UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

SERVICE BRAND AVOIDANCE IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS RELATIONS: EVIDENCE FROM GHANA

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPHIL MARKETING DEGREE

JULY, 2020

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the result of my own research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university. All references used in this work have been duly acknowledged.

I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings.

…………………………………………………… 03/03/2021 ……………………..

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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University of Ghana, Legon.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my lovely mother, Mrs. Dorothea Halm Otoo in appreciation of her immense support and motivation throughout my time of work and study.

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I am profoundly grateful to God Almighty who has sustained me through this journey – may His name be forever praised.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	--	Analysis of Variance
AVE	--	Average Variance Extracted
B2B	--	Business-to-Business
B2C	--	Business-to-Customer
CA	--	Cronbach's Alpha
CBBE	--	Customer-Based Brand Equity
CB-SEM	--	Co-variance Based Structural Equation Modelling
CR	--	Composite Reliability
CV	--	Convergent Validity
DSL	--	Digital Subscriber Line
DV	--	Discriminant Validity
EFA	--	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GDP	--	Gross Domestic Product
IT	--	Information Technology
KMO	--	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
PLS	--	Partial Least Squares
SEM	--	Structural Equation Modelling
SPSS	--	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSA	--	Sub-Saharan Africa
URL	--	Uniform Resource Locator
VIF	--	Variance Inflation Factor
VSAT	--	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WTO	--	World Trade Organization

ABSTRACT

This study examines service brand avoidance within the business market. Specifically, it assesses the applicability of the drivers of brand avoidance within the business-to-consumer (B2C) market in business-to-business (B2B) relations and assesses dissimilarities in customer responses to service brands based on customer business type. Employing an explanatory research design and a quantitative research approach, data for the study was attained through self-administered questionnaires and a uniform resource locator (URL) through Google forms. The population of interest was businesses within the Accra metropolis of Ghana avoiding a telecommunication network brand. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique. 346 out of the 398 questionnaires administered were used to analyse hypothesised relationships using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS SEM) technique. The findings revealed that unmet expectations, symbolic incongruence and failed communications have direct significant influences on brand avoidance, while ideological incompatibility has a significant influence on symbolic incongruence. Additionally, unacceptable trade-offs and ideological incompatibility though not directly, influence brand avoidance when symbolic incongruence acts as a mediator. Further, the study revealed that customers' business types account for some disparities in their responses to Telecommunication brands. This study contributes to literature new knowledge regarding brand avoidance within the business market from an emerging economy perspective. It provides empirical evidence as well as makes recommendations to brands and organisations on what to do and stay away from in order not only to ensure a purchase, but secure repeat purchases and loyalty. Future studies may consider examining brand avoidance by business clients within other industries as well as the impact it may have on co-branding agreements.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In a service-driven world, businesses contend with a globally fierce competitive landscape (Skaalsvik, 2017). Johannessen and Olsen (2010) describe this landscape as progressively intricate, turbulent and ambiguous, rendering some recognisably effective recipes for competitive advantage and value creation within the industrialised world inutile for service providers. Accordingly, Skaalsvik (2017) propose service branding as a pathway to consistent economic growth and value creation at the organisational level. However, traditional paradigms in business markets typically regard branding as being of minimal significance to industrial and business-to-business (B2B) marketing (Malaval, 2001; Low & Mohr, 2001). Thus, despite the continuous growth of attentiveness to B2B branding, studies in this regard have not been as forthcoming as those that examine the activities and implications of brands in consumer markets (Brown, Zablah, Bellenger & Johnston, 2011; Seyedgorban, Matanda & LaPlaca, 2016). Despite that, evidence from empirical studies forward that brands are highly influential in organisational buying decisions as they enhance confidence in the decision-making process and minimise perceived risk (Ohnemus, 2009; Zablah, Brown & Donthu, 2010).

Primarily, branding serves as a means of differentiation, focused on affecting consumers by creating positive, enticing and sellable concepts (Rindell, Strandvik & Wilen, 2014). Extant literature supports arguments that a company's brand presents a multi-dimensional market-based asset, which if harnessed and sustained offers a considerable advantage to the company in a competitive marketplace (Lee, Fernandez & Hyman, 2009; Belch & Belch, 2012). For services, branding presents companies a means of minimising perceived risks and building trust. The gains of attaining positive consumer-brand reactions such as loyalty, brand affection, brand love among others are extensive and palpable, rendering the study and pursuit of them justified (Yim, Tse & Chan, 2008; Jaiswal & Niraj, 2011; Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2012).

However, negative brand relationships pose a threat of greater measure to companies (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). This threat is partly because the probability of a consumer sharing their displeasure, a negative experience or review is much higher than that of sharing an equally positive experience (Kavaliauskė & Simanavičiūtė, 2015); a connotation of "negativity bias" (Kanouse & Hanson, 1972). The dreadful repercussions of this phenomenon are more pronounced for companies, given the power and ubiquity of social media and the internet (Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009; Delzen, 2014). Also, having established that familiarising with the distastes of customers is as critical as knowing their likes, the significance of studying negative customer brand relationships is now more prominent and needful than ever (Lee, Conroy & Motion, 2009; Knittel, Beurer & Berndt, 2016). Likewise, it is noteworthy that investigating what spurs anti-consumption behaviour (such as brand avoidance) is important to all marketers regardless of whether it relates to a competing brand, as this knowledge could be utilised strategically for positioning their brand as a preferable alternative (Lee, Motion & Conroy, 2009).

