

BRAND SINCERITY AND SPIRAL CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR OF CONSUMERS OF COSMETIC PRODUCTS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between brand sincerity and spiral consumption behaviour. Brand sincerity was the predictor variable, while spiral consumption is the criterion variable, and was proxied by frequency of purchase, consumer confidence and level of debt. This study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria. The used randomly surveyed 228 consumers of cosmetic products from the 6 States of South-South Nigeria. Questionnaire was used to collect primary data from the respondents. The study tested 3 hypotheses using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, relying on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Tests of hypotheses showed that brand sincerity has strong positive and statistically significant correlation with spiral consumption. The study concludes that brand sincerity relates to spiral consumption, and that brand sincerity is a strong pretext to elicit frequency of purchase, consumer confidence and level of debt of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria. Thus, the study recommends manufacturers and dealer of cosmetic products should build brand sincerity if they seek to elicit spiral consumption of consumers.

Keywords: Brand sincerity, consumer confidence, frequency of purchase, level of debt, spiral consumption

Introduction

In the contemporary world of consumer culture, the changing nature of consumption goes beyond the simple act of acquiring products. Instead, individuals often imbue their consumption choices with layers of meaning, reflecting their values, aspirations and identities. Central to this complex interplay between consumers and their consumption behaviour is the concept of brand sincerity.

Park and Kim (2020) define brand sincerity as the authenticity and transparency of a brand's behaviour, emphasizing the importance of brands staying true to their values and promises to build trust and loyalty among consumers. It encompass consumers' perception of the honesty and transparency of a brand. Brand sincerity is essential because it significantly impact consumers' perception of products and their subsequent consumption behaviour (Zhao & Jia, 2022; Sik et al., 2023).

Brand sincerity confer numerous benefits, including customer loyalty, positive brand perception, brand resilience, competitive advantage and increased customer engagement (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). In consumption decisions laden with safety and quality concerns, consumer frequently rely on a brand's sincerity to make purchase decision (Madu & Omotaye, 2017; Arnot et al., 2016).

There is however, little actionable insights about how brand sincerity results in spiral consumption behaviour. Eastman et al. (2014) argue that brand sincerity influences consumer confidence, Mueller et al. (2010) demonstrates that consumers trust in brands leads to repetitive buying, while Kaplan (2015) reports that brand sincerity correlates with marketing performance.

These studies suggests that firms can leverage brand sincerity to instigate spiral consumption behaviour, especially in markets where consumer face purchase risks relating to quality and

ethical concerns. Thus, this study explored the concept of brand sincerity and its contribution to spiral consumption behaviour towards cosmetic products. The study is justified by the fact that it provides valuable insights brands looking to develop sustainable and ethically aligned products that resonate with genuine needs and desires of consumers, and which hence instigate spiral consumption behaviour.

The aim of the study was to examine the link between brand sincerity and spiral consumption behaviour of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- 1) Investigate the relationship between brand sincerity and consumers' frequency of purchase of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria.
- 2) Assess the relationship between brand sincerity and confidence of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria.
- 3) Evaluate the relationship between brand sincerity and level of debt of cosmetic products consumers in South-South Nigeria.

Therefore, the study formulated and tested the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between brand sincerity and consumers' frequency of purchase of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria.

H₀₂: Sincerity does not significantly affect confidence of consumers of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria.

H₀₃: Sincerity does not significantly affect level of debt of consumers of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria.

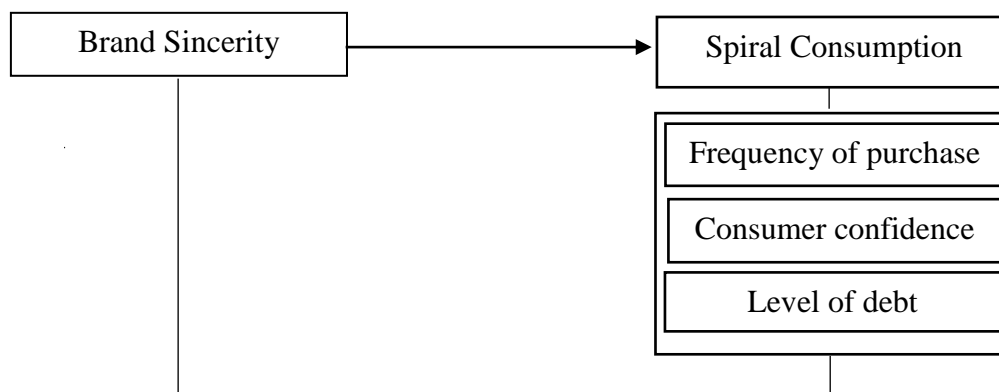


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between sincerity and spiral consumption behaviour

Theoretical Foundation

This study is underpinned by social comparison theory of Festinger et al. (1950), which argue that social comparison play an roles in group dynamics and decision making process. The theory posits that individuals determine their own social and personal worth based on how they stack up against others (Festinger, 1954).

