

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

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### **Abstract**

This study probed the correlation between brand sincerity and spiral consumption of consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria. Brand sincerity was used as the predictor variable, while spiral consumption, measured as frequency of purchase and level of debt was the criterion variable. This study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted consumers of cosmetic products in South-South Nigeria. This population is infinite. So, the Cochran formula was used to determine a sample size of 384 consumers. Data for this study were collected from using structured questionnaire, of which 369 copies were used for the study. Data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation and frequency for the univariate analyses; and Pearson product Moment Correlation for the bivariate analyses. The result of the analysis revealed that a positive and statistically significant correlation between brand sincerity and measures of spiral consumption. Thus, the study concludes that brand sincerity predict spiral consumption of consumers of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria; and recommends that dealerships of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria that seek to elicit spiral consumption of cosmetic products should project brand sincerity by ensuring authentic, transparent and honest brand communications.

**Keyword:** Brand sincerity, spiral consumption, frequency of purchase, level of debt.

### **Introduction**

The cosmetics industry in Nigeria has experienced growth in recent years with increasing consumer demands for various cosmetics products (Madu & Omaye, 2017). Yet, consumption of cosmetics is often tamed by product knowledge (Ateke & Didia, 2018) and concern for safety and quality (Arnot et al., 2016). Thus, a clear understanding of consumption behaviour has become crucial for businesses operating in the cosmetic market.

Contemporary consumer culture extends consumption beyond acquiring products. Instead, individuals now imbue their consumption choices with layers of meaning that reflect their values, aspirations and identities. Central to this complex interplay between consumers and their consumption behaviour is the concept of brand sincerity. The extent to which brands are authentic and transparent determines if they stays true to their values and promises; and this sincerity build trust and loyalty among consumers (Park & Kim, 2020).

Brands penetrate every facet of consumers' lives, as their presence is felt in economic, social, cultural, sporting and religious contexts; and consumers as symbolic animals capable of animating the material world with intricate and spiritual meanings, give meaning to their brand experience (Ateke & Nwulu, 2017; Maurya & Mishra, 2012; Belk & Costa, 1998); and preferring brands that are transparent and truthful when making purchasing decisions.

Thus, brand sincerity significantly impact consumer perception of brands and their products. It aligns consumers' purchases and consumption pattern to deeply held beliefs, values and personal preferences (Zhao & Jia, 2022; Sik, Sung & Lee, 2023). This buttresses that notion that brand sincerity convey values and beliefs that resonate with consumers, rather than merely project an image for profit (Hemingway & MacLagan, 2004).

So, brand sincerity cultivates genuine connection between consumers and products or brands; and shift consumption beyond mere material acquisition to a deeper sense of identity expression and fulfilment (Li et al., 2021; Chatterjee & Heath, 2020). Consequently, brand sincerity has become a pivot of customer loyalty, positive brand perception, resilience during crisis, competitive advantage and increased customer engagement. A corollary to these positives, is the idea that brand sincerity can trigger spiral consumption.

Powell (2021) describe spiral consumption is an intriguing consumption pattern characterized by repetitive buying driven by a desire for status or social recognition. It is a behaviour shaped by individual's values, belief and norms and social norms, marketing messages and peer interaction (Verhagen et al., 2017). Consumers engage in spiral consumption when they perceive that an offering aligns with their identity, social status, or personal aspirations, leading to a cycle of continued consumption and brand loyalty.

According to Sundar and Noseworthy (2016), individuals who find themselves caught in a relentless cycles of consumption, spurred on by the pressure to keep up with or surpass the consumption levels of their counter parts. Again, scholars noted that what begins as a quest for authenticity and sincerity can quickly devolve into a frantic race to acquire more, fuelled by societal norms and the pervasive influence of social media (Daramola, Adesanya & Ibrahim, 2018).

Studies have been conducted on brand sincerity and spiral consumption behaviour in China (Eastman et al., 2014) and Ghana (Mueller et al., 2010), and there are also studies on the link between spiral consumption and marketing performance (Kaplan, 2015) and social and economic consequences (Belk, 2014). But, there is an apparent dearth of studies that on brand sincerity and spiral consumption in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the intricate relationship between brand sincerity and spiral consumption of consumers of cosmetic products in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

This study is underpinned by social comparison theory (Festinger et al., 1950) which argue that social comparison plays an important role in group dynamics and decision making process, as individuals often seek validation and confirmation from others, which influences their conformity to group norms and attitude. The theory posits that individuals determine their own social and personal worth based on how they stack up against others (Festinger, 1954).

