Effects of Service Brand Personality on Brand Performance in the Context of Kenya's Insurance Sector

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ABSTRACT

Authors in the brand management research have emphasized on the need for branding research across a variety of cultures, industries and product/service categories to guide marketing practitioners on brand personification activities, yet the empirical relationship between brand personality and brand performance remains largely under-researched especially in developing economies. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of marketers on their companies' brand personalities and examine the effect of the brand personalities on brand performance in the insurance services sector in Kenya. Through a quantitative social survey on a sample of 214 insurance entities, the study reports that service brand personality has a positive and significant effect on customer-based and financially-based brand performance measures as well as composite/overall brand performance despite having a non-significant effect on employee-based performance measures. These results affirm the proposition that service brand personality differentiates competing brands, implying that the strongest brands have well-defined personalities which enables them to cultivate a competitive advantage over their competitors. Thus, marketing managers must focus on the sources of service brand personality that develops a positive brand personality, creating a distinction in customer's mind relative to other brands and influence brand performance dimensions.

Keywords: *Brand; Brand Performance; Customer-based Measures; Employee-based Measures; Insurance Sector; Financially-based measures; Service Brand Personality;*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Brands are an increasingly important marketing aspect in today's business and marketing environment in which brand building activities continue to represent a significant percentage of overall organizational marketing expenses (Guse, 2011). Given the continuously increasing competition in the operating business environment, it has become imperative for companies to differentiate in the market, gain the customers' awareness while sustaining their loyalty to gain competitive advantage (Hunt, 2000). Brands can midwife this achievement. A brand which is widely recognized and liked in the market and commands a loyal customer base is a significant financial asset for an organisation (Korhonen, 2010). Indeed, arguments have been advanced vouching for positive linkage between strong and differentiated brands and firm's performance (Colucci *et al.* 2008; Madden *et al.,* 2006; Warlop *et al.*, 2005). To manage brands properly, therefore, marketers would require a clear understanding of the drivers of brand performance. Consequently, both marketing scholars and practitioners have shown strong interest in concepts and mechanisms that can potentially increase the value of a business firm's brand portfolio(Guse, 2011).

The mental processes triggered by brands inside the customer's mind have dominated academic research over the last two decades. Brand personality is one among those key theoretical constructs that have attracted special interest and represents a strategic tool that allows for the establishment of strong brands (Keller and Lehmann 2003). Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) describe brand personality as the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands. Brand personality describes how an organization imbues a brand with human personality traits intended to create symbolic associations that are strong, unique and congruent to the customer (Freling & Forbes, 2005), aimed at enhancing brand performance by communicating desired symbolic meanings to the customer through the brand.

Plummer (2000) offers that brand personality is critical to the understanding of brand choice among consumers, while van Rekom *et al.* (2006) argue that strong brand personality is invaluable in building brand equity where differentiation based on quality seems to be very thin among competing firms. A significant number of other scholars have theorized brand personality to be a significant source of customer-based brand equity and loyalty (e.g. Aaker, 1996; Ang and Lim, 2006; Anisimova, 2007; Burmann *et al.*, 2009). However, majority of these prior studies tend to focus on theoretically describing and providing an understanding of brand personality, leaving a wide knowledge gap pertaining to the understanding of the nexus between brand personality and various dimensions of brand performance (Anisimova, 2007; Freling & Forbes, 2005). As a result, there is insufficient knowledge to guide the development of brand personalities that enhance customer-based brand equity and other brand performance measures. Nevertheless, a number of authors in brand management research suggest that there is need for research across a variety of cultures, industries and product/service categories (Aaker, 1997, 1999; Ekinici & Hosany, 2003) to guide marketing practitioners on brand personification activities yet the empirical relationship between brand personality and brand performance remains largely under-researched especially in developing economies.

This study applies existing brand personality measurement scales to evaluate the perceptions of marketers on their companies' brand personalities and its effect on corporate brand performance in the context of insurance services sector in Kenya. The services sector has emerged as an important component the economy in many countries that significantly contribution to Gross Domestic Product, job creation and provides crucial inputs for the rest of the economy (Banga, 2005; Deloitte, 2011; Mukherjee, 2013). The insurance sector plays an important role in the financial services industry in almost all developed and developing countries, contributing to economic growth, efficient resource allocation, reduction of transaction costs, creation of liquidity, facilitation of economies of scale in investment, and spread of financial losses (Haiss & Sumegi, 2008; Han *et al*., 2010; Horng *et al.,* 2012; Lee *et al.,* 2013; Taiwo *et al*., 2014). Consequently, the performance of insurance firms is of major importance to various stakeholders such as policyholders, agents and policy makers.