Consumers judge their consumption behaviour based on social comparison. Bunk and Gibbon (2007) define social comparison as a process by which individuals assess their attributes or opinions by comparing themselves to others, leading to different outcomes such as self-evaluation, self-enhancement or self-improvement. Social comparison may be upwards and downwards. Vogel (2016) states that upward comparison occurs when individuals compare

themselves to those they perceive as superior in some aspect while downward comparison involves comparing oneself to those perceived as inferior.

Bandura (1977) integrated social comparison theory into social learning theory and self-efficacy theory, and argued that social comparison revolves around observational learning and modelling, emphasising its role in shaping individuals behaviour, self-perception motivation. Bandura (1977) suggests that individuals learn from others through observation, imitation and comparison, which influence their perceptions, beliefs and action.

Tesser (1988) further expanded social comparison theory by the introducing the concept of self-evaluation maintenance, and proposed that individuals engage in social comparison not only to assess their abilities and traits, but to manage their self-esteem in relation to others. Sun and Wheeler (2000) emphasises the role of social comparison theory in the regulation of self-esteem and emotional well-being. However, the implication of social comparison theory to the relationship between brand sincerity and spiral consumption lies in how individuals compare themselves to others and how this comparison influence their consumption pattern.

Concept of Brand Sincerity

Park and Kim (2020) define brand sincerity as the authenticity and transparency of a brand's behaviour. This definition emphasize the importance of brands staying true to their values and promises to consumers. Bai and Balaji (2021) describe brand sincerity as the depth of a brand's commitment to fulfilling its promises and meeting customer expectations. This view explains the role of brand sincerity in building strong emotional connections and fostering loyalty.

Brand sincerity encompass such traits as honesty, genuineness and reliability, which are essential to building trust and credibility (Tifferet & Herstein, 2012). This means that a brand is sincere if its communications and actions are perceived as genuine and honest, and mirrors the values and intentions of the brand (Kim & Morris, 2007).

Brands that are perceived as sincere are more likely to establish long term relationships with customers and foster brand loyalty (Schwaiger, 2014). Aaker et al. (2015) and Malhotra (2014) adds that brand sincerity differentiate firms and influence brand preference and purchase decisions. More so, brand sincerity leads to higher brand engagement and positive brand perceptions (Han et al., 2019). Consumers form emotional attachment to brands that exhibit sincerity as part of their personality (Molar & Naggayi, 2017).

Spiral Consumption Behaviour

Spiral consumption behaviour is defined as phenomenon with which consumers progressively increase their spending on goods and services, often driven by social comparison, lifestyle change and desire for status (Ozuru et al., 2024). Spiral consumption behaviour also refers to an approach where initial consumer choices and actions lead to a series of interconnected decisions and behaviour that further reinforce and escalate the consumption process (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2008).

Dittmar et al. (2007) define spiral consumption as a pattern where individuals engage in ever-increasing purchases to maintain their self-worth or social status. It is materialistic outlook that predispose individuals to believe that acquiring more possessions will lead to greater happiness and social acceptance. Belk (2019) describe spiral consumption behaviour as instance where consumers compare themselves to others and feel compelled to continuously acquire possessions to keep up with perceived societal norms.

Firat and Dholakia (2006) argue that spiral consumption is a consumer culture where individuals continuously strives for self-expression and fulfilment through a perpetual cycle of increasing consumption. Thus, spiral consumption is shaped by individual factors and cultural factors, because consumers promote consumption in a society as a means of identity and social validation (Verhagen et al., 2017).

Consumers also engage in spiral consumption when they perceive that a product aligns with their identity, perceived value, social status or personal aspirations (Perrien et al., 2015). Also, spiral consumption has been furred by the rise of digital technology and e-commerce platforms that offer personalized value and seamless shopping experiences that encourage purchase of related products (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

Ateke and Ogbuji (2017) argue that the Internet has made it easier for consumers to access, compare and purchase goods in the convenience of homes and offices. Also, the Internet provides ease of access to large amount of information and options, hence contributes to spiral of consumption, as individuals easily navigate between e-store and products based on their preferences (Rindfleisch & Burrough, 2019). Spiral consumption behaviour is innately multifaceted. In this study, we adopted frequency of purchase, consumer confidence and level of debt as measure spiral consumption behaviour using.

Frequency of purchase

Frequency of purchase is a key indicator of spiral consumption, as it reflects repetitive and cyclical buying patterns. Kotler and Keller (2016) define frequency of purchase as the number of times a consumer buys a particular product within a specified period of time. Ainslie and Rossi (2017) define frequency of purchase as the average number of purchase carried out by a consumer within a timeframe.