Consumers make judgment regarding their consumption behaviour; and one of the ways they do this is through social comparison. Bunk and Gibbon (2007) define social comparison as a process by which individuals assess their attributes or opinions by comparing them to those of others. This leads to different outcomes such as self-evaluation, self-enhancement or self-improvement. Social comparison may take one of two forms: upward comparison and downward comparison.

Upward comparison occurs when individuals compare themselves to those who are perceived as superior in some aspect while downward comparison involves comparing oneself to those who are perceived as inferior (Vogel, 2016). Bandura (1977) integrated social comparison theory into his social learning theory and self-efficacy theory, arguing that comparison in society stems observational learning and modelling; to shape individual behaviour and self-perception motivation. This implies that individuals learn from others via observation, imitation and comparison, which influences their perceptions, beliefs, and action.

Tesser (1988) extended social comparison theory to include self-evaluation maintenance, stating that individuals engage in social comparison not only to assess their own abilities and traits but also 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. Their argument is that individuals engage in social comparison to evaluate their own abilities, traits and behaviour in relation to others. However, the implication of social comparison theory to the relationship between sincerity and consumers spiral consumption behaviour lies in how individuals compare themselves to others and how this comparison influences their consumption pattern.

### **Concept of Brand Sincerity**

Brand sincerity shape consumer perceptions and behaviour towards a brand. Humanoid traits such as honesty, genuineness and reliability associated with brands, are essential to building trust and credibility among consumers (Tifferet & Herstein, 2012). Park and Kim (2020) define brand sincerity as the authenticity and transparency of a brand's behaviour. The sincerity of a brand is perceived in the extent to which its communication and actions are genuine and honest, and mirrors true values and intentions (Kim & Morris, 2007).

Aaker et al. (2015) demonstrate brand sincerity as one of the primary factors used by consumer to evaluate and differentiate between brands. Thus, Molar and Naggayi (2017) and Schwaiger (2014) states that consumers form emotional attachment to sincere brand, leading to loyalty-based long-term relationships. Brand sincerity also lead to higher level of brand engagement, positive perceptions (Han et al., 2019); purchase intention and willingness to pay premium for products (Sarwar & Quereschi, 2019) and positive word-of-mouth (Park & Kim, 2020). Chernev et al. (2015) opine that in today's social media and online dominated world where brand reputation is easily by lack of sincerity, maintaining a sincere brand image is paramount for long term success.

### **Concept of Spiral Consumption Behaviour**

Spiral consumption is defined as situation where consumers progressively increase their spending on goods and services, often driven by social comparison, lifestyle and desire for status (Ozuru et al., 2024). It 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 ingesting to maintain their self-worth and social status. This implies that materialistic individuals are prone to spiral consumption and are driven by a belief that acquiring more possessions will lead to greater happiness and social acceptance. Spiral consumption is shaped by a combination of internal factors (values, belief and norms) and external influences (social norms, marketing messages and peer interaction) (Verhagen et al., 2017).

Perrien et al. (2015) adds that spiral consumption is driven by perceived value, where consumers' measure the benefit and cost associated with a product while making subsequent decisions based on that evaluation. This implies that when consumers experience and perceive a high value in a product or brand, they are more likely to engage in repetitive purchases.

Spiral consumption leads to strong brand loyalty that impacts individual well-being in terms of emotional satisfaction and self-esteem (Richins & Dawson, 2016). When individuals continuously purchase products from a particular brand, they develop a sense of attachment and loyalty towards that brand, making it challenging for competitors to attract them.

Scholars highlight various forms of spiral consumption including, conspicuous consumption, retail therapy, lifestyle inflation, compulsive buying and status consumption (Eastman et al., 2014; Mueller et al., 2010). In this study however, we measure spiral consumption using frequency of purchase and level of debt.

### **Frequency of purchase**

Frequency of purchase indicates the repetitive buying behaviour that highlights brand loyalty and habitual consumption patterns (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). It is a key indicator of spiral consumption, as it reflects repetitive and cyclical buying patterns. Ainslie and Rossi (2017) define frequency of purchase as the average number of purchases made by a consumer within a given time frame. McEachern (2015) states that frequency of purchase measures the average number of times a consumer obtains a product within a given time frame, reflecting the level of engagement and loyalty towards the brand.

Kim and Rossi (2014) describe frequency of purchase as the average number of times a customer buy from a business during a given period and a good indicator of success of a business and effectiveness in retention marketing. High frequency of purchase suggests that consumers are engaged in a cycle of repeated purchases, upgrades or replacement, signalling spiral consumption where individuals continuously acquire and consume products.

