

**BRAND PERSONALITY AND MARKET COMPETITIVENESS OF MOBILE
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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between brand personality and market competitiveness. The study adopted a correlational research design. Brand personality is the predictor variable, while market competitiveness which was proxied by cost advantage, responsiveness and service quality was the criterion variable. The population of the study consisted 4 major mobile telecommunication companies. The study sample was the same as the population. The study administered 8 copies of structured questionnaire to top management staff of each of mobile telecommunication companies. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test hypotheses relying of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23.0. The study found the existence of significant relationship between brand personality and market competitiveness of mobile telecommunication in Rivers State. The study therefore concluded that brand personality significantly relates to market competitiveness (cost advantage, responsiveness and service quality) of mobile telecommunication in Rivers State; and recommends that managers of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State should capitalize on brand personality such as brand sincerity and brand ruggedness in their pursuit of market competitiveness.

Keywords: Brand personality, market competitiveness, cost advantage, responsiveness, service quality**Introduction**

Organizations around the world are facing turbulence occasioned by globalization, advances in technology and pressure from the competition. Adha and Utami (2021) aver that the convergence of forces such as new market entrants, escalating pace of technological change and product similarity are main causes of competition in today's business-scape.

The motivation to overcome the challenge of product similarity has challenged managers to understand the role of branding in market competitiveness (Hinds & Joinson, 2019). Brands are essential to sustained business growth and stability. Strong brands enable organization introduce new products easily and achieve market presence; as well as establish the uniqueness of their products (Harcourt & Nwokah, 2020).

There is a widely held belief that brands like humans, have personalities that set them apart; but that this personality must be managed, else it will assume a life of its own (Bagozzi et al., 2021). Consumers prefer brands that have strong, favourable brand personalities. Industry experts assert that brand personality help firms achieve product differentiation and influence consumer judgment and achieve brand-equity-related benefits (Baştuğ et al., 2020).

However, the explicit benefits of brand personality are yet to be fully understood as marketing practitioners and theorists are yet fully illuminate the contributions of brand personality to marketing results. For the most part, consumer research has shown little evidence of the efficacy of brand personality, instead on other branding issues such as brand equity and brand extension have attracted more attention (Chang & Kwon, 2022).

Rajagopal (2008) and Chiang and Yang (2018) states that brand personality ignite marketing performance by reducing perceived risks, increasing consumer confidence, creating an atmosphere for repeat purchase, and strengthen consumer's social identity. Nevertheless, there is

little empirical validation of this position, especially in the context of mobile telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Astono et al. (2021) Kaisupy (2017), Mochammad (2012) and Agil (2011) highlight the pivotal role of brand personality to marketing success. However, their studies were not focused to exploring the relationship between brand personality and market competitiveness within mobile telecommunication in Rivers State, Nigeria. Therefore, the present study joined the discourse on brand personality by probing its nexus with market competitiveness of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State. Fig 1 provides a conceptual framework for the study.

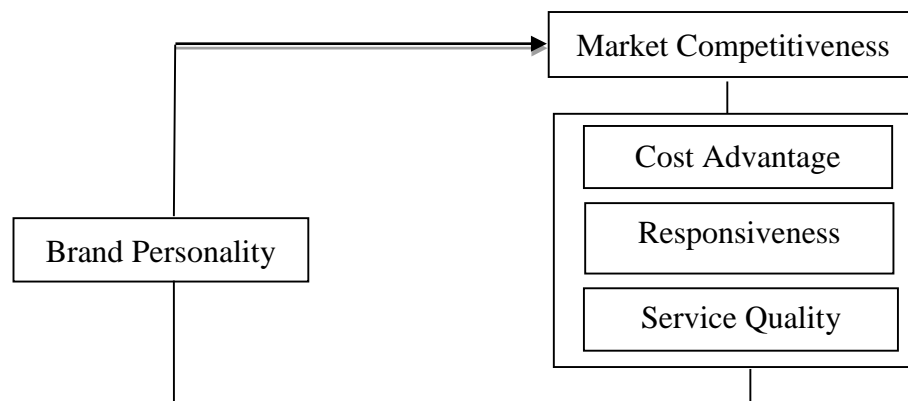


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework of relationship between brand personality and market competitiveness.