Numerous studies assert that anti-consumption behaviour, predominantly brand avoidance, is broad and thus is predicated by multifaceted motives (Lee et al., 2009; Safana, 2018). Brand avoidance denotes the conscious effort made by customers to keep away from a brand, especially when they possess the purchasing power (Lee et al., 2009b). Just as customers like to get closer to and spend more time with brands they like, they are prone to keep distant brands they dislike (Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi & Bagozzi, 2016). A careful review of literature reveals unmet expectations, incongruence between a brand's image and an individual's identity, disparity between consumer's ideological beliefs and brand values, consumer's refusal to accept cost-to-benefit trade-offs offered by brand, and disapproval of brand advertisement (Lee at al., 2009; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007; Kim, Lee & Mattila, 2014; Khan & Lee, 2014; Knittel et al., 2016) as factors that spur brand avoidance. Additionally, Zarantonello et al. (2016) and Hegner, Fetscherin and Van Delzen (2017) identify brand avoidance as a consequence of brand hate, presupposing that brand hate could induce brand avoidance. As explained by Chen and Bargh (1999), just as positive favourable stimuli induce approach behaviour, negative stimuli prompt avoidance behaviour.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Traditional consumer research is shifting from a fixation on positive consumer-brand relations to negative relations (Grappi, Zarantonello & Romani, 2019). Prevailing branding literature mainly explores positive customer-brand relations including brand affection (Yim et al., 2008), brand love (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Sarkar, 2014; Silden & Skeie, 2015), loyalty (Jaiswal & Niraj, 2011) and emotional attachment (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011), reiterating their importance and contributions to firms and brands. Nevertheless, negative brand associations are equally significant (Lee et al., 2009; Knittel et al., 2016). Prior studies propose that possessing knowledge of what customers find distasteful is as important as knowledge of what they like (Banister & Hogg, 2004), hence, the growing interest in the area. For instance, a call for papers on negative consumer-brand relations was made recently by the Journal of Product and Brand Management, which informed the publication of its Volume 28, Issue 5. Even so, interest in issues of anti-consumption is still emergent (Bryson, Atwal & Hultén, 2013), particularly brand avoidance (which is counted among the most prominent), accentuating the need to probe further (Knittel et al., 2016).

Moreover, existing studies in the domain of anti-consumption, particularly brand avoidance have focused on relations between brands and the end-user (Lee et al., 2009; Lee, Conroy & Motion, 2012; Kavaliauske & Simanavicinte, 2015; Zarantonello et al., 2016), neglecting B2B relations. This act of negligence exists even though other businesses remain a major consumer segment for most brands (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Consequently, there have been calls for investigation into issues of avoidance concerning B2B relations (Lee et al., 2009; Safana, 2018). Organisations benefit greatly in B2B branding as branding efforts do not end with the buying business but transcend to all its stakeholders including its other suppliers, investors, partners, customers, employees, competitors among others (Queicb, 2003). Although this offers greater market and opportunities to brands, falling into the bad books of business clients could be damaging, as the business may not only avoid but discourage other related stakeholders (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). This study therefore seeks to investigate the drivers of brand avoidance in B2B relations.

Although there may be some similarities, organisational buying and decision-making vary from that of end-users in many ways. Unlike end-user buying, organisational buying involves input from more people; mainly professionals from different departments (Turka & Sasan, 2015). Also, organisations buy in larger quantities and place paramount importance on negotiation (Kotler & Pfoertsh, 2006; Kuhn, Alpert & Pope, 2008). Turka and Sasan (2015) argue that organizational decision making differs from that of individuals, in that it places more emphasis on rational factors (such as product/service quality, price, feasibility, running and maintenance cost among others) in comparison to emotional elements. However, Kotler and Pfoertsh (2006) opine that business decisions are still made by people who make both cognitive and affective considerations in decision-making. Also, the introduction of branding and relationship-building in B2B markets introduces emotional elements as branding efforts and development of brand equity thrive on the affective for optimal result (Lynch & De Chernatony, 2004). Moreover, the characteristics and preferences of the people who partake in the buying process informs organizational decisions to some extent (Turka & Sasan, 2015). For instance, each person in the buying centre has a unique preference for brands and products/services for one reason or another (Lysons & Farrington, 2006), and those of deciders, influencers and buyers in some organizations may be weightier in influencing brand choice. Thus, the drivers of brand avoidance that apply to individuals may reflect on the organizational level as well. Furthermore, due to larger order sizes, more attention to details, higher switching costs, investment of more resources and access to other stakeholders, the buyer-seller relationship is often of greater value to both parties in B2B relations than in B2C relations (Turka & Sasan, 2015). Hence, the study of brand avoidance in B2B relations is off great importance, not only to academics but businesses alike.

