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INVESTIGATING THE DETERMINANTS OF BRAND EQUITY AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR IN EMERGING MARKETS

George Dominic Ewur
Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa
Email: 22174971@dut4life.ac.za

Jeevarathnam Parthasarathy Govender
Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa
Email: govendej@dut.ac.za

John Amoah
Takoradi Technical University, Takoradi, Ghana
Email: jamoah29@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the key drivers of brand equity and examine their influence on consumer purchase behaviour in emerging markets. Specifically, it examines how brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived quality, grounded in the consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) framework, influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. Empirical data were collected from students at technical universities via purposive sampling, yielding 372 valid responses. The study employed Partial Least Squares (PLS) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to analyse the relationships between brand equity drivers and consumer purchase behaviour. All hypothesised relationships were supported, confirming that brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived quality significantly influence consumer purchase behaviour in emerging markets. The findings highlight practical implications for marketers, emphasising the need to adapt branding strategies to local consumer preferences and to leverage both global and local brand strengths. Marketers should focus on enhancing all dimensions of brand equity to foster stronger consumer engagement and drive purchase decisions. This research enriches the understanding of brand equity dynamics in emerging markets, providing actionable insights for academics and practitioners. It underscores the importance of context-specific strategies for building and sustaining brand equity, thereby improving brand performance and consumer loyalty in dynamic market environments.

KEYWORDS: Brand equity, consumer purchasing behaviour, brand loyalty, brand association.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: H57, L25, P47

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INTRODUCTION

Branding has emerged as a pivotal strategy for firms worldwide, offering substantial benefits such as differentiation, increased profitability, customer loyalty, and a sustained competitive edge (Melović et al., 2020; Nguyen Van et al., 2023). Companies that invest in building strong brands consistently outperform those that do not, enjoying advantages that are well-documented in the literature (Mirzaei et al., 2022). Central to the discourse on branding is the concept of brand equity (BE), which has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years (Iglesias et al., 2019; Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2022; Algharabat et al., 2020). Brand equity, particularly customer-based brand equity (CBBE), is recognised for its significant impact on firm performance and consumer behaviour (Wang & Sengupta, 2016; Nguyen–Viet & Nguyen

Anh, 2022). However, there remains a lack of consensus regarding its definition, scope, and measurement (Londono et al., 2016; Bergkvist & Eisend, 2021; Hao et al., 2021).

In today's dynamic global marketplace, brand equity plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour, influencing factors such as perceived quality, brand recognition, loyalty, and associations (Parris & Guzman, 2023). Understanding how brand equity affects purchasing decisions is essential for businesses seeking to build strong brand identities and foster lasting customer relationships (Sharma, 2020). This is particularly relevant in emerging economies like Ghana, where rapid urbanisation, rising incomes, and evolving consumer preferences have transformed the marketplace (Asante et al., 2023).

Ghana's consumer market has witnessed significant expansion and diversification, fueled by both the growth of indigenous enterprises and the entry of multinational corporations (Bannor et al., 2024). Emerging markets present distinct challenges and opportunities for building and sustaining brand equity. Factors such as rapid economic growth, evolving consumer preferences, and varying degrees of market maturity require brands to adapt their strategies to local contexts.

While the relationship between brand equity and firm performance has been extensively studied in developed markets, a notable research gap remains regarding how brand equity dimensions influence consumer purchasing behaviour (Attor et al., 2022; Majeed et al., 2021; Perera et al., 2023). Most existing studies have focused on European and Asian contexts, leaving African markets underrepresented in the branding literature. This gap is particularly pressing given the unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics of Ghana's market, which may affect how brand equity drivers operate.

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the influence of brand equity drivers, such as perceived quality, brand associations, brand awareness, and brand loyalty, on consumer purchasing behaviour among students of technical universities. By employing structural equation modelling (SEM), this research seeks to provide robust empirical evidence on the mechanisms linking brand equity to consumer decision-making in a rapidly developing economy. In doing so, the study not only advances theoretical understanding by contextualising global branding models within the Ghanaian market but also offers practical insights for businesses aiming to enhance their competitiveness and foster sustainable growth.