Source: Measures of market competitiveness was sourced from:

Rizkya, I., Hidayati, J., Syahputri, K., Sari, R. M., Siregar, I. Siregar, K. & Utaminingrum, J. (2019). Measurement of market competitiveness in manufacturing. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1230(69), 1-8 (Measures).

Literature Review

Theoretical Underpinning: Building Theory

Building theory contends that a brand goes beyond physical attributes and appearance. To include benefits, which though intangible, but are important to consumers (De Chernatony et al., 1998, as cited in Jones & Slater, 2003). A brand may have added value which differentiate a firm and its products from competitors and theirs (De Chernatony & MacDonald, 2003).

Jones and Slater (2003) used building theory to sum up these added values as those that develop from experiences of the brand; those that arise as a result of usage of the brand, which could be as a result of consumers association with the brand; those that arise from an assumption that the brand is powerful; and those that arise from the appearance of the brand, like packaging.

The implication of building theory to our study is that since customers are sensitive and curious about product capability in meeting their expectation, mobile telecommunication companies' can build their brands in a way that customers can perceive them as added value, hence achieve improved market competitiveness.

Concept of Brand Personality

Like people, brands acquire personalities that differentiate them in the minds of consumers and shape their preferences. Brand personality is thus a metaphor used to show relationship between brands and customers (Aaker 1997). Su and Reynolds (2017) defines brand personality as a set of qualities similar to those of humans that become associated with a brand. To Lee and Kang (2013), brand personality refers to human traits attributed to brands.

When a brand is expressed in terms of human traits, it is known as brand personality. It could relate to age, gender, socioeconomic status and psychographic, emotional characteristics. Consumers when making purchase decisions, look at how a brand behaves (Wang et al., 2012). Just as individuals have personal make-up with traits, brands too have characteristics associated with them.

Market Competitiveness

Market competitiveness refers to the ability of a company to offer products that are more appealing to customers than those of its competitors. Understanding market competitiveness is crucial for businesses to thrive in a competitive market. However, understanding market competitiveness requires a deep understanding of the market, including demand and supply of products offered by the company and its competitors. Thus, we adopt cost advantage, market responsiveness and service quality, as measures of market competitiveness.

According to Marangu et al. (2017), cost advantage is a planned positive approach to reduction expenditure. It implies the reduction in unit cost of goods or services without impairing suitability for the use intended. The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), London define cost advantage as the achievement of real and permanent reduction in the unit cost of goods manufactured or services rendered without damaging the ability of the product to serve the purpose for which it was intended.

Responsiveness is the willingness to provide prompt services in line with market demands (Virgianne et al., 2019). Market responsiveness is defined in this study as an organizational competency that allows an organization to react quickly to changing market demands. Responsive firms are able to adapt quickly to changing environmental conditions (Randall et al., 2003), and rapid adaptation can be critical when those conditions reflect tremendous ambiguity and uncertainty, as is often the case with the market contexts of pioneers.

Service quality is customers' assessment of the overall excellence of the service they receive and the extent to which it meets their expectations or provides satisfaction (Ateke & Amangala, 2021). The provision of superior service through adequate focus on customer is one of the key factors that enable firms gain lasting competitive advantage (Saeed et al., 2014). Service quality is antecedent to customer satisfaction (Saleem & Raja, 2014). According to Kotler and Keller (2016), service quality arises from the needs of a consumer which then leads to a sense of satisfaction related to the pleasant feeling or perception of the service obtained.

Brand Personality and Market Competitiveness

Empirical studies indicate that brand personality can bring about marketing performance. Cowan and Kostyk (2023) states that the personality of luxury brand influence consumers' evaluation of digital interaction. Chang et al. (2022) established that brand personality improve tourists' satisfaction and commitment in terms of tourism affective commitment and tourism normative commitment.

Makatita et al. (2022) analyzed impact of reputation, equity and brand competence on hand-phone brand loyalty in Ambon city. The result showed that reputation, equity and brand competence had positive and significant impact on hand-phone brand loyalty in Ambon City. This suggests that improvement in reputation, equity and brand competence improves consumers' brand loyalty.

