Effect of Aaker's Model of Brand Personality on Customer Choice of Branded E-Retailing Outfits

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Abstract

The current global pandemic has forced many customers to carry most of their purchases and other transactions into the virtual environment. As a result, the patronage of online retailers will be affected by how they are perceived by the customers. On this basis, the researcher intends to study the effect of Aaker's Model of brand personality on customers' choice of branded e-retailing outfits. The researcher adopted a cross-sectional research design using the descriptive method to explain the analysis of the data administered. Primary data were gathered through an online survey with the sample size of 397 undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Lagos, participating voluntarily. However, 274 responses were fit and analyzed using the Social Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20). The result revealed that four out of five dimensions of Aaker's models, namely, Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, and Ruggedness have a significant effect on consumers' choice decision for electronic retailers. Sophistication, in contrast, shows no involvement in customers' decision-making process on e-retailing outfits. The findings suggest that majority of University of Lagos students perceived Jumia to be competent, Jiji.Ng as rugged, Konga as competent, Olx.com.ng as rugged, SME Market Hub as competent, Slot.ng as competent, Obeezi as rugged, and Payport as competent. To ensure sustainability, the e-retailing outfits are recommended to improve on four identified variables (i.e., Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, and Ruggedness).

Keywords: brand personality; consumers' choice decision; electronic retailing

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1.   Introduction

Consumers always demand easy and convenient purchases of goods and services, especially when the COVID-19 pandemic strikes globally. Such a situation has forced consumers to go online shopping in order to avoid direct contact with more people. Furthermore, with the rapid development of technology and the bid to search for human convenience, customers have preferred online to the

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traditional brick-and-mortar stores (Thu & Nhung, 2019). Merrilees and Miller (2005) described online retailing as a special type of electronic marketing. It is an internet-based business in which customers can observe and purchase the services and products from their homes, and retailers can sell them at lower costs than of traditional stores (Ahn, Ryu, & Han, 2007).

Traditional retail stores are prone to a lot of risks, such as the large quantity of purchases, unsold products, increasing costs, and declining profit, whereas online retailers can provide a wide of products and minimize such risks (Direction, 2018). It is also impossible for the trading organization to not recognize the importance of online stores which can influence their interaction with customers and increase the organization's profitability (Syaglova, 2019). Government inconsistent policies regarding the internet have has also posed serious threat to the survival of online retailers. For instance, the recent ban on Twitter in Nigeria has reduced the number of viewers who are the major audience of many online retailers, and this raw decision remains a nightmare to major online retailers whose business and survival largely depend on the internet.

Online retailing has a global reach which allows buyers and sellers to transact beyond geographical boundaries (Azar, et.al., 2015). Besides, a considerable amount of attention has been recently paid by marketing researchers on the symbolic meaning attributed by customers to brands. One of which is Aaker's model of brand personality (Zentes, Morschett, & Schramm-Klein, 2008). Only a few studies consider how Aaker's model of brand personality affects customer choice of branded e-retailing outfits, particularly in developing economies such as Nigeria.

Against this background, the present study seeks to answer the research questions of what effects that Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness have on customers' choice of electronic retailing. More specifically, the research objectives were formulated to determine how Aaker's dimensions (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness) impact consumers' choice decisions in electronic retailing, in Nigeria.