Kenya's insurance sector is the most developed in Sub-Saharan Africa, but the performance of the industry has not been impressive in spite of a reported 7% growth in investments in product marketing and marketing itself having been identified as the number one driver of industry growth by 21% of Insurance company CEOs in 2013 (Insurance Regulatory Authority, 2013). The key challenges for the industry include the cut throat competition within industry that has too many underwrites in a small market; the industry is largely driven by brokers who sell insurance as a commodity, causing the insurance companies to be less aggressive as far as branding is concerned as compared to other countries and; the insurance industry at large lacks differentiation at the corporate positioning level as well as in products offering. This low focus on brand development, management and measurement leads to low emotional appeal for the insurance industry, which is a major drawback for an industry whose details are difficult for consumers to understand. However, it is somewhat surprising that there is limited research that investigates branding activities in the industry and its linkage with brand performance, yet without empirical evidence on the relationship between branding activities and brand performance, industry practitioners may not accomplish much. Thus, the objectives of this paper were to examine the perceptions of marketers on their insurance entities' brand personalities and to determine the relationship between brand personalities and corporate brand performance in the insurance services sector in Kenya.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Identity and Brand Personality

Brand personality is a major component of brand identity. Kapferer (2008) defines brand identity as specifying the facets of the brands' uniqueness and value as communicated by the firm. According to Janonis *et al.* (2007), brand identity includes everything that makes the brand meaningful and unique. Saaksjarvi and Samiee (2011) describe the construct as a unique set of brand associations that firms aim to create or maintain. Based on a synthesis of prior extant literature, Coleman (2011) defines service brand identity as the strategist's vision of how a service brand should be perceived by its stakeholders.

Scholars have typically conceptualized brand identity as multi-dimensional constructs of which brand personality is an important element. Kapferer (2008) Hexagonal Identity Prism model conceptualizes brand identity along six facets: personality, physique, culture, relationships, self image and reflection. Aaker's Brand Identity Planning System considers brand identity from four perspectives: brand as a product, an organization, as a person and as a symbol (Saaksjarvi & Samiee, 2011). Aaker and Joachimsthaler's (2000) Brand Leadership Model organizes brand identity elements around four perspectives: the brand as a product; the brand as an

organization; the brand as a person and; the brand as a symbol. These conceptualizations help brand strategists consider different brand elements which clarify, distinguish and add depth to a brand identity (Coleman, 2011). Building on earlier work de Chernatony's (2006) Process of Managing a Brand model conceptualizes brand identity into four aspects: personality, positioning, vision and culture and relationship.

Kapferer (2008) considers a brand as a speech flowing from a sender to a receiver and argue that the brand identity dimensions of physique (physical features and qualities) and personality (human personality traits) picture the sender. The identity dimensions of reflection (image of the target group) and self-image (how the brand makes consumers feel) depict the receiver. The dimensions of culture (values) and relationship (mode of conduct) form a bridge between the sender and the receiver. Personality of the brand indicates the sort of personality characteristics the brand would possess were it a person. It considers how brands can be 'humanized' through 'traits' and so reveals the brand's character and attitude in a more emotionally orientated manner (Kapferer, 2008). Developing brand personality entails addressing questions such as if this brand was a person what type of person would it be. This facet of Kapferer's (2008) model draws heavily on Aaker's (1997) seminal brand personality work. The personality facet is readily interpreted as it is relatively straightforward to transfer familiar personality traits such as calm, cold or caring to brand identity. One of the most effective ways of communicating this brand personality is by using a person that is widely known to have and represent similar values to the brand, which has been an aspect of marketing advertising for some time.

The foregoing theoretical foundations point to the fact that brand personality a very important component of brand identity and that brand identity is a complex, multidimensional construct. Although agreement on the dimensionality of brand identity does not exist, there is concurrence that brand personality is part and parcel of brand identity.