Sohail et al. (2015) opine that monitoring 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 consumption and evaluate the impact of this behaviour on brand loyalty, revenue generation and market dynamics.

Aihumenki-Okha et al. (2020) classify factors that influence frequency of purchase into social, psychological and personal factors, as well as perceived value, and product perception. Sweeney and Soutar (2013) adds that frequency of purchase is influenced by age and lifecycle state, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality and self-concept.

### **Level of debt**

Level of debt is literally the amount of money that individuals, businesses and governments owe to creditors or lenders. It is a significant measure used to assess spiral consumption, as 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 repetitive consumption patterns (Arlashkan, 2021). According to Damayanty and Astuti (2024), level of debt seen from spiral consumption signifies recurring cycle of borrowing to finance a consumption beyond ones means.

Level of debt is typically expressed as a monetary value and serve as an entity's financial leverage, solvency and ability to meet its debt obligations (Melesse et al., 2021). Scholars have explored the relationship between level of debt and spiral consumption, shedding light on the consequences of excessive borrowing and unsustainable spending patterns (Brown & Taylor, 2014; Dettling et al., 2019, Zinman, 2017).

### **Brand Sincerity and Spiral Consumption**

Lervik-Olsen et al. (2024) tested antecedents of behavioural and motivational paths as well as the consequences of compulsive social media consumption. The study depicts two major manifestation of compulsive social media use that spurred reinforce of compulsivity -frequency

of social media consumption and intensity of consumption. It also revealed two main paths to compulsive social media consumption to be behaviour-based on habit, which was observed to be a function of situation cues and consumer engagement and motivation based on fear of missing out as shaped by both injunctive norms and descriptive norms.

Wu et al. on their part, (2024) studied the effect of host sincerity on tourists perceived destination image, satisfaction and behavioural intentions in China. Data generated in the study was analysed using structural equation modelling. The study found a positive impact of sincerity on destination image. Again, it was showed that sincerity triggers positive behavioural intentions of tourists for sustainable development of the travel destination.

Also, Yao et al. (2023) examined the impact mechanism and boundary conditions of supplier green innovation types on consumer willingness to participate in value co-creation with focal firms from perspectives of multi-tier supply chain management. The result of the study showed that suppliers' green innovation efforts are sincerer when they are substantive against symbolic, thereby generating higher value co-creation intentions.

Yi et al. (2023) examined impulse buying tendency in live-stream commerce with respect to viewing frequency and anticipated emotions impact on scarcity induced purchase decision. The results of data analyses indicated that frequency and anticipated emotions completely mediates the relationship between past purchase and future purchase decisions. Likewise, Zhafira et al. (2022) examined the effect of social media influencer perceived sincerity and perceived similarity on consumer attitude and purchase intention. The findings of the study depict that consumer attitude towards a brand is formed by predicting influencers trustworthiness, attractiveness, perceived sincerity and similarity.

In another study, Melesse et al. (2021) probed determinants of debt financing choices among small scale manufacturing enterprises in Ethiopia. The findings revealed that policy activism through provision of training related intervention scheme boost debt utilization in finance mix start up while it lowers the profitability of firms dropping into higher debt levels.

In lieu of the above, we hypothesize that:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between sincerity and frequency of purchase of consumers of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between sincerity and level of debt of consumers of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria.

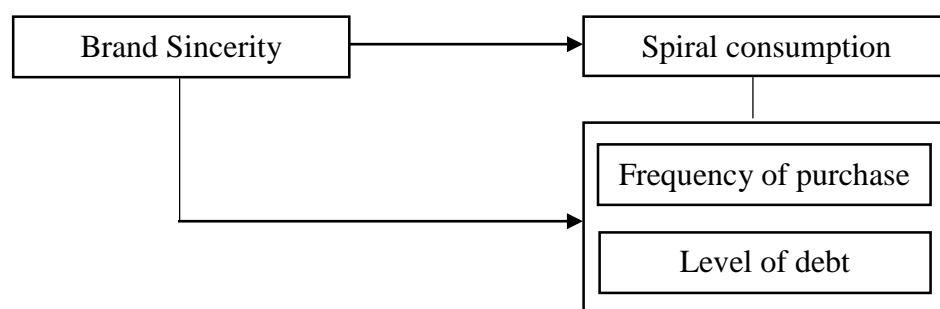


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework of relationship between brand sincerity and spiral consumption.