2.   Literature Review

2.1.   *Conceptual Model*
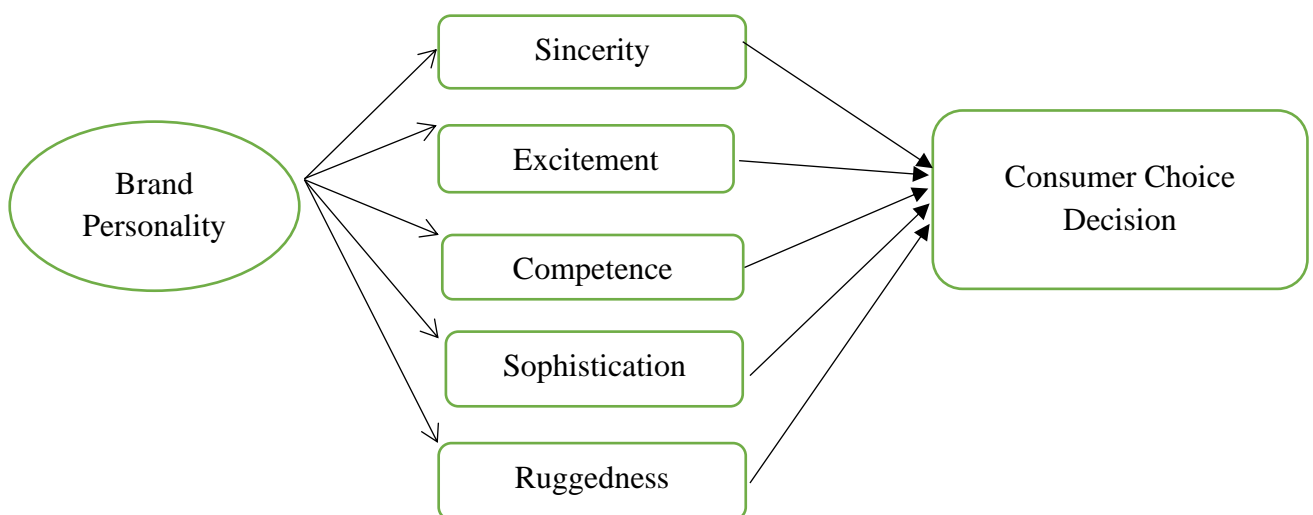
Source: Researcher's desk, 2022

2.2.   *Conceptual Framework*

2.2.1   *Concept of Brand Personality*

Ivens and Valta (2012) believed that branding is more than just highlighting the functional utility of a product or brand. Branding effort has to be directed toward creating brands with unique identity having the ability to position and distinguish themselves in the mind of the consumers (Delvin, 2003). To survive the competition in the dynamic and turbulent marketplace, branding strategy is very important to enable marketers to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors (Kiriri, 2019). Studies on brand personality have assisted marketers to identify these humanlike traits in products in aligning their products with the target markets (Kiriri, 2019). Brand personality also played an important function in shaping consumers' attitude and behavior towards a brand (Shobeiri, Mazaheri, & Laroche, 2015).

Aaker (1997) described brand personality as human characteristics associated with a brand. Zentes et al. (2008) asserted that such existing association shows a general tendency of ascribing human characteristics to inanimate objects which has not been agreed upon in the literature. Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo (2007) described brand personality as the phenomenon of anthropomorphism which is the tendency of associating inanimate objects with human-like characteristics, intentions, motivations, or emotions. However, Lee and Kang (2013) believed that brand personality is not equal to human personality; rather brand personality is regarded as a hypothetical concept developed by the consumers. Lakanie and Mojarrad (2015) asserted that brand personality is formed in the memory of consumers by five types of brand-related stimuli which influence prestige. It emphasised on psychological values beyond a brand or product's functional utility to help sustain individuality and develop differentiation (Rutter, Nadeau, Lettice, Lim, & Al Shamaisi, 2018). Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer (2013) also asserted that brand personality is a major driver in predicting the preferences and choices of customers. Furthermore, Kumar, et al. (2006) suggested that brand personality gives depth, feelings, and liking that build relationships between the brand and the customers. Demo, Silva, Watanabe, and Scussel, (2019) similarly described brand personality as a concept that enables consumers to view a brand as a partner. Attaching these human personalities to the brand could be a major strategy for creating affection for the brand and promoting word-of-mouth referrals (Taleghani & Almasi, 2011). It develops a technique to distinguish a brand from other brands and is a major factor in consumer purchase intention (Bruwer & Buller, 2012). Brand personality can be developed in various ways such as marketing communication, sales promotion, as well as social responsibility (Vahdati, & Mousavi-Nejad, 2016). It is also pivotal in shaping customer attitudes and behavior toward a brand (Shobeiri, et al., 2015).