2.2 Brand Performance

A broad range of measures have been used to operationalize brand performance in the marketing literature (Ambler, 2003; Lehmann *et al.,* 2008; Schultz, 2005). Extant streams of brand performance measurement literature revolve around customer, financial and employee dimensions. The importance of a customer has been central to marketing since the advent of the marketing concept (Coleman, 2011). Furthermore, marketing theory and practice have become increasingly customer driven with constructs such as marketing orientation becoming central to the discipline (Ambler, 2003). Developing a market orientation has been shown to have a notable effect on the performance of service brands (Cano *et al.,* 2004). On the other hand, the importance of financially based brand performance measures has been underlined by a number of scholars (Doyle, 2000; Munoz & Kumar, 2004; Schultz, 2005, 2006). Use of financially based brand performance measurement has been amplified by the growing need to justify marketing expenditures (Ambler, 2003). With respect to employee brand performance measures, the corporate branding literature review reveals the pivotal role employees play for service brands (Berry and Seltman, 2007; Brodie *et al.,* 2009; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2008). Consequently, 'customer', 'finance' and 'employees' emerge as key service brand performance dimensions in the brand performance literature (Coleman, 2011).

2.3 Service Brand Personality and Brand Performance

Harris and Fleming (2005) note that brand personality plays an important role in the service sector given the predominantly intangible nature of service brands that can make distinguishing between such brands challenging. Indeed, brand personality plays a particularly influential differentiating role when little or no functional distinction can be made between competing brands (Coleman, 2011). Freling and Forbes (2005) add that a strong, favourable brand personality may have less of an impact on consumer preferences for products predominantly characterized by search and be relatively more important to consumers for products that are predominantly characterized by experience or credence qualities. Consequently, the differentiating role of brand personality appears to take on greater importance for service brands. The reason being it can act as a surrogate for the brand's intrinsic attributes which may otherwise be difficult to evaluate prior to purchase (Freling & Forbes, 2005).

Extant branding literature elucidates several performance-related benefits that emanate from developing a brand personality. These include, along customer measures: facilitating relationship building between the organization and the customer (Swaminathan *et al.,* 2009), fostering greater brand loyalty (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Magin *et al.,* 2003; Zentes *et al.,* 2008) and enhancing positive brand attitudes (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004). A study by Kressmann *et al.* (2006) indicates that self-image congruity which is related to brand personality positively affects brand loyalty directly and indirectly through functional congruity, product

involvement and brand relationship quality while Phau and Lau (2001) supports the finding that differentiation using brand personality increases awareness and attachment, thus enhancing levels of trust and loyalty to a brand. These studies largely point to a positive relationship of brand personality trait on consumer-based brand performance measures in different product market settings. It is therefore hypothesised that:

H1: Service brand personality has a positive and statistically significant effect on customer-based brand performance measures

Prior studies conducted on the brand identity have also shown that brand personality helps build consumer-based brand equity (Keller, 2008; Freling & Forbes, 2005), providing a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Keller & Richey, 2006; Sherrington, 2003), engendering a greater willingness to pay premium prices (Freling & Forbes, 2005), facilitating brand extension (Freling & Forbes, 2005). Freling and Forbes' (2005) study on the effects of brand personality within the B2C context reported that personality engenders a greater willingness to pay premium prices in the bottled water market. Swaminathan *et al.* (2009) reported that brand personality increases purchase likelihood of jeans, while Persson's (2010) empirical research shows that brand associations such as brand personality influence buyers' willingness to pay a premium for corrugated packaging. Scholars have also noted the positive influence that brand personality has on brand preference and usage (Sweeney & Brandon, 2006). Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H2: Service brand personality has a positive and statistically significant effect on financially-based brand performance measures

Finally, whilst the paucity of empirical research linking brand personality and employee performance measures such as employee satisfaction and retention is evident in the literature, as discussed earlier, the corporate branding literature recognizes that employees play a significant role for service brands (e.g. Berry and Seltman, 2007; Brodie *et al.,* 2009; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). It is therefore reasonable to assume that customer congruity with organizational brand personality significantly influences employee performance measures in an organization. Consequently, it is hypothesised that:

H3: Service brand personality has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee-based brand performance measures

Combining the three measures of brand performance, the overall hypothesis thus is:

H4: Service brand personality has a positive and statistically significant effect on overall brand performance

3.0 STUDY METHODS

Given the deductive nature of the research hypotheses developed in the course of literature review for this paper, the social survey research design with quantitative approaches to data collection was adopted. The study was conducted in Kenya's insurance sector and targeted regulated insurance entities at the institutional level and marketing executives/CEOs at the elementary level. The sampling frame comprised named senior corporate Marketing Managers/Officers and CEOs/Managing Directors/Principal Officers of 524 regulated insurance entities excluding Insurance Agents who are mainly individuals and mostly sell insurance policies on behalf of more than one insurance firm. Scientifically viable sample sizes of the different insurance entities were earmarked for study, bring the total institutional sample size to 449, while selection of two key informants from each entity from among the Marketing Manager, CEO/MD, Marketing Executive, Principal Officer or Marketing Officer made up a total of 898 sample elementary units. The use of multi-informants was aimed at minimizing common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.,* 2003; Eng & Jones, 2009) and enhancing response rate based on Cycyota and Harrison's (2006) finding that executive research yields an average response rate of 28%.

A quantitative survey questionnaire was constructed and used to collect data on the constructs under study. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section collected bio data of the respondents and information on their organizations. The second section contained service brand personality items while the third section contained subjective brand performance measures. Operationalization of service brand personality focused on measuring strong, unique and favourable associations which brand personality can generate (Keller, 2003) and was measured using 9 scale items, 3 items adopted from Coleman *et al.'s* (2011) service brand identity scale, while 5 more items were generated from literature review and following suggestions made by Keller (2003).

Brand performance measurement scale comprised 8 subjective rand performance measures along financial, customer and employee based dimensions adapted from Coleman *et al.* (2011). All questions in sections two and three of the questionnaires were measured on Likert scales anchored by strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was pilot-tested on a convenient sample of 50 participants from among the insurance agents. Conducting the pilot study among insurance agents ensured that the actual study would not be conducted on respondents would have already had prior knowledge of the research instruments would influence their subsequent responses as advised by Haralambos and Holborn (2000). The ultimate survey of the insurance entities was administered online.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Organizations' and Respondents' Sample Profiles

The study targeted both institutions and individual respondents as the ultimate elementary sampling units. At the institutional level, responses from a total of 214 regulated insurance entities were received against an originally designed sample of 449. At the elementary level, the study utilized responses from a total of 428 responses obtained from the 214 regulated entities. Overall, these figures represented a 47.66% response rate. Out of the 214 regulated insurance entities that made up the final survey sample, the highest percentage were insurance brokers (46.3%) followed by motor assessors (17.3%) and insurance investigators (14%). Mainstream insurance companies made up to 12.6% of the sample while motor assessors were 1.4% of the final sample. In terms of organizational age, 32.7% of the entities had operated for more than 20 years while the lowest percentage (17.8%) had been in their respective businesses for between 6-10 years. Size-wise, slightly over half (53.7%) of the regulated insurance entities had up to 50 employees compared to 24.8% and 21.5% of the entities that had between 51 and 100 and more than 100 employees respectively.

The demographic profile of the ultimate study participants consists of sex, education, position held in the insurance entity and working experience in the entity. The respondents included more males (73.8%) than females (26.2%). With regard to educational background, the highest percentage of respondents (48.6%) had attained bachelor's degree qualifications, followed by 38.3% who had masters degree qualifications and 13.1% diploma level education graduates. Collectively, more than three quarters (86.9%) of the respondents were graduates or professionals. In terms of their position in the insurance entities, the largest section of the respondents (33.7%) were marketing managers, followed by marketing officers (16.8%) and then Principal officers (15.9%). Marketing executives and managing directors made up to 15.0% of the sample in each case while the CEOs were 3.7%. Finally, with regard to working experience, 45.8% had worked with their respective entities for 6-10 years, 29% for between 1 and 5 years and 25.2% for over 10 years. Overall, 75% of the respondents had over 5 years working experience with their current entities and were therefore in a position to provide fair evaluation of branding activities as well as provide reliable information on their respective entities' average performance based on subjective measures.