Extant branding literature is suffused with arguments that consumer brand preference or rejection is triggered by various intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli (Lee et al., 2009a; Odoom, Kosibi, Djamgba & Narh, 2019). For instance, Hegner et al. (2017) assert that development of negative consumer-brand relationships could flow from consumer, product or context-related factors. Also, scholars like Lim and O'Cass (2001) contend that consumers patronise specific products as purposive expressions of who they are and select brands to represent their lifestyles, personalities and other characteristics symbolically. In like manner, firm decisions and purchases can be considered a reflection of their characteristics. A plethora of studies including (Wagner, 1995; Orlitzky, 2001; Tsai & Wang, 2005; Kogan & Tian, 2012) spells out the centrality of firm characteristics in strategic and managerial activities and outcomes.

Many studies have investigated the roles and impacts of firm size, age, ownership structure and other idiosyncrasies on firm performance (Kipesha, 2013; Kisengo, 2014; Oyewobi, Windapo, Rotimi & Jimoh, 2016; Elshabasy, 2018), brand-building and brand management (Berthon, Ewing & Napoli, 2008; Spence & Essousi, 2010), export intensity (Bonaccorsi, 1992; Majocchi, Bacchiocchi & Mayrhofer, 2005) among others. However, studies to examine the roles specific features as business type play in influencing customer response to brand activities within B2B markets are scanty. Meanwhile, Turka and Sasan (2015) and Inoni, Salami and Olannye (2019) mention the importance of organisational attributes in influencing organisational purchasing behaviour. Until further research is conducted to examine the dynamics business type introduces to business responses and its impact on brand avoidance, marketing literature would remain somewhat porous.

Also, owing to the relative novelty of brand avoidance as a research topic and the recent surge in interest, most of the studies in this area committed to its exploration and conceptualisation, thus employed the more suitable qualitative research approaches. As such, most of the studies in brand avoidance are qualitative (Bryson et al., 2013; Khan & Lee, 2014; Kim, Ratneshwar, Roesler & Chowdhurry, 2016; Knittel et al., 2016; Berndt, Petzer & Mostert, 2019) with just a few quantitative studies (Hegner et al., 2017; Safana, 2018; Odoom et al., 2019), creating a methodological gap which this study seeks to fill. Quantitative research, acting as a build-up on qualitative studies is more explanatory. It seeks to give more clarity to a research topic as well as understand cause and effect relationships (Yin, 2014), making it a relevant approach for studies in the ongoing development of brand avoidance literature.

Furthermore, there have been calls for further studies in negative consumer-brand relations in emerging economies (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010; Bryson et al., 2013) as studies have focused predominantly on developed regions, including Germany, UK, Sweden, New Zealand and Australia (Sandikci & Ekici, 2009; Lee et al., 2009; Bryson et al., 2013; Khan & Lee, 2014; Knittel et al., 2016). Per the assertions of Izberk-Bilgin (2010), perspectives from developed contexts differ from developing regions based on varying levels of modernisation and cultural development. This claim is also supported by Bochner (2013) who acknowledges the influence of varying cultural perceptions among consumers. In the bit to address this gap, this study examines brand avoidance from the perspective of an emerging market, specifically Ghana.

A thorough review of literature gives an indication that most studies have thrown more light on negative relations in the overall consumption of general goods and service brands (Kozinets, 2002; Banister & Hogg, 2004). Studies with more specificity considered the service industry in general (Safana, 2018; Berndt et al., 2019), creating the need for research into other specific industries as well as specific sectors within the industries (Roper et al., 2013; Knittel et al., 2016; Safana, 2018). This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the drivers of brand avoidance in B2B relations. More specifically, it determines the applicability of the B2C brand avoidance drivers within the B2B terrain. It further examines the dynamics business types introduce in business responses to brands in the Ghanaian Telecommunications sector; a fiercely competitive industry.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Hinged on the identified problems and gaps in both theory and practice, this study seeks to:

1. Determine the applicability of the drivers of brand avoidance in the B2C market within the B2B terrain.
2. Assess dissimilarities in customer responses to service brands based on customer business type.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What are the factors that influence brand avoidance in business-to-business relations?
2. a. Are there dissimilarities in customer responses to service brands based on customer business type?

   b. What are the dissimilarities in customer responses to service brands based on customer business type?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this thesis is multifaceted, offering contributions to various categories of people, including academia, brand managers, brand consultants, and marketing agencies. These contributions are discussed under to broad headings as follows;

1.5.1 Contribution to Literature

First and foremost, this study contributes to existing literature, an emerging market perspective of service brand avoidance, thus filling the gap that currently exists, as most of researches in these areas have focused on developed contexts. Additionally, the findings of this study expand knowledge on brand avoidance within the B2B domain. This entails the factors that drive businesses to avoid brands when making purchase decisions, specifically regarding services provided by telecommunication network brands. The study considers established drivers of brand avoidance within the B2C context and how they may apply in business markets. This study also exposes the dissimilarities in client reactions to brands that are attributable to the business type of the client.

1.5.2 Contribution to Practice

Currently, the Ghanaian Telecommunications Industry offers services that have become very critical and almost indispensable in the everyday activities of people and businesses alike. This creates grand opportunities for telecommunication network brands. However, it leaves little room for tolerance of mistakes, oversights and failures, especially amidst such great competition. This study thus serves as a reference document to all service brands, specifically within the telecommunication sector as well as brand consultants and agencies in identifying and strategizing against the factors that could make their business clients avoid their brands, thus staying competitive.