Also, Adha and Utami (2021) determined that brand experience, brand personality and brand trust individually and collectively, have effect on brand loyalty; while Lee et al. (2020) showed that brand personality has significant positive influence on brand engagement and purchase intention. In Das and Khatwani (2018), it was established that brand personality positively relates to self-

congruity and behavioral intentions; while Ashraf et al. (2018) reports that brand personality has significant influence on consumer buying behavior.

In addition, Horsefall and Mac-Kingsley (2018) examined brand equity and market performance of food and beverage firms in Rivers State. Their study reports that brand personality is critical to market performance. This results substantiate the argument that firms that build unique brand personality stand to increase their marketing performance. Thus, we hypothesize as follows:

H01: There is no significant relationship between brand personality and cost advantage of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

H02: There is no significant relationship between brand personality and market responsiveness of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

H03: There is no significant relationship between brand personality and service quality of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted 4 major mobile telecommunication companies operating in Rivers State, which are also enlisted in the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) report for the first quarter of 2020. The study sample was the same as the population. The study administered copies of structured questionnaire to 8 top management staff of each of the 4 mobile telecommunication companies. The questionnaire was tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha test (see Table 1 for results). The management staff included Business Manager, Operations Manager, Customer Relationship Manager, Research and Development Manager, Tarrif and Billing Manager, Data Management Officer, Marketing Manager and Sales Manager. With the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses.

Table 1: Reliability Test - Cronbach's Alpha Analysis

S/N	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
1	Brand Personality	5	0.981
2	Cost Advantage	5	0.910
3	Responsiveness	5	0.962
4	Service Quality	5	0.966

Source: SPSS Output form field data

The Cronbach's alpha analysis in Table 1 revealed that all the variables in the study produced high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. This is an evidence that there is inter-item consistency among the variables in the study. In other words, if this study is conducted again in a similar condition the results will be similar to the results of this study.

Data Analyses and Results**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Brand Personality**

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
To what extent does your organization define and communicate a clear and consistent brand personality across all marketing channels	30	55	3.67	1.952	3.810
To what extent does your organization ensure that your brand's personality resonates with your target audience and meets their expectations	30	53	3.53	1.885	3.552
To what extent does your organization align its internal culture and employee behavior with your brand's personality	30	56	3.73	1.710	2.924
To what extent does your organization measure and track the impact of your brand's personality on customer perceptions and loyalty	30	55	3.67	1.447	2.095
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 2 depicts high mean scores of the questionnaire items ranging over 3.00, this means that greater number of the respondents expressed very high and high extents of acceptance to the research question with respect to brand personality. However, it can be seen that question 4 which sought to determine the extent to which mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State align their internal culture and employee behavior with their brands' personality, has the highest mean score of 3.73, meaning that item 4 has is the most prominent feature of the variable.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Cost Advantage

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
To what extent have you been able to reduce production costs while maintaining product quality	30	72	4.80	.414	.171
To what extent have you been able to achieve economies of scale in your operations	30	59	3.93	1.387	1.924
To what extent have you been able to negotiate favorable terms with suppliers to lower procurement costs	30	55	3.67	1.234	1.524
To what extent have you been able to streamline processes and eliminate waste to reduce overall operating expenses	30	62	4.13	1.187	1.410
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 3 show high mean scores of the questionnaire items ranging over 3.00, this means that greater number of the respondents expressed very high and high extents of acceptance to the research question with respect to cost advantage. However, it can be seen that question 1 which sought to determine the extent to which mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State are able to reduce production costs while maintaining product quality, has the highest mean score of 4.80. This shows that item 1 is the strongest feature of the variable.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Responsiveness

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
To what extent have you been able to quickly adapt to changing market conditions and customer demands	30	60	4.00	.926	.857
To what extent have you been able to develop and launch new products or services in response to market trends	30	53	3.53	1.407	1.981
To what extent have you been able to adjust your marketing and sales strategies based on real-time market feedback	30	52	3.47	1.302	1.695
To what extent have you been able to implement flexible supply chain practices to respond to fluctuations in demand	30	56	3.73	.884	.781
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 4 depicts high mean scores of the questionnaire items ranging over 3.00, this means that greater number of the respondents expressed very high and high extents of acceptance to the research question with respect to market responsiveness. However, it can be seen that question 1 which sought to determine the extent to which mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State are able to quickly adapt to changing market conditions and customer demands, has the highest mean score of 4.00. This shows that question 1 has the strongest influence on the variable.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Service Quality