This research is academically significant as it addresses a critical gap in the literature, providing new insights into the psychological and behavioural aspects of consumer decision-making in emerging markets. By focusing on Ghana, the study contributes to the geographic and economic diversification of branding research and sets a foundation for future investigations into brand equity and consumer behaviour in similar contexts.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) theory

This theory, primarily developed by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), conceptualises brand equity from the consumer's perspective, focusing on components such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. It is highly relevant because it explains how consumers in emerging markets perceive and value brands, which directly influences their purchase behaviour (Islam et al., 2024). Studies show that CBBE components strongly relate to market share and consumer preferences in emerging markets, especially for global versus local brands (Zarantonello et al., 2020; Safeer et al., 2022). It captures the intangible value that brands hold in the minds of consumers, which is critical in markets where brand differentiation can influence buying choices significantly. Emerging markets often feature diverse consumer bases with varying income levels, cultural backgrounds, and exposure to global brands.

CBBE helps explain how brand equity is built through consumer knowledge and emotional connections, which are essential for brands seeking to gain trust and loyalty in these heterogeneous markets. CBBE models provide measurable constructs that can be operationalised through surveys and consumer feedback, facilitating empirical research on brand equity's impact on purchase behaviour (Tasci, 2021; Khan, 2022). This aligns well with studies aiming to quantify brand drivers and their effects on consumer decisions in emerging economies. By identifying which aspects of brand equity most strongly influence consumer behaviour, firms can tailor marketing strategies to strengthen those components (Stocchi & Fuller, 2017). This strategic insight is crucial for brands competing in emerging markets where resources may be limited and targeted efforts are needed to build sustainable brand equity.

1.2. Brand equity dimensions

1.2.1. Brand association

Anything linked in memory to a brand is referred to as a brand association (Aaker, 1991). He asserts that a brand association has a strength and that a link to a brand (from the association) will be stronger if it is supported by a network of other links and is based on numerous experiences or communication exposures. Product attributes may be reflected in brand associations. Moreover, Aaker (1991) proposed that brand connections may benefit customers by giving them a cause to purchase the brand and by fostering favourable attitudes and feelings in them toward the brand. According to Keller (2021), brand associations play a crucial role in the development and maintenance of brand equity. High brand equity suggests that people have favourable and strong associations with the brand in this way. Brand image is the result of several brand connections combined (Keller, 1993). Moreover, brand associations characterise the extent to which customers see their connections to the brand (Alzate et al., 2022). Additionally, stronger links between consumers and brands are indicated by higher degrees of associations (Cheng & Jiang, 2022; Keller, 1993). Previous research has separated brand connections into three categories: organisational associations, perceived value, and brand personality (Ranjbaran et al., 2022; Nadeem et al., 2021; Roggeveen et al., 2021; Coelho et al., 2020). Based on the above, this study suggests that:

H1: Brand Association influences the purchasing behaviour (intention) of consumers significantly.

1.2.2 Brand awareness

A key element of brand equity is brand awareness, which is defined as the degree to which a brand is remembered by customers (Aaker, 1991). He also recognised that there are many levels of brand awareness, from simple brand recognition to dominance, the state in which the brand in question is the only one that a customer can recall. Additionally, brand awareness was described as whether and when the consumer knows the brand and brand image, that is, how the consumer associates the brand with them (Febriyantoro, 2020).

Customers' capacity to identify and remember a brand in various contexts is known as brand awareness (Aaker, 1991). The ability of consumers to recognise past brand exposure when the brand is presented as a cue is known as brand recognition (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2022; Koech et al., 2023). The capacity of consumers to recollect the brand name from memory is known as brand recall (Davtyan et al., 2021; Keller, 1993). Well-known brands outperform less well-known businesses in the marketplace because of brand awareness (Olanipekun & Adelekan, 2022). The purchasing behaviour of consumers is influenced by brand awareness (Dabbous et al., 2020). Hence, this study proposes that:

H2: Brand Awareness influences the purchasing behaviour (intention) of consumers significantly.