To McEachern (2015), frequency of purchase is a measure of the average number of times a consumer obtains a product within a given timeframe, reflecting the level of engagement and loyalty towards the brand. Frequency of purchase a good indicator of success of a business and effectiveness marketing (Kim & Rossi, 2014).

Frequency of purchase indicates repetitive buying behaviour of consumers, and highlights habitual consumption patterns and brand loyalty (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). High frequency of purchase suggests that consumers are engaged with a brand; while upgrade or replacement signal spiral consumption. Sohail et al. (2015) opine that frequency of purchase provide valuable insights into consumer behaviour and consumption patterns.

By tracking how often consumers buy a particular product, businesses can assess the extent to which individuals are involved in spiral of consumption and evaluate the impact of this behaviour on brand loyalty, revenue generation and market dynamics (Aihumenki-Okha et al., 2020). Factors that influence frequency of purchase include social factors, personal factors, perceived value, psychological factors and product perception (Khan, 2016; Perreau, 2014). Others are product characteristics, consumer demographics, brand loyalty and economic conditions (Dawar & Bendle, 2020). According to Evans and Berman (2018), frequency of purchase can be measured using sales data, customer survey, or through analytics tools that track consumer behaviour and purchase patterns.

Consumer confidence

Consumer confidence is the trust, assurance and belief customers have in a company, brand and product (Strahilevitz, 2019). It is a psychological perception that reflects customers' expectations, satisfaction and willingness to engage in transaction based on their belief in the reliability, credibility and quality of the offerings of a brand (Macready et al., 2020).

According to Morgan et al. (2019), high consumer confidence typically leads to increased spending, contributing to a cycle of consumption that drive economic growth while. Low level of consumer confidence on the other hand, may result in reduce spending, consumption, economic stagnation and market uncertainty, which negatively affect businesses and market dynamics (Del Boca et al., 2014; Fritsch & Wyrwich, 2014).

According to Ehrlich and Stock (2018), consumer confidence provide valuable insights into consumer sentiments, spending intentions and overall economic conditions. This implies that change in consumer confidence levels has to be closely monitored by policy makers, businesses and economists as they signal shifts in consumer behaviour and economic trends (Mian & Sufi, 2016). Understanding consumer confidence help businesses tailor marketing strategies to align with consumer preferences and expectations (Strobel & Van der Straeten, 2017).

Level of debt

Level of debt literally is the amount of money individuals, businesses and governments owe to creditors or lenders. It is a significant measure used to assess spiral consumption because it reflects the extent to which individuals or household rely on credit, loans or financial obligations to support their consumption patterns. Bucks and Pence (2008) define level of debt as the extent to which an entity has borrowed funds to finance its activities or expenditure.

Level of debt as a measure of spiral consumption is the amount of financial obligation incurred by individuals or household as a result of excessive and unsustainable consumption patterns (Arlashkan, 2021). According to Damayanty and Astuti (2024), level of debt suggests a recurring cycle of borrowing to finance consumption beyond ones means, leading to increase in debt burden and ongoing reliance on credit to maintain lifestyle choices.

The interplay between level of debt and spiral consumption highlights a precarious financial situations where consumers may struggle to break free from the cycle of debt accumulation and adjust their consumption patterns to align with their financial reality ((Sunardi et al., 2020; Han, 2017). High level of debt lead to persistent financial stress, limited ability to build saving to invest in the future, increase vulnerability to economic downturns and difficulty in achieving long term financial goals (Malmendier & Nagel, 2016; Dettling et al., 2019).

Brand Sincerity and Spiral Consumption

Lervik-Olsen et al. (2024) empirically tested antecedents to compulsive social media consumption. The study identify key antecedents to compulsive social media use: behaviour-based habits, consumer engagement and fear. Mochklas et al. (2024) showed that work ethics influenced by hard work, smart work and sincere work have positive significant influence on consumers' confidence in a firm and its products.

In Wu et al. (2024), it was reported that brand sincerity has positive influence on destination image and behavioural intentions, while Yao et al. (2023) showed that suppliers' green innovation efforts that are considered sincere, trigger greater collaborative inclination from

consumers and generate higher value co-creation intentions. Also, Yi et al. (2023) established that frequency and anticipated emotions mediates the relationship between past purchase and future purchase decisions.

Huang and Ho (2023) studied the importance of brand sincerity and keenness in creating retail sustainable development in Taiwan retail sector in the capital city of Taipei. The study revealed the dimension of service quality to be sincerity, neatness, attentiveness, keenness, empathy, reliability, optimism, steadfastness, expertise and store policy. Noting that sincerity and keenness are the most crucial. Similarly, Zhafira et al. (2022) revealed that consumers' attitude towards a brand is informed by influencers' trustworthiness, attractiveness, perceived sincerity and similarity.