4.2 Results of Descriptive Results

4.2.1 Means and Standard Deviations of Brand Personality Measurement Scale

The final brand personality (BP) measurement scale after deleting one item due to its marginal contribution to scale reliability during the pilot test consists of 8 items reflecting the human characteristics associated with the brand, which are intended to be generated in the mind of clients when they utilize the services offered by the brand. Based on the mean score for each item, the respondents demonstrated rather strong agreement that the reputation that their respective brands command among their clients is very important to the organization (M=4.68, SD=0.47), as the clients see the brand as unique compared to competitors (M=4.40, SD=0.61). Additionally, the respondents agreed that their respective clients have no difficulty describing what their brands stands for (M=4.39, SD=0.62); their respective brand image is regarded favourably by their clients (M=4.38, SD=0.52); evoke feelings of confidence in the minds of their clients (M=4.34, SD=0.62); that the image of their respective brands is completely different from their competitors (M=4.25, SD=0.56) and that the image their brands paints in the minds of their clients is extremely positive (M=4.24, SD=062). The respondents further agreed that their respective brands evoke feelings of comfort among their clients (M=4.19, SD=0.78). The results of the descriptive analysis were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the Brand Personality Scale Items

Items and Descriptions	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
BP_1 The image our brand paints in the minds of our clients is extremely positive	4.24	.618	-.208	-.577
BP_2 Our clients have no difficulty describing what our brand stands for	4.39	.616	-.477	-.637
BP_3 Our brand image is regarded favourably by our clients	4.38	.515	.170	-1.263
BP_4 The image of our brand is completely different from our competitors	4.25	.558	.009	-.384
BP_5 Our clients see our brand as unique compared to our competitors	4.40	.610	-.477	-.637
BP_6 Our brand evokes feelings of confidence in the minds of our clients	4.34	.620	-.372	-.655
BP_7 Our brand evokes feelings of comfort among our clients	4.19	.779	-.891	.691
BP_8 The reputation that our brand commands among our clients is very important us	4.68	.469	-.765	-1.428

The results of this section indicate that brand strategists in the services sector in general, and the insurance sub-sector in Kenya in particular recognize the important role brand personality plays in building relationships between the brand and customers, which generates customers emotional attachment to the brand with potential to drive competitive advantage. This is consistent with Keller (2003) who vouches for the importance of brands to have personality traits, a position that Berry (2000) notes that service companies with strongest brands make a conscious effort to carve out a distinct brand personality, which, according to Hoefller and Keller (2003a) enables the brand to convey much richer and contextually based information thus providing a basis for developing a brand-customer bond which, due to their nature, is particularly relevant for service brands.

4.2.2 Means and Stand Deviations of Brand Performance Measurement Scale

Descriptive statistics for the brand performance (BPERF) measurement scale are reported in Table 2. The measurement scale comprised of 8 items used to assess the respondents' views on their organizations' average performance in the last three years compared to their main competitors. Similar to the brand personality measurement scale, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale. The mean scores of the scale items ranged from 4.14 to 4.46. The respondents expressed rather strong agreement (M=4.46, SD=0.55) that on average, their respective companies' reputation had been significantly better than their main competitors'. They further agreed that on average, their companies' performance was better that their main competitors' in net profits (M=4.36, SD=0.55), employee satisfaction (M=4.36, SD=0.53), employee retention (M=4.34, SD=0.51), customer awareness of the company and services (M=4.26, SD=0.52), relative customer satisfaction (M=4.22, SD=0.58), customer loyalty (M=4.21, SD=0.60) and market share based on revenue (M=4.14, SD=0.51).

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Brand Performance Measurement Scale

Items Description		Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
BPERF_1	Customer loyalty	4.21	.598	-.116	-.436
BPERF_2	Relative customer satisfaction	4.22	.576	-.045	-.338
BPERF_3	Market share (based on revenue)	4.14	.508	-.430	3.843
BPERF_4	Net profit	4.36	.552	-.249	.273
BPERF_5	Company reputation	4.46	.553	-.505	.246
BPERF_6	Customer awareness of the company and services	4.26	.519	.242	-.381
BPERF_7	Employee satisfaction	4.36	.526	.115	-.972
BPERF_8	Employee retention	4.34	.512	.267	-.986