1.2.3 Brand loyalty

One important aspect of brand equity is brand loyalty. Rego et al. (2022) distinguished between brand loyalty from three perspectives: choice, behavioural, and attitudinal. Attitudinal viewpoint takes into account customer preferences and dispositions towards brands, whereas the behavioural perspective is based on the volume of purchases made for a specific brand. Furthermore, Parmata and Chetla (2021) characterise brand loyalty as a fervent resolve to continually repurchase or represent a favoured good or service in the future, even in the face of external factors and promotional initiatives that may encourage behaviour changes. While Joseph et al. (2020) contended that brand loyalty is frequently defined by a positive attitude toward a brand and repeated purchases of the same brand over time, Oliver's definition places more emphasis on the behavioural aspect of brand loyalty. The tendency to be loyal to a focal brand, which is demonstrated by the intention to buy the brand as a primary choice, is the definition of brand loyalty from an attitudinal perspective (Ebrahim, 2020).

Brand loyalty in terms of resonance is the measure of a customer-brand relationship that shows a sync between the brand and its consumers and leads to unusual behavioural outcomes like actively seeking out ways to engage with the brand and tell others about their experiences (Hashim et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2022). Conversely, brand loyalty is described as a state that indicates a customer's propensity to move to a different brand, particularly when that company modifies its features or prices (Kato, 2021; Akoglu & Özbek, 2022). When consumers react more strongly to a brand than to rival brands, the brand may see a spike in sales and consequently positive returns on investment, and loyalty can be rightfully viewed as a component of brand value (Robertson et al., 2022; You & Hon, 2021). Additionally, a correlation between brand loyalty and business performance has been found (Villagra et al., 2021; Keller, 2003). Businesses boost their profit margins through brand loyalty while leveraging their brand and putting safeguards in place to fend off competition (Gielens et al., 2021). Furthermore, some academics have suggested that a corporation can gain significant economic and competitive advantages from brand loyalty (Le, 2023; Hussain et al., 2023; Lacap et al., 2021). Businesses cannot establish a long-lasting competitive edge without loyalty. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Brand Loyalty influences the purchasing behaviour (intention) of consumers significantly.

1.2.4 Perceived quality

Another crucial component of brand equity is perceived quality (Aaker, 1991). According to Harju (2022), perceived quality is the consumer's subjective evaluation of the product, not the actual quality of the product. To create a competitive advantage, it is critical to comprehend its significance. Many businesses today have built their entire business model around customer-driven quality, to create value and happiness for customers by profitably and consistently attending to their requirements and preferences (Singh et al., 2022). Additionally, Bhattacharya et al. (2021) note that there is a strong correlation between customer happiness, the profitability of a firm, and the quality of its products and services. The degree to which a brand is thought to offer consumers high-quality products is known as perceived quality (Aaker, 1991). It is the primary driver of product or service purchases, aids in brand extensions, and persuades customers to pay a greater price for a good or service (Keller, 2021; Aaker, 1991). Customers will choose a brand over rivals if they believe it to be of higher quality (Kryscynski et al., 2021; Yoo et al., 2000). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: *Perceived Quality influences the purchasing behaviour (intention) of consumers significantly.*

1.2.5 Consumer purchase behaviour (purchase intention)

Buying behaviour is a sign of purchase intention (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021). Customers' interests in a product and their propensity to buy it combine to form their purchase intention (Dinh & Lee, 2022).

Through the sharing of opinions, ratings, and information in marketing communications, consumers can overcome their fears and develop trust, which increases their propensity to purchase a company's goods (Bigné et al., 2023). Before committing to buy a product or service, consumers typically go through a process of evaluating it, researching it, and analysing it (Lee et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2023*).* A consumer's purchasing intention serves as the foundation for their purchasing behaviour (Riaz et al., 2021; Sohn and Kim, 2020). Purchase intention is commonly used as a predictor of actual purchase behaviour (Kumar et al., 2021). The probability that a person will buy a specific product depends on the interaction between the needs, attitude, and perception of the customer toward the product or brand (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2022).

Purchase intention refers to a customer's desire to purchase a specific good or service (Peña-García et al., 2020; Sohn & Kim, 2020). Stated differently, the degree of a consumer's readiness to buy is determined by their purchase intention (Dangi et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2021). Understanding the consumer's buying intention is essential because it typically predicts the consumer's behaviour (Costa et al., 2021; Dangi et al., 2020). The behavioural outcome of brand equity dimensions is purchasing intention (Verma, 2021; Majeed et al., 2021; Pina and Dias, 2021). Purchase intention serves as a mediator between a customer's chance of making a purchase and their level of focus on doing so (Dabbous et al., 2020; Riaz et al., 2021). Consumers' perceptions of brand equity are influenced by marketing communication, which in turn influences their desire to purchase (Pina and Dias, 2021; Arya et al., 2022). One psychological factor that is thought to follow from strong brand equity dimensions is purchase intention. Furthermore, high brand equity is a sign of purchase intention, and customers are more likely to purchase a brand they are familiar with. It is possible to use purchase intention as a measure of customer behaviour (Peña-García et al., 2020; Costa et al., 2021). Actual behaviour and purchase intention are connected (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2021).

