04(.15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5. Discussion

5.1 Result Summary

In an emerging market, brand personality has become a key determinant of what makes a product unique and identifiable in global brands, especially smartphones. Prior literature on brand personality has provided valuable findings on its effects on consumer purchase intention (Aaker et al., 2004; Mao et al., 2020; Sundar & Noseworthy, 2016). However, there is scant literature about the effects of brand personality on purchase intention in emerging economies, especially Sub-Saharan African countries. Given the growing and evolving nature of the smartphone market in Sub-Saharan African countries. This study aims to explore the effect of brand personality on consumer purchase intention, the mediating role of brand identification and the moderating role of self-construal using social-identification theory to explicate the mediation mechanism.

As predicted, the findings of this study revealed that brand sincerity significantly predicted consumers’ purchase intention supporting H1. This result is consistent with the findings of (Wang & Yang, 2008). This means that the more smartphones hold value-added attributes such as vivacious, successful and reliability the more consumers consider them to be righteous, valuable and delightful to be purchased(Akkaya, 2021).

Again, the results indicated that H2a and H2b were supported. That is, brand identification mediates brand personality (i.e., sincerity and excitement) and purchase intention. This implies that consumers are more concerned about the identity of a brand which sparks cognitive and affective processes among consumers which further enhances the intention to purchase smartphones (Martins et al., 2018; So et al., 2017). Consumers’ readiness to experience and purchase smartphones originate from how familiar and knowledgeable ones has gain from self or social experience (Keller, 1993). Specifically, honesty, reliability, wholesomeness and excitement of a product drive and influence consumer purchase intention (Park et al., 2014) through an emotional and cognitive connection that gives special meaning and connotationsto self or social groups.

Last, self-construal significantly moderated the relationship between excitement and purchase intention supporting H3b. This result affirms the findings of previous literature (Joe et al., 2021; Kim & Johnson, 2014). That is consumers with high interdependent self-construal value sense of connectedness with others and thus, may prioritizesocial values and status consumption which strongly influence smartphone purchase intention (Kim & Johnson, 2014; Markus et al., 1991).

5.2 Theoretical implication

This present study offers several theoretical contributions in many ways. First, these findings add to the literature on the influencing factors of purchase intention in emerging economies where the smartphones business is gradually booming (GSMA, 2020). In particular, this study demonstrates that, the influencing factors of purchase intention in emerging economies might not be different from the brand personality dimensions demonstrated in literature studied in Western settings (Aaker et al., 2004; Sundar & Noseworthy, 2016). Such that brand personality forms a crucial determiner of consumer’s purchase intention. Though the extent to which these factors are stronger and weaker than those found in Western settings is unexplored, we suggest that could be an important direction for future research.

Second, the significant mediating role of brand identification in brand personality (i.e., sincerity and excitement) and purchase intention relationship suggests that the personality characteristics brand possesses can reflect on the consumer’s self or social values and feelings they hold (McGowan et al., 2017). This result corroborates the previous research that brand personality holds the capacity to strengthen consumer’s
knowledge (cognitive) and emotional bond towards a product which in turn leads to purchase intention (Keh & Xie, 2009; Keller, 1993). Interestingly, examining the intervening role of brand identification in brand personality and purchase intention link. The findings of this study provide support for the social identity theory that postulates that individuals classify themselves and others into social groups (H. Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Cognitive and emotional social affect consumer’s product-related, that is, thoughts and actions are transferred from the consumer’s personal and social identity (Reed et al., 2012). Specifically, on the one hand, brand sincerity offers consumers unique features to undergo value perception and evaluations (i.e., brand identification), which in turn predicts purchase intention (McGowan et al., 2017). On the other hand, brand excitement tends to trigger socially acceptable value through cognitive and affective which in turn influence consumers’ purchase intention.

Last, the significant moderating role of self-construal in excitement and purchase intention link was achieved. This supports the broad that self-construal guides preferences (Das & Roy, 2019), that is, consumers’ decision making process is influenced by families, friends, and society at large towards the intention to purchase a smartphones.

5.3 Practical Implications
Besides the theoretical contributions, this present study puts forward several valuable practical implications for smartphone companies, managers and marketers. First, consumers are keen on understanding the nature of a product can fair in the market world. That is, consumers easily identify smartphone that has generally been associated with human characteristics (i.e., brand personality) (Aaker, 1997). Also, Cameroon consumers enter in market to search for smartphones that are reliable, attractive and have a utilitarian purpose (i.e., can be used for entertainment activities). The brand managers and companies should invest more money into crafting and designing features of the product (smartphone) in such a way that it will appear attractive, and distinctive and win the hearts of consumers (Kim et al., 2001). Again, managers should consider the utilitarian value (e.g., hedonic features) when planning for the extension of the smartphone so that it might influence consumers’ purchase intentions (Matthews et al., 2014).
Secondly, given that identification contributes to the purchase intention of the smartphone, managers and producers should identify and understand consumer’s needs and preferences to provide brands that reflect consumer’s attitudes, cultures, subjective norms, behavioral control and fit status consumption (Jebarajakirthy & Das, 2020; Markus et al., 1991). Again, marketers should roll out marketing programs or strategies that best fit consumers’ values and cultures to engender massive engagement or patronage of the brand. Also, marketers must communicate their brand more effectively to consumers. That is, marketers should use the brand personality traits to advertise their product in the market, highlight the strength and positive aspects of their products (i.e., sincerity and excitement dimension) and eliminate the negative aspects of their products to get a strong commitment from consumers (Martins et al., 2018; Park et al., 2014). Last, since the emerging market needs more attention and resources, more money should be invested in promotional activities to influence consumers’ purchase intention.

5.4 Limitations and Directions for Future Studies
Though this current study provides insightful theoretical and practical implications for marketing practitioners, there are some limitations. First, the study could not cover all the dimensions of brand personality but concentrated on sincerity and excitement to predict purchase intention. However, the other dimensions (such as competence, ruggedness and others) could be equally important in predicting consumer purchase intention. This study recommends that future research could highlight all the dimensions of brand personality and examine which factor most influences consumers’ purchase intention in emerging economies. Second, the cross-sectional design limits this study to make causal inferences from the study findings. Accordingly, a quality study may offer an in-depth understanding of “why” and “how” brand personality explains the underlying processes of intention to purchase smartphones. Consumers may learn to associate the visual appearance of the leading brand with the benefits it provides and then generalize those benefits to similar-looking products. Also, a cross-cultural
study of brand personality structure may give scholars a more complete insight into the unique values of respective cultures between and among some developing countries and cultures. Last, the sample size was relatively small, since the study sampled students, employees, entrepreneurs and other groups of people in the society. Additionally, the distribution of 285 data to respondents online was not evenly distributed throughout Cameroon.

Reference

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