In addition to the existing definitions, propensities to associate human characteristics to a brand, and functions of brand personality, E-brand personality emerges and is, then, defined as the personality of an online product or service which is often represented by a website, with four dimensions which are bold, analytical, friendly and sophisticated (Park, Choi & Kim, 2005). Chen and Rodgers (2006) defined website personality as a set of traits that includes human characteristics and features of information technologies that are associated with the brand website. They also developed a website personality scale with five dimensions (i.e., intelligent, fun, candid, organized, and sincere). However, for this study we shall be using the Aaker's personality framework.

2.2.2   *Aaker's Brand Personality Framework*

Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework happens to be the most popular framework as there is hardly any work on brand personality that does not mention about this model (De Gauquier, Brengman, Willems, & Van Kerrebroeck, 2019). Aaker (1997) defined brand personality as a set of human characteristics that are associated with a brand and developed a framework that has five distinct

dimensions in line with the big five human personalities as illustrated in Fig.1 Tarver (2021) asserted that customers tend to patronize brands that have a similar personality as theirs.
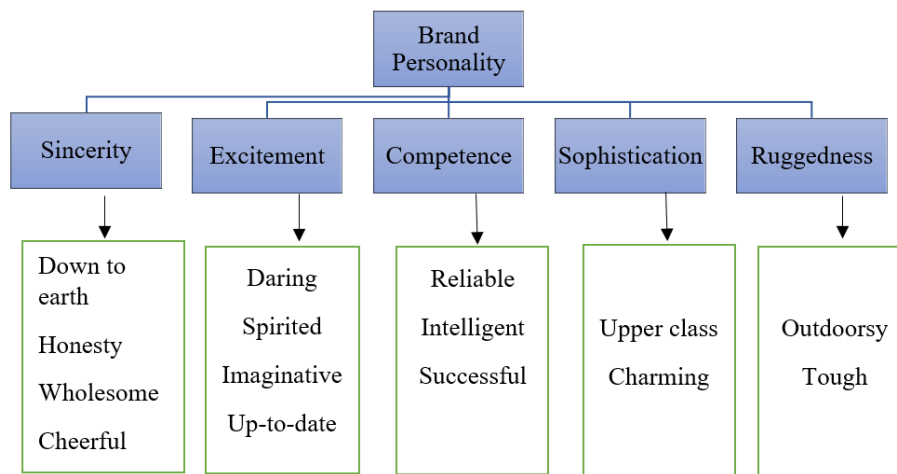
Source: Aaker (1997)

Figure 1. Aaker's model

2.2.3   *Sincerity*

Erickson (1995) believed that Sincerity describes the attribute of a person representing herself truly to others and not one's relationship with oneself. Aaker (1997) described sincerity as being down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful. It also refers to the integrity and reality of the brand (Vahdati and Mousavi-Nejad, 2016), and to the attribute of being honest and genuine and not deceptive (Woodbury, 1984, cited in Perepelkin & Di Zhang, 2014). Though overall service quality impacts positively customer trust, Sincerity has more immediate impression (Perepelkin & Di Zhang, 2014). He (2012) suggested that, in general, Sincerity is the longest brand to exist. Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004) explained that Sincerity is conducive for brands to build long-term relationships with consumers under a normative condition. These brand personality characteristics must be durable to enable the customers to identify them, and thus, get them to be attached to the brand. For example, Coca-Cola is considered to be a cool and sincere brand, a character which has persisted over time differentiating it from its competitors (Niros, & Pollalis, 2014).

2.2.4   *Excitement*

Patel (2021) described Excitement as a state of arousal which results in an increase in heart rate, sympathetic nervous system activity, and hormone production. Vahdati and Mousavi-Nejad, (2016) described it as how exciting and adventurous the brand is. Excitement is also implied to be daring, spirited, imaginative, and current (Aaker, 1997). Similarly, Perepelkin and Di Zhang (2014) illustrated it as the attribute of being daring and spirited. Ragas and Robert (2009) also mentioned the sometimes-witty attitude also describes the excitement dimension. Generally, new brands are perceived to be exciting, but for the existing brands which are considered to fail their customers or to be less attractive, the excitement dimension can be useful in restoring relationships with customers and improving the customers' attitude towards the brands (He, 2012). The emotion of an excited customer could become more powerful, and thus, affect their decision-making abilities which could lead to impulsivity (Patel, 2021). Orr and Patel (2018) asserted that excited and engaged customers improve profit margins by about 23 percent. Therefore, online retailers need to find new ways to get customers excited.