1.6 CHAPTER DISPOSITION

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. Chapter one is the introductory section of the study. It gives a background to brand avoidance as a concept and discusses the problems the study addresses. Additionally, the objectives and significance of the study are mentioned. Chapter two throws light on the context of the study. Chapter three also presents a review of existing literature on business-business markets, branding, brand avoidance and all related issues. In this section, theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study are thoroughly discussed.

Chapter four presents a thorough account of the study methodology. Specifically, it describes the research paradigm, design, strategy and sampling design as well as data collection, pretesting procedure and ethical considerations. Chapter five outlines and discusses the techniques applied in analysing data and the study findings. Chapter six then summarises the study, discusses the major findings, highlights the implications and limitations of the study and makes recommendations.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the background to this thesis, identified gaps in extant literature and highlighted the problems to be solved by the study. The objectives and significance of the study were then outlined.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter builds the context of the study. It provides an overview of the services sector, and a synopsis of the Ghanaian telecommunications industry, throwing light to the various services provided and consumed within the industry.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICES SECTOR

Marketing literature is thronged with a plethora of definitions for services. In Edvardsson's (1997) view, services form a part of the wider product concept. Lovelock (1991) on the other hand, views services as a performance or process instead of a thing. Grönroos (2001) defines a service as "an activity or series of activities of a more or less intangible nature that normally, but not necessarily take place in the interaction between the customer and service employees or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems". Diverse interpretations of this concept highlight that although services may feed into the development of physical goods, the final output of the service itself is not physical or tangible (Lovelock & Patterson, 2015).

Universally, the service sector is seen as the driving force for many economies, spurring globalisation and technological development (Enu, Addey & Okonkwo, 2015). For instance, the services sector in developed countries such as Japan, USA and UK as well as developing countries such as India, Indonesia, Ghana and China have become a major source of state and national incomes, employment, FDI inflows and trade flows. In countries like Brazil, Germany, the US and France, over 65% of overall gross domestic product (GDP) is contributed by services. According to data from the World Trade Organization (WTO), this sector is the fastest growing in the global economy, employs about a third of the workforce and provides 70% of accounts and global output for a quarter of overall global trade (ISSER, 2015). Africa is not left behind in this development, as Hassan and Abdullah (2015) point out. The authors mention that over half of the total GDP of developing economies is accounted to their respective services industries. For instance, between the years 2000 and 2015, 47% of total GDP sourced from services, 37% form industry and 16% from agriculture (Hassan & Abdullah, 2015). The authors further assert that recent spurs in Africa's economic growth are heavily dependent on the services sector.

The story is no different in Ghana. The Ghanaian service sector has gradually outrun the agriculture and industry sectors (known as the traditional economic sectors) and contributes over 50% of Ghana's GDP (GSS, 2016), proving to be the trigger for the country's development. In 2012, the service sector accounted for 49.3% of Ghana's GDP, surpassing the year's target of 7.7% by 1.1% to attain 8.8% growth (MoF, 2013). Furthermore, in 2016, the sector witnessed growth in GDP share of 54.3% from 53.3% in the previous year. Conversely, the industrial and agricultural sectors decreased from 25.1% in 2015 to 24.3% in 2016 and 20.3% in 2015 to 18.1% in 2016 respectively (MoF, 2017). The main sub-sectors in the Ghanaian service sector are; transport and storage; trade and repair of vehicles; hotels and restaurants; households and goods; information and communication; real estate; health and social work; business; social and personal; community; social security; public administration and defence; education and financial intermediation. Of the various sub-sectors, the information and communication sector stands out as a prime driver of the services sector (ISSER, 2016; NCA, 2017). Within this sector are the mobile network operators, network infrastructure operators, software operators, internet service providers, Very Small Aperture

Terminal (VSAT) data operators, internet backbone providers, telephone systems and dedicated transmission networks (TV, Cable, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)).

2.3 THE GHANAIAN TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY

The telecommunication industry forms part of the larger service industry, specifically the information and communication sector, and plays a critical role in the development of an economy (Boohene & Agyapong, 2011). According to Boohene and Agyapong (2011) and Ofori, Osei, Ato–Mensah and Affum (2015), telecommunications provide how all day-to-day transactions transpire, thus, facilitate activities such as decision-making, instructing, organising, information exchange, provision of feedback as well as the promotion of business and interpersonal relationships among others.

In an organisation, calls within the firm (within and between departments) and out to suppliers, customers and other stakeholders, text messages and emails are reliant on the services of telecommunication networks. Also, voice and internet services for holding meetings over conference and video calls, accessing cloud storage services, as well as platforms for making and receiving payments, are powered by telecommunication networks. Furthermore, financial institutions such as investment and commercial banks and credit unions are heavily dependent on centralised systems for operation, which are accessed via the internet. Moreover, news media agencies, internet cafes, medical centres among others rely on telecommunication services to store, access, share data and provide optimal services to their customers. In the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) telecommunication market, the Ghanaian Telecommunications Industry has been one of the prominent leaders for the past two decades (Nimako, 2012).