## Methodology

The study employed an explanatory research design with hypothesis testing attribute to an infinite population from registered cosmetic companies operating in Nigeria. The study used Cochran (1963) method of determining a sample size for infinite population based on 95% confidence level. The sample size for the study using Cochran formula entailed 384 customers

of cosmetic dealerships. Data were collected from respondent and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tool with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses formulated based on the fact that data generated from the study met the two parametric assumptions. Firstly, the variables in the study are measured on an ordinal scale. A 5-point Likert scale was used to collect data. Secondly, with regard to the relationships between the variables, increase in one variable, triggered increase in the other, and vice versa. This relationship is clearly depicted in Fig. 1. Additionally, the result of Normality test is shown in Fig. 2.

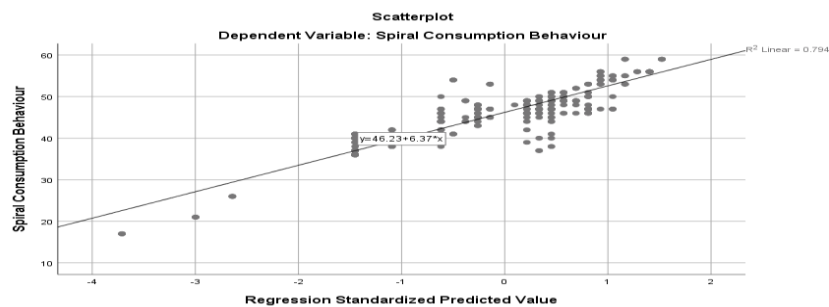


Fig. 2: Scatter plot of linear relationship between brand sincerity and spiral consumption  
Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

As shown in the scatter plot, there is a monotonic relationship between the variables, and no significant outliers can be seen. Most of the data points are along the 45-degree diagonal line. Thus, linear relationship condition was fulfilled.

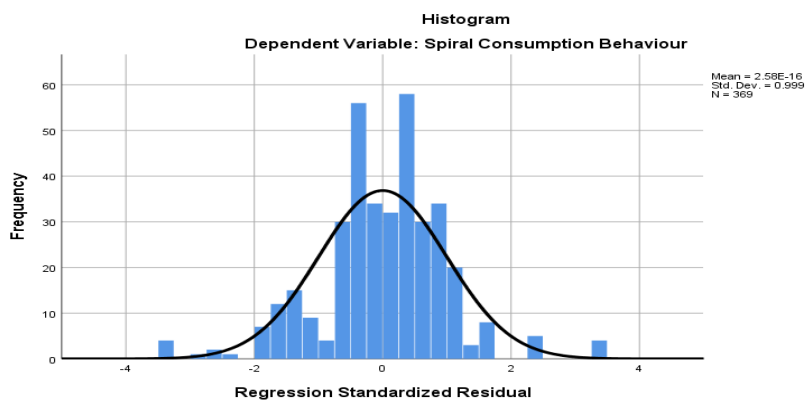


Figure 3: Histogram with superimposed normality curve showing the distribution of data  
Source: SPSS Output, 2025.



## Data Analysis and Results

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Brand sincerity**

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
To what extent do you believe the brand consistently communicates its values and beliefs?	369	1260	3.41	.783	.613
How much do you feel that the brand genuinely cares about its customers' needs and concern?	369	1352	3.66	1.094	1.197
To what extent do you perceive the brand as honest and transparent in its advertising and marketing efforts?	369	1365	3.70	1.179	1.390
How much you think the brand takes responsibility for any issue that arises with product?	369	1300	3.52	1.089	1.185
Valid N (listwise)	369				

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

Table 1 showed high mean scores of over 3.00, which suggest that respondents agreed with the items on brand sincerity to a high extend. Though it can be seen that item 3 which sought to ascertain the extent to which consumers perceive the brand as honest and transparent in its advertising and marketing efforts has the highest sum of 1365; highest mean score of 3.70; highest standard deviation of 1.179 and highest variance of 1.390. This implies that item 3 has the strongest influence on brand sincerity as a dimension and explained the most data variation

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Frequency of purchase**

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
To what extent do you find yourself acquiring from this brand more frequently compares to other brands in the same category?	369	1463	3.96	1.140	1.300
How regularly do you make repeat purchase from this a brand due to your satisfaction with previous experience?	369	1490	4.04	.740	.547
To what extent do you tend to purchase a product from his brand when you need a product in its category, regardless of price or convenience?	369	1519	4.12	.850	.723
How regularly do you find yourself buying products from this brand because of its strong emotional attachment?	369	1512	4.10	.781	.610
Valid N (listwise)	369				