2.2.5 *Competence*

Aaker (1997) explained that Competence means being reliable, intelligent, and successful. A competent brand is innovative, clear, and efficient and can position themselves as the leading expert in their field (Kapok, 2019). Vahdati and Mousavi-Nejad (2016) described it as the sustainability and smartness of a brand. Like the previous descriptions, Guttmann (2019) illustrated competent brand as a brand whose philosophy is reliability, responsibility, trustworthiness, intelligence, success, and, confidence. Butler (1991) also suggested that Competence is the ability of a brand to interpret worries and meet the needs. It means that a brand is supposed to prove to customers its ability to deliver consistently (Ogbuji, Onuoha, & Owhorchukwu, 2016). O'Driscoll, Carson, and Gilmore (2000) asserted competence is a skill, expertise, or capability that an organization possesses that leads to the development of the organization. O'Driscoll, Carson, and Gilmore (2000) further explained that it takes some time to build and nurture lasting competence. Additionally, Competence is usually highlighted by leadership (Tarver, 2021).

2.2.6 *Sophistication*

Oldfield (2020) described Sophistication as building outstanding images that promote rich content. Furthermore, it is regarded as charming, luxurious, glamorous, and upper-class (Aaker, 1997; Guttman, 2019). It also refers to the attractiveness and elegance of a brand (Vahdati and Mousavi-Nejad, 2016). According to Tarver (2021), luxury brands like Chanel and Michael Kors targeted sophistication by focusing on attracting upper-class customers whose lifestyles are glamorous and trendy and the spending is high. Lok (2021) in Schwartz (1966) described the five levels of sophistication as the phase of announcing your arrival to the marketplace, the phase of outbidding the competitors with features, benefits, and claims, the phase of showing customers how it works, the phase of crushing the competitors, and the phase of becoming iconic. Such phases showed that there is a positive relationship between planning, sophistication, and performance (Phillips, 2000).

2.2.7 *Ruggedness*

Aaker (1997) and Guttmann (2019) described rugged brands as those which are built to be durable, tough, outdoorsy, strong, authentic, and have high quality. Similarly, Bhasin (2021) explained that ruggedness is related to the outdoor environment, adventures and toughness, and it reveals the strength, muscularity, authentication, and hardworking nature of the brand. Vahdati and Mousavi-Nejad (2016) also described it as the resistance and power of the brand.

2.2.8 *Consumers' choice decision*

Before making any purchases, consumers indeed consider several aspects such as brands, stores, and prices. Their choice decision has attracted great attention from both researchers and practitioners (Wang, Sun, Niraj, Chung, & Su, 2019). Wang et.al (2019) suggested that it is affected significantly by a set of choice composition, although Sharma and Nair (2017) believed that customers may begin to experience choice overload as a result of extremely various assortments.

3.   **Methodology**

This study is a cross-sectional research design using the descriptive method to examine the influence of e-retail on consumer choice decisions in Lagos using Aaker's Model. A three-part questionnaire was used to gather the data. The first part intended to use the nominal scale to elicit information about the respondents' characteristics such as gender, age, educational qualification, and online shopping

experience. The second part used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) in gathering information adopting the dimensions of Aaker's model. The third part was to elicit the online customers' perception about the various online retailers in Nigeria. Data were gathered through an online survey administered to undergraduate and postgraduate students of the University of Lagos, who participated voluntarily. Students are considered as the most active online shoppers and web users (Lester, Forman & Loyd, 2006), and thus, are suitable to be part of this study. The students were contacted through various Whatsapp groups consisting of undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Lagos using the simple random sampling technique. The University of Lagos has about 57000 undergraduate and postgraduate students (Wikipedia) and thus represents the population for the research. Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine the sample size of 397 respondents. However, 274 responses were recovered and analyzed using the Social Statistic package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20). According to Oasdom (2020), the top eight online stores in Nigeria are Jumia, Jiji.Ng, Konga, Olx.com.ng, SME Market Hub, Slot.ng, Obeezi and Payport. Those online stores would serve as the basis to which study respondents responded.