Following the Accelerated Development Programme, the Ghanaian industry was deregulated in 1994, opening the gates to foreign companies (Nimako, 2012). Before this, the industry was state-controlled and constituted of just a few firms to control the telephone (fixed-line and mobile) and internet services (Boohene & Agyapong, 2011). The era was marked by exorbitant pricing and highly restricted services which were mostly shoddy (Boohene & Agyapong, 2011). Currently, the sector is recognised as a part of the largest and most efficient sectors in Ghana, characterised by fierce competition and innovation (Ofori et al., 2015). The players within the industry are MTN (Scancom Ghana Ltd.), the largest mobile network operator; Vodafone Ghana which took over Onetouch; Glo (Globacom Ltd.); and AirtelTigo, the product of a merger between Airtel Ghana and Tigo Ghana in November 2017 to become the second-largest mobile network operator.

Primarily, the market offerings of telecommunication networks constitute voice, data and SMS services. For instance, a customer may choose prepaid or post-paid service. Prepaid subscribers call, text and browse without paying monthly fees but recharge at their convenience, whereas post-paid subscribers are free to perform these activities without limits but pay monthly bills. Encapsulated in these are various bundle packages, for instance; unlimited call bundles, fuse bundles, Good Morning pack, Sunday bundles, free night call services among others. For business clients, there are specialised packages such as red business, which allows employees of a firm to talk to each other for free, browse and text; smart business, which allows firms to customise their data and voice plans; caller ring back tunes, aimed at assisting firms to advertise, improve their brand identity and better engage their customers while saving money. There is also global MPLS which allows businesses located in Ghana to seamlessly connect their offices to various locations across the globe, including South Africa, Nigeria, Tanzania, United Kingdom, Senegal, among others. Some other service packages for business clients are ready office, VAS short codes, toll-free numbers, corporate WIFI, roaming bundles, bulk SMS solutions, enterprise fixed voice, multi-caller service and leased line services. Some businesses may, however, choose to patronise the regular individual or family packages for several reasons such as sheer preference, small business size and financial capabilities.

Telecommunication providers also offer insurance, entertainment (music and movies) and mobile money services. The mobile money service was introduced into the Ghanaian market by MTN and has since grown in coverage and scope (Business Day, 2017). Currently, all telecommunication networks provide mobile money services. MTN mobile money popularly referred to as MTN Momo alone in 2017 signed on over 1.5 million active subscribers recorded an average of 18.5 million monthly transactions and employed about 19,500 merchants across the country (Business Day, 2017). Due to its handiness, security and convenience, most people and businesses have signed on, making it a major mode of payment for goods and services in both B2C and B2B markets (Ofori et al., 2015).

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the context within which this study is examined. More precisely, an overview of the service sector and a discussion of the Ghanaian telecommunication sector were given.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to review literature germane to brand avoidance thoroughly. First, the theoretical foundation of the study is determined, under this, anti-consumption and attachment theory are discussed to aid in the comprehension of brand avoidance as a concept. Second, some background is given to business markets, how businesses behave like customers and the factors that influence decisions. The study then provides an empirical review, where literature on branding, brand equity and brand avoidance. Also, this chapter discusses the various types of brand avoidance with their corresponding motivators as well as firm characteristics.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAME

Anti-consumption being the broader construct from which the concept of brand avoidance emanates forms the basis of this study. Additionally, this study is informed by the attachment theory as it explains some consumer behaviours critical to this study.

3.2.1 Anti-consumption

Over decades of years, consumption and exchange have been the focus of attention for marketing practitioners and academics alike (Kotler, 1972; Bagozzi, 1978; Lee et al., 2009a). However, recent trends have revealed a growing interest in anti-consumption behaviour across the globe, exemplified by studies of Knittel et al. (2016), Hegner et al. (2017) and Odoom et al. (2019). In the world of business, the Nivea brand recently faced some avoidance and rejection issues after launching racist advertisement, and Liverpool dropped Addidas for Nike. Iyer and Muncy (2009) explain anti-consumption as a conscious or optional attempt by consumers to keep away from consumption and could take the form of minimising overall consumption or avoiding specific brands or products. Zavestoski (2002) however describe it simply as a distaste of and resistance to consumption in general. Extant literature reveals multiple streams or perspectives of anti-consumption. They include boycotts (Farah & Newman, 2010; Albrecht, Campbell, Heinrich & Lammel, 2013), anti-loyalty (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009), ethical consumption (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Hoffmann & Hutter, 2012; Zollo, Yoon, Rialti & Ciappei, 2018), consumer resistance (Cherrier, 2009; Lee, Roux, Cherrier & Cova, 2011), brand avoidance (Lee at al., 2009b; Kim, Choo & Yoon, 2013; Knittel et al., 2016), brand rejection (Sandikci & Ekici, 2009; Nenycz-Thiel & Romaniuk, 2011), pre-purchase brand avoidance (Khan & Lee, 2014), moral avoidance (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2018) as well as brand apathy and opposition (Kucuk, 2008; Fournier & Alvarez, 2013; Wolter, Brach, Cronin & Bonn, 2016).