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

Table 2 shows a high mean scores of over 3.00, which suggests that a greater number of respondents agreed to a high extent with the items on frequency of purchase. Nonetheless, item 3 which sought after the extent to which a consumer tends to purchase a product from a brand when he/she needs that product in its category, regardless of price or convenience has the highest sum of 1.519; highest mean score of 4.12. This depicts that item 3 has the strongest influence on frequency of purchase. Furthermore, item 1 which determines the extent to which a consumer finds his/her yourself acquiring from a brand frequently compares to other brands in the same category has the highest standard deviation and variance of 1.140 and 1.300 correspondingly implies that item 1 has the most data variation among the items on frequency of purchase.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Level of debt**

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
To what extent does individuals or household rely on credit, loans or financial obligations to support their consumption patterns?	369	1514	4.10	.814	.663
To what extent do you think that the amount of debt you currently have is manageable?	369	1362	3.69	1.044	1.089
How much do you feel your current debt level limits your ability to make other financial decisions?	369	1279	3.47	.831	.690
How much confident are you that you will be able to pay off your debt in the near future?	369	1508	4.09	.877	.770
Valid N (listwise)	369				

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

Table 3 reveal high mean scores of over 3.00, which shows that a greater number of respondents agreed to a large extend with the items on level of debt. From the analysis, it was revealed that item 1 which sought to ascertain the extent to which individuals or household rely on credit, loans or financial obligations to support their consumption patterns has the highest sum of 1514; highest mean score of 4.10. This explained that item 1 has the strongest influence on level of debt. Again, question 2 which ascertain the extent to which consumers think that the amount of debt they currently have is manageable has the highest standard deviation and variance of 1.044 and 1.089 respectively, depicting that item 2 has the most data variation.

**Table 4: Correlation between Brand sincerity and Frequency of Purchase**

		Brand sincerity	Frequency of purchase
Brand sincerity	Pearson Correlation	1	.561**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	369	369
Frequency of purchase	Pearson Correlation	.561**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	369	369

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

**Table 5: Correlation between of Brand sincerity and Level of debt**

		Brand sincerity	Level of debt
Brand sincerity	Pearson Correlation	1	.483**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	369	369
Level of debt	Pearson Correlation	.483**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	369	369

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

The output of analysis on Table 4 and 5 showed the correlational result of the relationship between brand sincerity and measures of spiral consumption (frequency of purchase and level of debt). The results reveal a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between the variables. These are indicated by the correlation coefficient and probability value of ( $r = 0.561$  and  $0.483$ ,  $N=369$ ,  $pv= 0.000 < 0.05$ ). These values showed the direction, magnitude and significance of the relationship between brand sincerity and measures of spiral consumption. From the result of the analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypotheses which states that



there is no significant relationship between brand sincerity and measures of spiral consumption (frequency of purchase and level of debt) of consumers of cosmetic products in Nigeria.

These findings support the findings of Lervik-Olsen et al. (2024) that use of social media encourages reinforcement of compulsivity -frequency of social media consumption and intensity of consumption, stating that social media consumption behaviour is a habitual factor that function based on situation cues while consumer engagement and motivation is based on fear of missing out, shaped by both injunction norms and descriptive norms.

The current findings also align with the report that sincerity has a positive impact on destination image, and triggers positive behavioural intentions of tourists for sustainable development of the travel destination (Wu et al., 2024). Again, our findings agree with the findings of Yao et al. (2023) that effort of suppliers' green innovation is sincerer when used as substantive against symbols, thus generating higher value co-creation intentions.

In addition, our findings align with the view that frequency and anticipated emotions mediate the relationship between past purchase and future purchase decisions (Yi et al., 2023). They also corroborate the report that consumers attitude towards a brand is formed by predicting influencer trustworthiness, attractiveness, perceived sincerity and similarity (Zhafira et al., 2022).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study probed the correlation between brand sincerity and spiral consumption of consumers of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria. The results of the empirical tests conducted, showed that brand sincerity has significant predictive power over spiral consumption. This is because the results showed moderate, positive and statistically significant correlation between brand sincerity and measures of spiral consumption (frequency of purchase and level of debt).

Based on these findings, the study concluded that brand sincerity predict spiral consumption of consumers of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria; and that spiral consumption of consumers of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria depend on brand sincerity. Consequently, the study recommends that dealerships of cosmetic products in south-south Nigeria that seek to elicit spiral consumption of cosmetic products should project brand sincerity by ensuring authentic, transparent and honest brand communications.

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