4.   **Test of Hypotheses**

The focus of this study is to elicit how the Aaker's personality dimensions influence consumer choice decisions to select online retailers and to determine how online consumers perceive the electronic retailers using the Aaker's personality model dimensions.

4.1.   *Presentation of the Results of Analysis of Demographic Data*

Table 1. Result of Analysis of the Demographic of the Respondents

Respondents' Demographic	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender:		
Female	149	54.4
Male	125	45.6
Total	274	100.0
Educational Level:		
PGD	9	3.3
Postgraduate	200	73.0
Undergraduate	65	23.7
Total	274	100.0
Marital Status:		
Married	113	41.2
Single	159	58.0
Widowed	2	.7
Total	274	100.0
Online retailers involved:		
Jiji.ng	20	7.3
Jumia	217	79.2
Konga	14	5.1
Olx.com.ng	4	1.5
Payport	7	2.6
Slot.ng	7	2.6
SME Market Hub	5	1.8
Total	274	100.0

The result presented in Table 1 showed the information of their genders that are made up of 54.4% of females and 45.6% of males; their educational level that is composed of 3.3% of PGDE students, 73% of postgraduate students, and 23.7% of undergraduate students; their marital status which amounts

to 41.2% of married, 58% of single, and 0.7% of widowed; 7.3% indicated Jiji.ng as their preferred online retailers, 79.2% indicated Jumia, 5.1% indicated Konga, 1.5% indicated Olxx.com,ng, 2.6% indicated Payport, 2.6% indicated Slot.ng, and 1.8% indicated SME Market Hub. This implied that postgraduate single students with more money at their disposal patronise mostly the Jumia online stores.

4.2. *Re-Statement of Hypotheses*

The following null hypotheses were formulated below:

H_01: There is no significant relationship between sincerity and choice of electronic retailing

H_02: There is no significant relationship between excitement and choice of electronic retailing

H_03: There is no significant relationship between competence and choice of electronic retailing

H_04: There is no significant relationship between sophistication and choice of electronic retailing

H_05: There is no significant relationship between ruggedness and choice of electronic retailing

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	.991[a]	.981	.981	.99368

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ruggedness, Sophistication, Excitement, Competence

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	154475.383	4	38618.846	16988275.404	.000[b]
	Residual	.602	265	.002		
	Total	154475.985	269			

a. Dependent Variable: E-retailing

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ruggedness, Sophistication, Excitement, Competence

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-.022	.012		-1.790	.075
	Excitement	1.003	.002	.259	600.747	.000
	Competence	1.006	.002	.213	418.241	.000
	Sophistication	.001	.001	.000	.514	.607
	Ruggedness	2.241	.003	.546	781.882	.000
	Sincerity	1.041	.003	.246	471.022	.000

a. Dependent Variable: E-retailing

The regression analysis as expressed by the regression equation, four of the independent variables which were Excitement, Competence, Ruggedness, and Sincerity are positively related to the dependent variable and by extension, these variables were sought to have explained 98.1% of the variation, while Sophistication the third variable exhibited no relationship with the dependent variable. Sophistication might have more of an impact in a developed country than in a less developed or developing one, like Nigeria. Even the four independent variables namely Excitement, Competence, Ruggedness, and Sincerity reflected a weak relationship with the dependent variable e-retailing choices. The implication of these findings indicated that sustainable e-retailing choices can only be achieved either by improving on the four identified variables or the alternative search for more robust variables.