Hogg (1998) in exploring the impact of negation on consumption highlighted the fundamental motivations that promote the two prime anti-consumption phases; non-choice and anti-choice behaviour. Non-choice behaviour is predicated on the inaccessibility, unaffordability or unavailability of a product or brand to a consumer for purchase, thus, the consumer has no say (Hogg, 1998; Hogg, Banister & Stephenson, 2009). However, with anti-choice behaviour, the decision lies with the consumer. He or she may find the product or brand distasteful and thus avoid or abandon it (Hogg, 1998). In this case, anti-consumption is not dependent on the expensiveness or availability of the product or brand, but the preference and perceptions of the consumer (Hogg & Banister, 2001).

It is, however, important to note that, as stressed by Chatzidaki and Lee (2013), the reverse of the reasons for anti-consumption behaviour should not be automatically considered as drivers of consumption. For this study, the focus shall be on anti-choice consumption, where the buying organisation has enough resources to make any service choice.

3.2.1.1 Dimensions of Anti-Consumption

Product or brand anti-consumption could come in diverse forms; some reject consumption for personal reason (e.g. living a simpler life) and those who do so for universal purposes (e.g. environmental preservation) (Cherrier, 2009). Iyer and Muncy (2009) point out the existence of four distinct groups of anti-consumers – dependent on the object and purpose of anti-consumption, as seen in Table 3.1. They are anti-loyalists, global-impact consumers, market activists and simplifiers. Global impact consumers take a keen interest in diminishing general consumption levels for societal or planetary benefits. For instance, members of the buying centre in a refrigerant-using firm could boycott the purchase of chloro-fluoro carbons (CFCs) and hydro-chloro-fluoro carbons (HCFCs) refrigerants to help fight against ozone layer depletion and global warming. Simplifiers, the next set of anti-consumers, seek to avoid fast-paced, excessive-materialistic lifestyles and opt for less-materialistic and simpler lives. In this case, the purpose of anti-consumption is personal, however, the object is universal (Shaw & Newholm, 2002; Iyer & Muncy, 2009).

There are also the anti-loyalists; who reverse the concept of brand loyalty. Anti-loyalists refuse to patronise specific products or brands either because of a negative or unfavourable experience with the product or brand or low quality of the product (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). Here, the object of anti-consumption is specific, and the purpose is personal. Last but not least are the market activists. This group of anti-consumers avoid patronising certain products or brands due to their perception of the harmful effects it may have on the environment or promote negative social behaviour (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). The purpose of anti-consumption here is societal and the object is specific. For instance, the decider or influencer in a firm's buying centre could avoid or reject a certain brand or service because of the potential harm it may cause to the firm or its end-consumers.

Table 3. 1: Types of Anti-consumers

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Object of Anti-Consumption</td><td rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">Purpose of Anti-consumption</td></tr>
<tr><td>Societal concerns</td><td>Personal concerns</td></tr>
<tr><td>General (All consumption)</td><td>Global Impact Consumers</td><td>Simplifiers</td></tr>
<tr><td>Specific (Individual Brands or Products)</td><td>Market Activists</td><td>Anti-Loyal Consumers</td></tr>
</table>

(Source: Iyer and Muncy, 2009)

The focus of this thesis is anti-consumers who avoid specific brands for societal reasons i.e. market activists. This is because, in an organisation, although personal factors may come to play, the prime foci of purchasing decisions are the organisation and its end-consumers (Turka & Sasan, 2015). Per the assertions of Lee et al. (2009) and Kim et al. (2013), brand avoidance corresponds to brand-level rejection, which is a subset of the larger anti-consumption phenomenon.

3.2.2 Attachment Theory and Brand Attachment

Attachment theory attempts to bring understanding to the nature of the affective bonds made by people (Smith, Murphy & Coats, 1999). This theory emanated from a study of how baby animals imprint on their mothers and the effect of severing their bonds and progressed to emotional bonds formed by human infants and adolescents (Lorenz, 1935; Suomi, Harlow & Domek, 1970; Ainsworth, Blehar, Water & Wall, 1978). As propounded by Bowlby (1969, 1980), humans form emotional attachments; which are resolute emotional connections between an individual and an entity that persists across space and time. He asserts that these attachments feed into the basic requirements for human survival and are attributable to the period of the dependence of an infant to its mother to an adolescent's need for affection and relationships.

Per the assertions of this theory, an individual’s relations with an entity bothers on the degree of emotional connectedness the individual has to the entity (Bowlby, 1982). Impliedly, a person who is extremely affectionate towards another is predisposed to be devoted to, protect, work more closely with and sacrifice a lot for that person, on the other hand, in the event of disappointment from the receiving entity, the individual in question will be hurt and displeased (Bowlby, 1982). Extensive research has shown that emotional attachments go beyond just caretakers, partners and other humans to collectables, places of residence, brands, gifts and other objects of interest and fondness (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988; Hill & Stamey, 1990; Mick & DeMoss, 1990; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Slater, 2001).

Park, McInnis and Priester (2006) explain brand attachment as the robustness of the cognitive and emotional bond between a consumer and a brand. This explanation reveals the existence of a bond between the consumer and brand, and an emotional and cognitive correlation. The nature of this correlation informs the portion of resources the consumer apportions to the brand (Park et al., 2006). The consumer-brand connection portrays the degree to which the brand links to the consumer and influences the functional, symbolic and experiential goals of the consumer (Thomson, MacInnis & Whan Park, 2005). Just like babies form attachments to their caregivers (based on the caregiver’s reaction to the baby’s needs), consumers form attachments to brands based on the extent to which the brand can satisfy their needs (Bowlby, 1982; Thomson et al., 2005). Although in comparison to adults, the needs of babies are less complicated, the underlying process of attachment is similar.