3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Data collection and sampling

The study primarily involved university students as participants. Data collection was conducted through a combination of online and face-to-face survey methods, following the approach described by Jibril et al. 2024). For the in-person surveys, questionnaires were distributed during students' free periods. Out of 400 questionnaires handed out, 372 valid responses were received, resulting in a 93.00% response rate. The participants were selected from technical universities. This group was chosen due to their relevant knowledge and alignment with the study's objectives. Furthermore, previous research indicates that students, often categorised as low-income consumers, tend to place significant importance on brand when making purchasing decisions (Roy et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2016).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to deliberately select students from Technical Universities. The questionnaire, designed in English, consisted of two parts: Section A gathered demographic details, while Section B addressed the core constructs of the research. University students were targeted because their income levels and consumer habits make them frequent brand purchasers. For the analysis, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was utilised, implemented via software version 4.0 (Henseler, 2017; Keelson et al., 2024). This method was selected due to its capability to manage complex models, flexibility with different sample sizes, ability to generate latent variable scores, and its widespread use across various research disciplines (Henseler, 2017; Dadzie et al., 2024).

3.2 Measurement and instrument development

The survey's measurement items were adapted from well-established sources in the literature. Specifically, brand loyalty items were drawn from Zaman et al. (2025) and Rosário and Casaca (2025); brand

association from Sang & Cuong (2025) and Jelea et al. (2024); brand awareness from Ihzaturrahma and Kusumawati (2021) and Charles and Duffett (2025); perceived quality from Jibril et al. (2024), Hardian (2025), and Ole et al. (2025); consumer purchasing behaviour from Ungureanu et al. (2025) and Guo (2025). To ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data collected, the questionnaire was meticulously designed with clear wording, logical sequencing, and carefully refined scale items aimed at minimising response bias, following the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003).

In addition, to further mitigate potential bias, items measuring independent and dependent variables were separated into different sections of the questionnaire, consistent with the method suggested by (Podsakoff et al, 2012). The instrument was subjected to pilot testing and expert evaluation to verify its reliability and validity. Insights gained from these preliminary assessments were used to refine the final survey instrument. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency. The majority of questions required respondents to express their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale, adhering to established best practices for survey measurement (Leung, 2011; Hutchinson, 2021).

3.3 Common method bias

To assess the potential presence of common method bias (CMB), we adopted the strategy proposed by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), which involved carefully crafting the construct items and reassuring participants of strict confidentiality and anonymity on the questionnaire's introductory page. Participants were also made aware that their participation was voluntary and that they had the option to withdraw at any point. Additionally, to further mitigate the risk of CMB, we performed a thorough multicollinearity analysis using the variance inflation factor (VIF) to examine common method variance (CMV). As indicated in Table 2, all constructs exhibited values above 0.5, and the VIF scores remained below the critical threshold of 10. These findings align with the guidelines set forth by Alin (2010), Kock and Hadaya (2018), and Podsakoff et al. (2003), suggesting that neither multicollinearity nor CMV pose significant issues in this research. In summary, the evidence points to minimal common method bias, as detailed in Table 1.

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Assessment of the measurement model

This study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to investigate the relationships among latent variables. The measurement model was assessed through multiple stages, focusing on factor loadings, as well as convergent and discriminant validity. Initially, the factor loadings for each indicator were reviewed to confirm they met the minimum acceptable value of 0.7. Indicators with loadings below this threshold were removed to enhance the model's overall fit, in line with best practices recommended by Hair et al. (2017). Subsequently, the internal consistency of each construct was evaluated using both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Convergent validity was assessed through the calculation of the average variance extracted (AVE), following guidelines from (Hair et al., 2019; Bruce et al., 2025). The results showed that all constructs demonstrated strong convergent validity and sufficient internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7. Table 1 depicts a summary of construct reliability (CR), AVE, and Composite reliability, while Table 2 depicts the variance inflation factor (VIF) and factor loadings for each construct.

Discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which stipulates that the square root of the AVE for each construct should be greater than its correlations with other constructs (Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Rönkkö & Cho, 2022). The findings indicated that all constructs had AVE values above the

recommended 0.5 threshold (Haji-Othman & Yusuff, 2022). Moreover, the correlations between constructs were consistently lower than the square roots of their respective AVEs, confirming discriminant validity (Haji-Othman & Yusuff, 2022). These results verify that the constructs are distinct from one another, supporting the robustness of the measurement model. Table 3 summarises the discriminant validity outcomes.

Table 1: **Construct reliability and validity**

Constructs	Cronbach alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Association	0.891	0.901	0.925	0.755
Brand Awareness	0.875	0.887	0.924	0.802
Brand Loyalty	0.928	0.930	0.949	0.823
Consumer Purchase Behaviour	0.953	0.954	0.966	0.877
Perceived Quality	0.915	0.929	0.941	0.799

(*Source:* Processing from PLS-SEM)

Table 2 **Construct indicator, loading, and VIF**

Construct	**Indicator**	**Loading**	**VIF**
Brand Loyalty	I intend to continue purchasing this brand in the future.	0.904	3.123
	I would recommend this brand to others.	0.925	4.367
	I am loyal to this brand, even if other brands offer similar products.	0.932	4.594
	I would choose this brand over competitors, even if their prices are lower.	0.866	2.528
Brand Association	The brand aligns with my values and lifestyle.	0.774	1.806
	I associate the brand with high-quality products/services.	0.875	2.585
	The brand reminds me of positive experiences or emotions.	0.926	3.681
	The brand's image reflects attributes I find important (e.g., innovation, reliability).	0.895	3.062
Brand Awareness	I am familiar with the brand.	0.818	1.717

	I can easily recognise the brand among competing brands.	0.930	3.908
	I often notice the brand's logo or advertisements.	0.934	3.910
Perceived Quality	The brand consistently offers high-quality products/services	0.792	1.868
	The quality of this brand's products/services meets my expectations.	0.908	3.312
	I believe this brand's products/services are superior compared to other brands	0.929	4.327
	Products from my brand are reliable.	0.940	4.375
Consumer Purchasing Behaviour	I frequently purchase products from a brand	0.934	4.721
	I am willing to pay a higher price for products with a brand.	0.960	4.572
	I often choose a brand over others when making a purchase.	0.927	4.313
	I intend to continue buying products from a brand in the future.	0.926	4.113

(*Source:* Processing from PLS-SEM)

Table 3 **Discriminant validity**

Constructs	Brand Association	Brand Awareness	Brand Loyalty	Consumer Purchase _Behaviour	Perceived Quality
Brand Association	**0.869**				
Brand Awareness	0.817	**0.895**			
Brand Loyalty	0.863	0.790	**0.907**		
Consumer Purchase _Behaviour	0.890	0.758	0.852	**0.937**	
Perceived Quality	0.898	0.818	0.829	0.910	**0.894**

(Source: Processing from PLS-SEM)