4.2.3 Normality of Measurement Scales

As a rule of thumb, Byrne (1998) suggested that variables can be considered as moderately non-normal if they indicate skewness values ranging from 2.00 to 3.00 and kurtosis values from 7.00 to 21.00; extreme normality is defined by skewness values greater than 3.00 and kurtosis values greater than 21. In this study, skewness and kurtosis results for brand personality and brand performance scale items as already been reported in Tables 1 and 2 indicated that it was reasonable to consider that generally, the measurement items were normally distributed with marginal deviations from normality. Field advises that skewness and kurtosis tests should always be used in conjunction with visual inspection of histograms to make an informed decision about the extent of non-normality based on converging evidence. Observed shapes of the Normal Q-Q plots for all the scales' items showed that the actual (observed) values slightly deviated from the straight line, that is expected (normal) values (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

4.2.4 Reliability Analysis

Initial reliability examination of the measurement scales was conducted in SPSS 23 through an examination of each Cronbach's alpha coefficients and item-to-total correlations (ITC). Item-to-total correlations are the correlations between each item and the total score of the measurement scale (Field, 2005). The analysis was conducted for each of the measurement scales of service brand personality and brand performance with the objective of identifying and removing potentially problematic items (Tables 3 and 4). As a rule of thumb, a .70 cutoff value was established for the Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, 1978). As for the item-to-total correlation, cut-off value of 0.5 recommended by Zaichkowsky (1985) was adopted. The item deletion process was performed in order to increase the alpha value. The items were deleted one at a time, starting with the one with the lowest ITC, and the reliability for the new alpha value was re-tested. Initial reliability estimates for each construct's measurement scale indicated that the alpha coefficients for each construct were exceeded 0.7, showing a high degree of internal consistency. The service brand personality scale had an initial alpha of 0.737 while brand performance measurement scale had 0.758.

Table 3: Brand Personality Item Reliability Analysis (n_1 = 214)

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Initial Scale Alpha	Corrected Alpha
BP_1	30.63	5.907	.645	.665	.737	.785
BP_2	30.48	6.260	.515	.693		
BP_3	30.49	6.758	.449	.708		
BP_4#	30.62	7.017	.304	.733		
BP_5#	30.47	6.936	.286	.738		
BP_6	30.53	6.297	.497	.697		
BP_7#	30.68	6.041	.413	.720		
BP_8#	30.19	7.066	.378	.721		

#Deleted Item

Table 4: Brand Performance Item Reliability Analysis (n_1 = 214)

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Initial Scale Alpha	Corrected Alpha
BPERF_1	30.12	5.253	.522	.720	.758	.759
BPERF_2	30.12	5.399	.589	.727		
BPERF_3	30.20	5.504	.536	.720		
BPERF_4	29.98	5.371	.533	.719		
BPERF_5	29.88	5.666	.506	.742		
BPERF_6#	30.07	5.985	.310	.759		
BPERF_7	29.98	5.662	.540	.736		
BPERF_8	30.00	5.775	.509	.741		

#Deleted Item

4.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

After deleting the four troublesome items from the brand personality scale, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the remaining 4 items using structural equation modelling (SEM) in the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) Version 23.0 to examine whether the collected data was consistent with a very constrained hypothesised brand personality measurement model (Byrne, 2001) and evaluate to what extent the collected data set confirmed the theoretical aspects of brand personality (Hair *et al.*, 2006). The properties of the single-factor service brand personality measurement constructs were tested using SEM in AMOS 23.0, and the maximum likelihood (ML) method as an estimation technique for model evaluation and procedures (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Bentler 1983; Byrne 1998). The hypothesised brand personality model was examined using three types of fit index: absolute fit indices; incremental fit indices; and parsimonious fit indices (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). The CFA produced a significant chi-square statistic (χ^2 = 15.777, df = 2, p= .000, N = 214). Among the absolute fit indices, only root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA=0.180) fell beyond the recommended level of acceptable fit of below 0.08 (Hair *et al.,* 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell 2007) but both standardised root mean square residual (SRMR=0.015) and goodness-of-fit index (GFI=0.963) were within the recommended values. For incremental fit indices, only normed fit index (NFI=0.941) met the required value for a good fitting model while adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) was 0.816 and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) was 0.842. Finally, for the parsimonious fit measures, comparative fit index (CFI) and incremental fit index (IFI), both met the required minimum fit values above 0.9 as CFI was 0.947 and IFI was 0.948.