Methodology

This study examined the correlation between brand sincerity and spiral consumption of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised of consumers of cosmetic product in South-South Nigeria. However, the total number of persons that consume cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria cannot be ascertained due to nonexistence of reliable records.

Thus, the randomly surveyed 228 consumers of cosmetic products in the 6 States of South-South Nigeria. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire consisting items describing consumers' perception of the sincerity of their preferred brands; and the extent to which they engage in repetitive buying of those brands. The validity of the instrument was confirmed through opinion of experts consisting members of the academia and practitioners with adequate knowledge of the subject of the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined through Cronbach's alpha test with a threshold of 0.70 set by Nunally (1978).

The reliability test produced Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .704, .722, .701, and .730 respectively for brand sincerity, frequency of purchase, consumer confidence and level of debt. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study, relying on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0.

Results

Table 1: Correlation between Brand Sincerity and Frequency of Purchase

		Brand Sincerity	Frequency of Purchase
Brand Sincerity	Pearson Correlation	1	.586**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.003
	N	228	228
Frequency of Purchase	Pearson Correlation	.586**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.003	
	N	228	228

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Source: Survey Research, (2024)

Table 1 shows the correlation analysis on the extent and direction on relationship between brand sincerity and frequency of purchase. The Table showed a correlation coefficient of 0.586** and probability value of $0.003 < 0.05$ (critical value). The positive sign of the correlation coefficient indicate that increase brand sincerity among cosmetic products

manufacturers leads to increase in frequency of purchase by consumers, while the correlation coefficient and probability values suggests that a moderate and statistically significant connection exists between brand sincerity and frequency of purchase. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that a significant relationship exists between brand sincerity and frequency of purchase of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria.

Table 2: Correlation between Brand Sincerity and Consumer Confidence

		Brand Sincerity	Consumer Confidence
Brand Sincerity	Pearson Correlation	1	.661**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	228	228
Consumer Confidence	Pearson Correlation	.661**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	228	228

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

Source: Survey Research, (2024)

Table 2 shows the correlation analysis on the extent and direction of relationship between brand sincerity and confidence of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria. The Table showed a correlation coefficient of 0.661** and a probability value of .000. These values indicate a strong positive relationship between brand sincerity and consumer confidence. Since the probability value (PV) $0.000 < 0.05$ (critical value), we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3: Correlation between Brand Sincerity and Level of debt.

		Brand Sincerity	Level of debt
Brand Sincerity	Pearson Correlation	1	.440**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	228	228
Level of debt	Pearson Correlation	.440**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	228	228

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Source: Survey Research, (2024)

Table 3 shows the analysis of the extent and direction of relationship between brand sincerity and level of debt of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria. Table 1 showed a correlation coefficient of 0.440** and a correspondent probability value of 0.000. These values suggests a moderate positive and statistically significant correlation between the variables. So, we reject the null hypothesis. Meaning that a significant relationship between exists between brand sincerity and level of debt of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the statistical analyses showed that brand sincerity has moderate relationship with frequency of purchase; strong relationship with consumer confidence and moderate relationship with level of debt. The analyses also showed that these relationships are positive and statistically significant. This means that cosmetics products dealers can instigate spiral consumption behaviour through the instrumentality of brand sincerity.

Our findings are in line with the findings of Lervik-Olsen et al. (2024) that two major manifestation of compulsive social media use that spur or reinforce compulsivity are frequency of social media consumption and intensity of consumption. Lervik-Olsen et al. (2024) also reveal behavioural habit, consumer engagement and fear of missing out are factors that shape compulsive social media consumption.

The findings also support the finding Prakash et al. (2023) that an association exist between income, educational qualification economic conditions and spiral consumption behaviour. Similarly, the findings of the current study validate the view that purchase intention is often informed by consumer knowledge (Ateke & Didia, 2018) and brand experience (Ateke & Damina-Okoro, 2024).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between brand sincerity and spiral consumption behaviour of cosmetic products consumers in South-South Nigeria. The results of the statistical analyses shows that brand sincerity is a strong contributor to the phenomenon of spiral consumption. The findings of the study align with reports and arguments of scholars, and provide insights into the relationship between brand sincerity and spiral consumption behaviour of cosmetic products consumers in South-South Nigeria.

The study therefore concludes that spiral consumption among consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria stems from brand sincerity, and that brand sincerity predicts spiral consumption behaviour. Consequently, the study recommends that manufacturers of, and dealers in cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria that seek to ignite spiral consumption behaviour among consumers communicate values and undertake actions that are genuine, honest and resonate with consumers' perception of trustworthiness.

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