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
To what extent have you been able to meet or exceed customer expectations in service delivery	30	57	3.80	1.612	2.600
To what extent have you been able to implement quality control measures to ensure high standards of service	30	55	3.67	1.589	2.524
To what extent have you been able to provide consistent and reliable service across all customer touchpoints	30	57	3.80	1.373	1.886
To what extent have you been able to gather and act on customer feedback to improve service quality	30	58	3.87	1.356	1.838
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 5 depicts high mean scores of the questionnaire items ranging over 3.00, this means that greater number of respondents expressed very high and high level of agreement with the items on the research questionnaire. However, it can be seen that item 5 which sought to determine the extent to which mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State are able to gather and act on customer feedback to improve service quality, has the highest mean score of 3.87. This shows that item 5 is the strongest characteristic of service quality among the firms surveyed.

Table 6: Relationship between Brand Personality and Cost Advantage

		Brand Personality	Cost Advantage
Brand Personality	Pearson Correlation	1	.716**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Cost Advantage	Pearson Correlation	.716**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 6 reveals a correlation coefficient of 0.716** between brand personality and cost advantage. This high correlation coefficient indicates that a strong relationship exists between brand personality and cost advantage; the positive sign of the coefficient means that the relationship between the variables is positive; while the probability value (0.000) which is less than the critical value (0.05), shows that the relationship between brand personality and cost advantage is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between brand personality and cost advantage of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State was rejected.

Table 7: Relationship between Brand Personality and Responsiveness

		Brand Personality	Responsiveness
Brand Personality	Pearson Correlation	1	.590**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.590**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 7 reveals a correlation coefficient of 0.590** between brand personality and responsiveness. This moderate P(r) value indicates a moderate relationship between brand personality and responsiveness. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient suggests that a positive relationship exists between the variables; while the probability value (0.000) which is less than the critical value (0.05) shows that the relationship between brand personality and responsiveness is statistically significant. Based on these facts, we rejected the hypothesis which denies the existence of significant relationship between brand personality and market responsiveness of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Table 8: Relationship between Brand Personality and Service Quality

		Brand Personality	Service Quality
Brand Personality	Pearson Correlation	1	.950**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	.950**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 8 reveals a correlation coefficient of 0.950** between brand personality and service quality. This very high P(r) value indicates a very strong relationship between brand personality and service quality. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient shows that the association between the variables of positive, while the probability value (0.000) which is less than the critical value (0.05) shows that the relationship between brand personality and service quality is statistically significant. Based on this, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between brand personality and service quality of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The result of our analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between brand personality and cost advantage; a moderate positive relationship between brand personality and responsiveness; and a very strong positive relationship between brand personality and service quality. In addition, all the correlations were found to be statistically significant. These findings agree with the report of Chang et al. (2022) that brand personality improve tourist satisfaction and tourism commitment; and the report of Makatita et al. (2022) that brand reputation, equity and competence have positive significant impact on brand loyalty.

Also, the findings support the reports that brand personality has strong positive effect on brand loyalty (Adha & Utami, 2021), brand engagement and purchase intention (Lee et al., 2020) and behavioral intentions and self-congruity (Das & Khatwani, 2018). The finding further concretize the findings of Ashraf et al. (2018) that a positive relationship exists between components of brand personality and consumer buying behavior; and that of Horsefall and Mac-Kingsley (2018) that brand personality is critical to market performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and their level of consistency with similar studies, we conclude that brand personality significantly relates to market competitiveness of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State. This means that brand personality is integral to market competitiveness of these firms, as it impacts cost advantage, responsiveness, service quality. Consequently, we recommend that:

1. Managers of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State should capitalize on brand personality such as brand sincerity and brand ruggedness in their pursuit of market competitiveness.
2. Managers of mobile telecommunication companies in Rivers State should build personality such as brand excitement and sophistication in their brands to ensure service quality and overall performance in their operations.

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