Overall, these model fit indices implied that the model was not a good fit to the data but assessment of the AMOS output's parameter estimates and modification indices revealed that there was room for improving the model fit by offloading BP_6 (Our brand evokes feelings of confidence in the minds of our clients) which had a factor loading of less than 0.6 (0.58) (Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Its R^2 value was .309, which was equally perilously below the .50 minimum value as suggested by Bollen (1989) and Steenkamp and van Trijp (1991), while the modification indices indicated that there was misspecification between BP_1 and BP_6 with the error term associated with BP_6 revealing misspecification between BP_6 and both BP_1 and BP_2. Appearance of BP_6 and its associated error more frequently in the modification indices was indicative of a problematic item (Byrne, 2001), which provided justification for its removal. Upon deleting BP_6, the brand personality measurement model retained only three indicators and according to Kline (2005), if a standard CFA model with a single factor has at least three indicators, the model is identified. Thus, the brand personality measurement model was identified and the fit statistics were as follows: χ^2 = 0.000 (df = 0); RMSEA = 0.00; SRMR=0.000; GFI=1.00; NFI=1.00; AGFI = 0; TLI=0; CFI=1.00 and; IFI=1.00. Thus, further modification of the model was not tenable.

4.3.1 Validity and Reliability of Final Brand Personality Measurement Scale

The internal consistency of the final service brand personality measurement scale was assessed using both the Cronbach's alpha and calculation of composite reliability using the Fornell and Larker's (1981) composite reliability formula. The composite reliability for the measurement scale was above the recommended level of 0.6, that is, 0.92 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) while its Cronbach's alpha value was above the 0.7 (i.e. 0.79) (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 6: Std Factor Loading, t-Values, AVE and Composite Reliability for Brand Personality

Construct Item	Std Factor Loading	t-Value	p-Value	AVE	Composite reliability
Brand Personality				0.79	0.92
BP_1	.732	N/A			
BP_2	.823	8.640	.000		
BP_3	.686	8.514	.000		

Convergent validity was examined in three ways. First, via the average variance extracted (AVE) for the brand personality construct which was obtained by substituting AMOS output into Fornell and Larcker's (1981) formula. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), convergent validity is achieved when AVE value is greater than 0.5. The AVE values for the brand personality construct was 0.79, thus confirming the scale's convergent validity. The second evidence of convergent validity can be judged from the standardised factor loadings which should be greater than 0.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). For this study, the standardised factor loadings ranged from .686 to .823, further confirming convergent validity of the service brand identity measurement scale. Finally, convergent validity can be adduced if each indicator's standardised factor loading coefficients on its posited underlying construct factor produces statistically significant results at the *p* = .05 level (Holmes-Smith *et al.,* 2006; Lin and Ding, 2005). In other words, if the *t*-value for each item being significant (i.e. >1.96) then convergent validity can be proved. In this study, the *t*-values were all significant at p=0.000 and ranged from 8.51 to 8.64, thus supporting convergent validity.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

The study specifically sought to determine the influence of brand personality brand performance measures namely customer, financially based and employee measures. Thus, the structural model was estimated to test the underlying hypotheses outlined in Section 2.3 of literature review. Consequently, the structural model was estimated using Maximum Likelihood Estimation and goodness-of-fit indices examined to assess if the hypothesized structural model fit the data. The model's goodness-of-fit statistics as well as the hypothesised path coefficients were reviewed to verify the stated hypotheses. The structural model provided broadly satisfactory levels of fit with χ^2 = 165.642 (df = 32, *N*=214); RMSEA = 0.09; SRMR=0.049; GFI=0.89; NFI=0.91; AGFI = 0.88; TLI=0.89; CFI=0.90 and; IFI=0.91. Based on these fit statistics, it was reasonable to review the path coefficients and their levels of significance to determine the direct effects of service brand personality on the three dimensions of brand performance. The SEM findings were assessed based on estimated path coefficient (β) value with critical ratio (C.R. equivalent to *t*-value) and the associated *p*-value. The standard decision rules (t-value greater than or equal to 1.96 and p-value ≤ .05) were applied in deciding the significance of the path coefficient between brand performance dimensions (dependent variable) and service brand personality (independent variables) (Bryne, 2001).