4.2 Assessment of the structural model and hypothesis testing

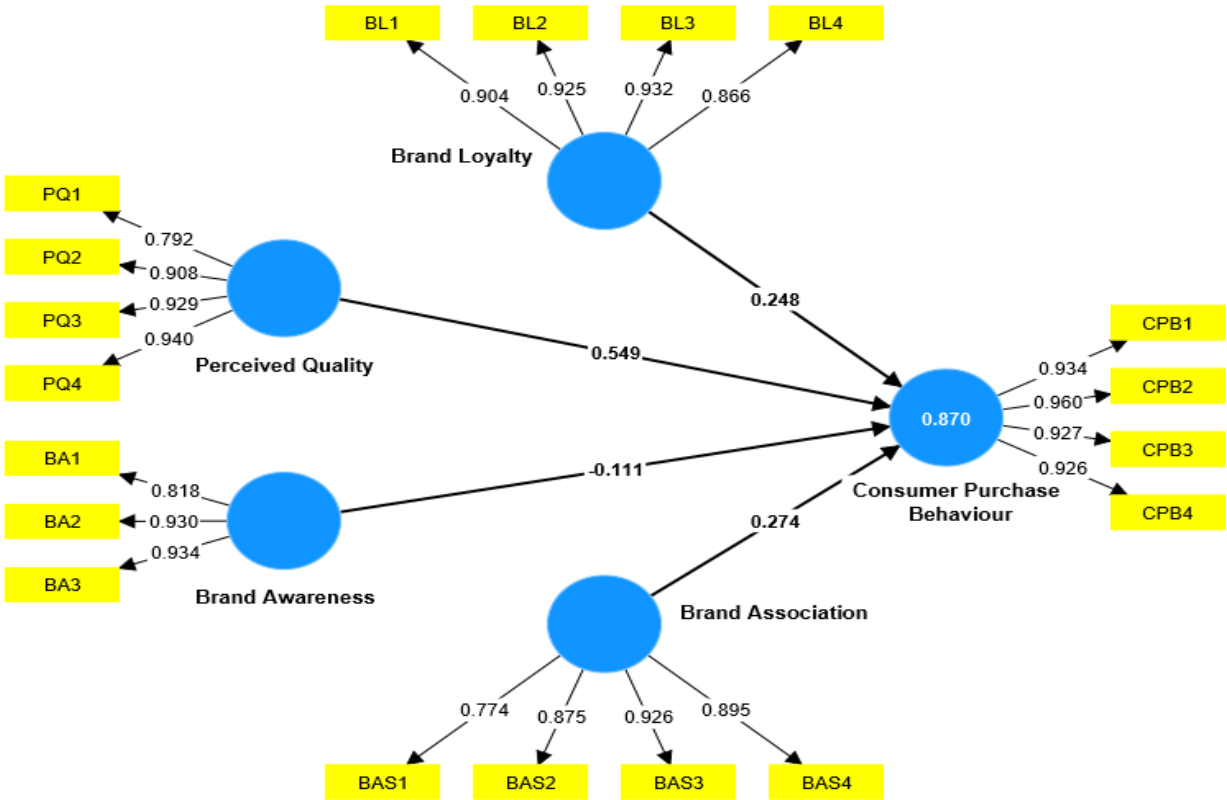
The third phase of the analysis involved evaluating the structural model, with a focus on testing hypotheses and determining the coefficient of determination (R^2), following the guidelines of Hair et al. 2019). Prior to this, collinearity among the predictor variables was examined to ensure the model's stability, with variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranging from 1.8 to 4.5, indicating acceptable collinearity.

Table 4 **Hypothesis Testing**

Constructs	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Decision
Brand Association -> Consumer Purchase _Behaviour	0.274	0.277	0.064	4.294	0.000	**Accepted**
Brand Awareness -> Consumer Purchase _Behaviour	-0.111	-0.112	0.042	2.657	0.008	**Accepted**
Brand Loyalty -> Consumer Purchase _Behaviour	0.248	0.245	0.046	5.355	0.000	**Accepted**
Perceived Quality -> Consumer Purchase _Behaviour	0.549	0.549	0.068	8.013	0.000	**Accepted**
Construct	R-square		R-square adjusted			
Consumer Purchase _Behaviour	0.870		0.869			

(Source: Processing from PLS-SEM)

Figure 1: **Estimated empirical model**



(Source: Processing from PLS-SEM)

Considering the potential for common method bias (CMB) in cross-sectional survey data, several preventative strategies were implemented based on Kock et al., (2021) recommendations. Harman's single-factor test showed that three factors with eigenvalues greater than one accounted for 70% of the variance, indicating that no single factor was predominant. Acknowledging the limitations of Harman's test, the Partially General Factor method was also employed within the PLS framework, as advised by Aguirre-Urreta and Hu (2019) and Jibril et al. (2024).

Once the measurement model's reliability and validity were confirmed, the explanatory power of the structural model was evaluated through R^2 values, which are summarised in Table 4. The outcomes of hypothesis testing, shown in Table 4, revealed that all directly hypothesised relationships were supported.

5. DISCUSSION

The study developed four direct hypotheses derived from the conceptual framework to meet the research objectives. Demographic analysis showed that females constituted a majority of the respondents, consistent with prior studies suggesting that students often exhibit unique preferences toward branded products. The research concentrated on investigating how key drivers of brand equity, namely brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and perceived quality, affect consumer purchasing behaviour. These variables were incorporated into the model to gain deeper insights into the psychosocial factors shaping students' choices when buying branded items.