The associations between brands and consumers manifest in both the cognition and emotions of consumers (Sperling & Berman, 1994); thus, whenever the thoughts of the brand come to mind substantial reasoning schemes are induced and bonds some parts of the consumer to the brand (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Moreover, embedded in brand attachments are strong feelings of self-relevance and self-implications which bind the consumer to the brand (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). This goes to say that brand attachment goes beyond just attitudes to more complex consumer behaviours related to commitment to a relationship (Park et al., 2006). The establishment of relationships, according to Hazan and Shaver (1994), is complex and dependent on the consumer's attachment style.

3.2.2.1 Attachment Styles and Consumption

Attachment styles may be described as the systematised patterns of a person's behaviours, feelings, memories of past occurrences and anticipations (Bowlby, 1982; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Ainsworth (1979) derived three attachment styles from an experiment on infants, namely; secure, avoidant and anxious-ambivalent or resistant. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) building on this developed a 2x2 matrix of adult attachments, with the axes being low or high dependence and low or high avoidance. From this matrix, they identified four attachment styles, namely, secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful attachment. Mende and Bolton (2011) however make the case that attachment styles are not limited to only person-to-person relations but influence relations between companies as well, hence, the attachment style of consumers portrays the kind of relationship they have with firms.

Mende and Bolton (2011) identify two distinct dimensions of consumer attachment styles, namely; attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. According to Thomson, Whelan & Johnson (2012), attachment anxiety focuses on an individual's self-view; considering the degree to which an individual perceives him or herself as deserving of love or not. They add that, anxious people are constantly concerned about their self-worth and self-esteem and tend to transfer undue attention to the object of their attachment. As a way of dealing with their excessive sensitivity to relationship threats, anxious persons require constant assurance and crave interdependence. In contrast, attachment avoidance relates to how an individual perceives others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). People who are high on avoidance tend to be highly self-reliant and prefer independence (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Prior studies reveal that the patterns of consumers' devotion, satisfaction, involvement and commitment to brands and service providers are influenced by their styles of attachment (Thomson & Johnson, 2006). Additionally, Swaminathan, Stilley and Ahluwalia (2009) maintain that attachment styles inform brand choice based on the consideration of brand personality types.

Consumer attachment is not limited to B2C relations only but comes into play in B2B relations as well; this is because, the internal working models of people inform their behaviours in business relationships as well (Paulssen, 2009). Paulssen (2009) in the investigation of the application of attachment theory in B2B markets identified two attachment styles that come into play; secure business attachment and close business attachment. Generally, employees who exhibit secure business attachment view others as being well-intentioned, reliable and responsible. They also have a high propensity to keep positive expectations, make positive appraisals and construct positive explanations to cover the behaviours and traits of business partners (or suppliers or brands). Thus, an organisation with a predominantly secure buying centre will be predisposed to greater levels of trust, satisfaction and repurchase intention in business transactions. However, it is worth noting that securely attached customers in B2B relations can possess a high willingness and ability to depend on a brand or business partner without an obligation or desire to be personally close to the brand or business partner (Paulssen, 2009). On the other hand, people who exhibit close business attachment prefer to have personal relationships with business partners (Paulssen, 2009). For instance, a brand or service provider would have to develop relationship marketing tactics aimed to personal bonding (showing interest in the personal lives of staff), so, if the brand's representatives are friendship-averse, the chance of perpetuating a good relationship will be little.

3.3 THE BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS (B2B) MARKET

Rope (1998) asserts that B2B marketing is premised on the buyer in the business transaction being either a company or another organisation. B2B marketing clientele may be classified into three broad categories, namely, commercial organisations, public organisations and non-profit organisations (Rope, 1998). Public organisations comprise of government and municipalities agencies and community–based service institutions such as schools and clinics, whereas non-profit organisations include unions, religions, institutions, fellowships (Rope, 1998; Webster& Wind, 1972; Turka & Sasan, 2015). Commercial organisations include service enterprises, industrial enterprise as well as whole and retail businesses (Rope, 1998). The commercial organisations, unlike the aforementioned, make purchases to facilitate their business processes, produce other products or resell at a profit (Turka & Sasan, 2015). As emphasised by Rope (1998), the prime qualification for a B2B transaction is not necessary for the specific use of the product or service but the fact that the purchase is made on organisational demand rather than for individual use.

3.3.1 Consumption in Business-to-Business Markets

Prior studies reveal that B2B interactions differ from B2C interactions on various fronts, including market structure, buying behaviour, products, buyer-seller relationships, promotions, price and channels (Giglierano & Vitale, 2002; Holvitie, 2006). B2B markets generally consist of fewer customers or buyers who purchase in larger proportions (Giglierano & Vitale, 2002). The revenue distribution of most businesses that serve other businesses follows the Pareto Principle, which avers that 80 per cent of revenue is generated by only 20 per cent of customers (Hague, Hague & Harrison, 2017). Products could range from simple to technically complex depending on the line of business of the customer and are usually customised to the preference of the buyer (Giglierano & Vitale, 2002). Additionally, the demand for business clients is determined by their final consumers, thus may fluctuate more frequently (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Negotiation plays a key role in B2B transactions, as well as careful consideration of factors such as price, product or service availability, quality, running and maintenance cost, delivery and feasibility (Webster & Wind, 1972; Giglierano & Vitale, 2002; Turka & Sasan, 2015).