AMOS results (Table 7) revealed that the direct path coefficient between brand personality and customer-based brand performance measures was significant with estimated β coefficient value = 0.170, *t*-value = 1.962 and p = 0.05) thus proving support for *H1*. The path coefficient for hypothesis *H2* was also significant in the structural model (Estimated β value = 0.12 with *t*-value = 2.655 and *p* =0.015). Consequently, this result confirmed the second hypothesis - *H2*. However, the third hypothesis (*H3*) was not supported by the results of this study because the path coefficient from brand personality to employee-based brand performance measures was not significant (Estimated β value = 0.094 with *t*-value = 1.679 and p > .093). Despite the results not providing support for *H3,* the hypothesised direct positive and significant relationship between brand personality and overall brand performance was validated by this study. The direct path between brand personality and overall brand performance had an estimated β value = 0.149 (*t*-value = 2.531 and p = 0.012) thus validating *H4*.

The findings of this study indicate that service brand personality significantly influences customer-based brand performance measures, in particular customer loyalty and relative customer satisfaction which build reputation for the company among its customers. These empirical findings are largely consistent with the findings of prior studies that have reported the positive influence that brand personality has on brand loyalty (e.g. Freling & Forbes, 2005b; Magin *et al.,* 2003; Zentes *et al.,* 2008) as well as those that have provided evidence that brand personality enhances positive brand attitudes (e.g. Freling & Forbes, 2005b; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004) that eventually define customer satisfaction. Such findings provide critical support to the argument that brand personality is influential in differentiating competing brands as advanced by Coleman (2011), which then enables brands to cultivate competitive advantage that is reflected in enhanced financial performance metrics as also confirmed by the findings herein, which indicate that service brand personality has some predictive influence on a company's financially-based performance metrics. This is in tandem with studies that have reported the positive influence of brand personality on financially-based brand performance measures such as Swaminathan *et al.* (2009) and Persson's (2010) which arise from the customers' willingness to pay premium prices. As argued by Wysung (2000), when service brand personality associations are strongly enabled in consumers' mind, it affects consumer behaviour and attitudes toward the brand which eventually influences the relationship between the consumer and the brand including brand preference (Kim, 2000), brand attachment (Sung, 2005), brand trust (Hess, 2007) and brand loyalty (Bercus, 2009). This means a strong commitment and by the customer to permanent buying and using the brand (Yoo, 2005), which generally translates to good market brand performance in both customer-based and financially-based measures.

Table 7: SEM Output for Hypothesised Path Relationships in the Structural Model

Hypotheses	Paths		Std (β)	SE	t-value	p-value
H1: Service brand personality has a positive and statistically significant effect on customer-based brand performance measures	CUS <---	BP	.170	.128	1.962	.050
H2: Service brand personality has a positive and statistically significant effect on financially-based brand performance measures	FIN <---	BP	.120	.110	2.655	.015
H3: Service brand personality has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee brand performance measures	EMP <---	BP	.094	.114	1.679	.093
H4: Service brand personality has a positive and statistically significant effect on brand performance	BPERF <---	BP	.149	.132	2.531	.012

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed to examine the effect of service brand personality on brand performance within the context of a developing economy. The results obtained confirm that service brand personality has a positive effect on customer-based and financially-based brand performance measures and consequently, overall brand performance within the insurance services sector setting. These results affirm the proposition that service brand personality differentiates competing brands, implying that the strongest brands have well-defined personalities which enables them to cultivate a competitive advantage over their competitors.

The implication of this study's results is that marketers should imbue their service brands with personality traits that have potential to contribute to customer satisfaction and brand loyalty which the influences the financial

performance of the brand. The results show that for service brands, brand image is particularly a significant aspect of brand personality. Service brands that fail to paint positive image in the minds of the consumer is less likely to be receive favourable attitudes by the consumer compared to competing service brands have strong personality propositions. Marketers who hope to achieve market success for their service brands must take note of these findings and use them develop a mix of brand personality features with their marketing strategies as well as strengthen the tone of their brand communications to create distinctive brand personality and enhance customer choice probability for their brands. The marketing managers must focus on the sources of service brand personality that develops a positive brand personality, creating a distinction in customer's mind relative to other brands and influence brand performance dimensions.

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