The study initially aimed to examine the direct impact of brand association on consumer purchasing behaviour, and the findings supported this hypothesis. This outcome is consistent with previous research by Pérez et al. (2013), Chen (2017), and Dada (2021), which highlighted that consumers' buying decisions are strongly influenced by their associations with a brand. The positive relationship identified suggests that brand associations play a crucial role in motivating consumers to purchase products. Specifically, brand associations such as emotional connections, perceived values, and memorable experiences can enhance brand recognition, build trust, and foster loyalty. These factors increase the likelihood that consumers will select and buy products from the brand, echoing the conclusions drawn by Chendo (2019).

The study also aimed to evaluate the direct influence of brand awareness on consumer purchasing behaviour. The results align with prior research by Shahid et al. (2017), Machi et al. (2022), and Lu et al. (2014), which support the hypothesis that brand awareness plays a fundamental role in shaping how consumers perceive brands and make buying decisions. According to Amoah et al. (2022), consumers who are familiar with a brand are more likely to recognise it, remember its attributes, and confidently select it over competing options. Brand awareness helps reduce consumer scepticism and fosters trust, thereby simplifying and accelerating the purchasing process. Furthermore, Machi et al. (2022) found that higher brand awareness is associated with increased purchase intentions and customer loyalty, as consumers tend to prefer brands they know and trust.

The study also examined the direct relationship between brand loyalty and consumer purchasing behaviour, with the results supporting the proposed hypothesis. This finding aligns with prior research by Ćatić and Poturak (2022), Villagra et al. (2021), and Diallo et al. (2021), all of which highlight a positive connection between brand loyalty and consumers' buying habits. The results suggest that loyal consumers tend to repeatedly choose the same brand, even when alternatives exist or prices vary. Such customers typically demonstrate lower price sensitivity and are less influenced by recommendations for competing brands. This loyalty is rooted in trust and positive experiences, which reinforce habitual purchasing behaviours and emotional bonds, reducing the likelihood of switching to competitors. When brand loyalty is conceptualised as both an attitude and a habitual behaviour influencing purchase frequency

(Tam et al., 2014), a favourable disposition toward a brand often translates into actual buying actions. In this regard, brand loyalty is better understood as a behavioural intention shaped by factors like perceived affection and brand popularity, rather than a direct determinant of purchase decisions. Consequently, weak or absent loyalty is likely to significantly reduce consumers' purchase intentions.

Additionally, the study explored the direct relationship between consumer purchasing behaviour and perceived quality, with the hypothesis being supported by the results. This confirms a significant connection between the two variables, consistent with findings from (Sakinah and Gayatri 2024). Understanding the factors driving consumer purchasing decisions enables brands to implement focused strategies to build trust, enhance their value propositions, and differentiate their products in the market. Employing transparent and informative communication, such as emphasising product quality, authenticity, and credible certifications, can effectively reassure consumers and justify premium pricing, particularly for organic products.

6. STUDY IMPLICATIONS

This study's theoretical contribution extends beyond practical relevance by systematically clarifying the antecedents that drive consumers in anticipating purchase. Exploring the drivers of brand equity and their influence on consumer purchase behaviour in emerging markets carries significant theoretical implications that advance the understanding of branding dynamics in these unique contexts. Emerging markets present distinct challenges and opportunities for brand management due to their diverse consumer bases, varying levels of market development, and socio-economic conditions. The study reinforces and extends the Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) framework, which conceptualises brand equity as the added value a brand provides through consumer perceptions, including brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived quality (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). While CBBE has been extensively studied in developed markets, its application in emerging markets helps validate and adapt the model to contexts characterised by different consumer behaviours, cultural influences, and market structures (Tasci, 2021; Zarantonello et al., 2020). This extension highlights how these brand equity components operate under conditions of limited consumer information, higher perceived risks, and price sensitivity prevalent in emerging economies.