Regression Equation:

Y= E-Retail

a=intercept

b1	=		Coefficient for excitement
b2	=		Coefficient for Competence
b3	=		Coefficient for sophistication
b4	=		Coefficient for ruggedness
b5	=		Coefficient for sincerity
X1	=	EX =	excitement
X2	=	CO =	Competence
X3	=	SO =	Sophistication
X4	=	RU =	Ruggedness
X5	=	SI =	Sincerity

Thus, based on regression analysis, the regression model for this study is, therefore:

E-Retail=a+β1EX+ β2CO+ β3SO+ β4RU+ β5SI

E-Retail=a+0.259+ 0.213+ 0.000+ 0.546+ 0.246

R square= 0.981

The above regression equation shows how the independent variables (Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, Ruggedness, and Sincerity) affected the dependent variable (electronic retailing choice among customers). Furthermore, the variables employed included electronic retailing choice among customers as the dependent variable and Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, Ruggedness, and Sincerity as independent variables in testing the hypotheses. The R square was XXX% from the overall model summary. This is further expressed as Y=a+b1X1+ b2X2+ b3X3+ b4X4, and b5X5 where Y is the dependent variable, a is the intercept, X1, X2, X3, X4, and X5 are the components of the independent variable and b1, b2, b3, b4, and b5 are the coefficient of the independent variables.

5.   Conclusion and Recommendation

The study found Excitement, Competence, Ruggedness, and Sincerity to be particularly impactful on customer choice decisions on e-retailing choice. However, sophistication was found to reflect no relationship with consumer choice decisions. The present researcher believed that the sophistication dimension might not be regarded as important in a less developed or developing economy. However, in a country whose economy is more established, it can be the other way around.

In conclusion, four independent variables, Excitement, Competence, Ruggedness, and Sincerity were found to explain the choice of a branded e-retail outfit. It is therefore recommended that e-retailing outfits need to improve on those identified variables to sustain customers' choices.

Suggestion for further studies

It is suggested that a qualitative approach can be applied to future studies and researchers may go further to investigate other categories of respondents such as the working class to see if the same result will be achieved.

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Pengaruh Model Kepribadian Merek Aaker pada Pilihan Pelanggan Pakaian E-Retailing Bermerek

Abstrak

Pandemi global saat ini telah memaksa banyak pelanggan untuk melakukan sebagian besar pembelian dan transaksi lainnya ke dalam lingkungan virtual. Akibatnya, patronase pengecer online akan dipengaruhi oleh bagaimana mereka dirasakan oleh pelanggan. Atas dasar ini, peneliti bermaksud untuk mempelajari pengaruh Model kepribadian merek Aaker pada pilihan pelanggan pakaian e-retailing bermerek. Peneliti mengadopsi desain penelitian cross-sectional dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif untuk menjelaskan analisis data yang diberikan. Data primer dikumpulkan melalui survei online dengan jumlah sampel 397 mahasiswa sarjana dan pascasarjana di University of Lagos, berpartisipasi secara sukarela. Namun, 274 tanggapan cocok dan dianalisis menggunakan Paket Statistik Sosial untuk Ilmu Sosial (SPSS 20). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa empat dari lima dimensi model Aaker, yaitu Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, dan Ruggedness berpengaruh signifikan terhadap keputusan pilihan konsumen untuk peritel elektronik. Kecanggihan, sebaliknya, tidak menunjukkan keterlibatan dalam proses pengambilan keputusan pelanggan pada pakaian e-retailing. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas mahasiswa Universitas Lagos menganggap Jumia kompeten, Jiji.Ng tangguh, Konga kompeten, Olx.com.ng tangguh, SME Market Hub kompeten, Slot.ng kompeten, Obeezi tangguh, dan Payport sebagai kompeten. Untuk memastikan keberlanjutan, pakaian e-retailing direkomendasikan untuk meningkatkan empat variabel yang teridentifikasi (yaitu, Ketulusan, Kegembiraan, Kompetensi, dan Ketangguhan).

Kata kunci: kepribadian merek, keputusan pilihan konsumen, ritel elektronik