Practically, emerging markets are becoming critical growth arenas where brands can build long-term equity by leveraging premiumisation strategies. Companies can differentiate themselves meaningfully by embedding symbolic value, emotional appeal, and aspirational messaging into their brand narratives. For example, emphasising ingredient provenance, sustainability credentials, or clinical efficacy helps brands resonate with younger, upwardly mobile consumers who seek authenticity and lifestyle alignment. This approach not only supports premium pricing but also fosters emotional connections that drive purchase behaviour in competitive and saturated categories. Given the heterogeneity of emerging market consumers, brands must adopt segmented approaches that consider varying income levels, cultural backgrounds, and purchase motivations. Understanding psychosocial drivers such as self-brand congruity, emotional associations, and trust allows for tailored marketing strategies that resonate with specific groups, including youth and middle-class consumers. This segmentation enhances the effectiveness of brand equity drivers in influencing purchase behaviour and loyalty. Sustained investment in brand-building capabilities such as dynamic content testing, influencer-led narratives, and region-specific campaigns is crucial for maintaining brand health in emerging markets. Improved measurement tools linking brand health metrics (e.g., emotional connection, distinctiveness) to business performance strengthen the rationale for ongoing brand investment. This long-term perspective helps brands navigate the volatility and complexity of emerging markets while fostering resilience and relevance.

CONCLUSION AND STUDY LIMITATIONS

As businesses strive to meet evolving customer expectations, brand marketing and its influence on consumer buying behaviour have become increasingly important. This study examined the effects of key brand equity components, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, and perceived quality on consumer purchasing behaviour. Building on prior research, a model was developed to connect these elements with consumer preferences, aiming to shed light on the psychosocial factors that drive purchase decisions. Data gathered from students at technical universities was analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM), which supported all four proposed direct hypotheses. The results offer significant theoretical and practical contributions to the understanding of branding and marketing strategies.

Although conducted in Ghana, the study focused exclusively on consumer purchasing behaviour by examining respondents' perceptions to predict their buying patterns. One limitation is the absence of differentiation between various brand types or identification of consumers' preferred brands, although purchasing behaviour can differ widely across brands. Furthermore, the sample was limited to technical university students in Ghana, without a thorough analysis of their socioeconomic status. Future research incorporating a broader range of consumer groups could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Another limitation is the relatively small sample size, especially considering the number of technical universities in the country. Expanding the sample size and diversity in future studies would enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. Additionally, this study relied solely on quantitative methods; employing a mixed-methods approach in subsequent research could yield deeper and more nuanced insights. Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful contributions and valuable implications for the field.

RESEARCH ETHICS, INFORMED CONSENT, AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

This study did not require research ethics committee approval, as it involved an anonymous questionnaire survey and did not collect sensitive personal data. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and told that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. By completing the questionnaire, participants provided their informed consent. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF AUTHORS:

George Dominic Ewur
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1067-9777
Affiliation: Durban University of Technology, Department of Marketing and Retail Management, Durban, South Africa.
Email:22174971@dut4life.ac.za/ george.ewur@ttu.edu.gh
George D. Ewur is a senior lecturer at the Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurial Studies of Takoradi Technical University, Takoradi, Ghana. He holds a Master's in Business Administration in Marketing from the University of Wales, United Kingdom, and is a final-year PhD student at Durban University of Technology, South Africa. His areas of expertise include: Strategic Marketing, Social Marketing, Branding, and Marketing Communication, among others.

Jeevarathnam Parthasarathy Govender
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2584-2824
Affiliation: Durban University of Technology, Department of Marketing and Retail Management, Durban, South Africa.
Email govendej@dut.ac.za
Jeevarathnam P. Govender is an Associate Professor at the Department of Marketing and Retail Management of Durban University of Technology, South Africa. He is the head of the Department of Marketing and Retail Management of Durban University of Technology. His areas of focus are: green marketing, consumer behaviour, and service marketing, among others. The results of his research have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and presented at numerous international conferences around the globe.

John Amoah
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3558-2077A
Affiliation: Takoradi Technical University, Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurial Studies, Takoradi, Ghana.
Email: jamoah29@gmail.com/john.amoah@ttu.edu.gh
John Amoah is a lecturer at the Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurial Studies of Takoradi Technical University, Takoradi, Ghana. He holds a PhD in Marketing Management from the Tomas Bata University, Zlín, Czech Republic. He serves on several editorial boards, including Cogent Business and Management, and is a reviewer. John Amoah is an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, CIM-Ghana. His areas of focus include SME Development, social media, and service marketing, among others. The results of his research have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and presented at numerous international conferences worldwide.