Furthermore, B2B transactions are characterised by shorter promotional and distribution channels, which could be attributed to the emphasis on personal selling and the use of little to no market intermediaries (Giglierano & Vitale, 2002). Additionally, in B2B markets, buyer-seller relationships are greatly valued by both buyers and sellers; this may be due to the large investments made by both parties and high switching costs (Turka & Sasan, 2015). Relationships have a long-term orientation and involve the exchange of significant information between members (staff) of the participating organisations (Giglierano & Vitale, 2002). Purchasing tasks normally include multilevel functional involvement (Turka & Sasan, 2015).
In smaller organisations, purchases may be conducted by a manager or the owner of the business. As expressed by Anton and Jones (2017), the actions of SMEs are mostly a direct representation of the psychological and behavioural characteristics of the business owner(s). However, in large organisations, purchases made result from the consolidated effort of largely professionally trained personnel who make up the buying centre (Rope, 1998; Lyson &

Farrington, 2006). The buying centre is described as the various people within an organisation who directly or indirectly participate in the buying process (Rope, 1998; Lyson & Farrington, 2006). According to Rope (1998), Lyson and Farrington (2006) and Turka and Sasan (2015), the buying centre comprises of:

- Initiators – those who establish the need for the product
- Influencers – those who specify the requirement to be met by the product or provide information that assists with the evaluation of alternatives
- Deciders – those who wield the formal or informal authority to make the final purchase
- Buyers – those who have the authority to choose the vendors and make the actual purchase
- Users – those who directly use the purchased product in their operational duties and
- Gatekeepers – those who have access to other members of the buying centre and have some control over information flow.

3.3.2 Factors that influence Organizational Buying

Organisational buying like many other activities in the corporate environment is affected by various controllable and uncontrollable factors. Prior studies show that organisational buying is influenced by organisational, environmental as well as group/interpersonal and individual/personal factors (Hutt, 1998; Thomas & Grashof, 1982; Glock & Hochrein, 2011). According to Lyson and Farrington (2006), environmental influencers include political factors, technological change, interest rate, competition, national economy, level of demand and government regulations. Besides, they posit that these factors fall out of the control of the organisation; thus, firms only adjust to accommodate and survive. The organisational factors, on the other hand, stem from within the institution and may be altered by the firm (Lyson & Farrington, 2006; Turka & Sasan, 2015). These factors feed into the firm's ideology, strategic priorities, strategic trends of purchasing and strategic role of purchasing (Hutt, 1998). They include the organisation's policies, goals, objectives, procedures, structure and system of rewards (Lyson & Farrington, 2006; Turka & Sasan, 2015). For instance, whether an organisation has a centralised or decentralised structure informs the degree of complexity of the purchasing process, whilst, the policies and goals form the basis for drawing up contracts and relationship – building (Turka & Sasan, 2015).

Interpersonal attributes, as defined by Turka and Sasan (2015) encapsulates the relations between the various members of the buying units during the decision-making process. The factors that come to play here include members' awareness, education, ability to take risks, mutual trust, the degree of conflict between members as well as the differing levels of authority, empathy, status and persuasiveness (Lyson & Farrington, 2006; Turka & Sasan, 2015). Also, Martilla (1971) found that interpersonal communication within the firm is rudimentary and crucial, whereas its significance between firms is dependent on the nature of the product and geographic market factors. Conversely, individual factors relate to the characteristics of the people who partake in the buying process and how they affect decisions (Turka & Sasan, 2015). For instance, each person in the buying centre has a unique preference for brands and products/services (Lyson & Farrington, 2006). Also, the dynamics introduced by multiple personalities, ages, attitude towards risk and professional identification creates different levels of information processing, product/service evaluation criteria and risk-reduction strategies which all feed into purchases (Hutt, 1998; Lyson & Farrington, 2006). Moreover, people move in certain directions in decision-making to attain some personal objectives such as recognition, power, prestige, promotion and job security; normally categorised as non-task objectives (Turka & Sasan, 2015).

3.4 EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

3.4.1 Brands and Branding in Business-to-Business Markets

De Chernatony and McDonald (2003) describe a brand as an aggregate of functional and emotional benefits that present a unique and desirable promise, whilst Farquhar (1989) defines branding simply as the process of making a product more valuable. Per the assertions of Kotler and Pfoertsh (2006), the general roles brands play in consumer markets can be translated to the B2B markets. However, Leek and Christodoulides (2011) point out that many marketers have viewed branding myopically in business markets. Branding was regarded as of little value to the business clients because of the traditional perception of organisational decision-making as very rational, whereas branding appeals more to the emotions (Robinson, Faris & Wind, 1967). Conversely, later studies, such as that of Lynch and De Chernatony (2004) reveal that just like in B2C markets, brands in B2B markets must build both affective and cognitive ties with customers to foster trust.

It is evident in extant literature that branding is beneficial to both the brand\firm investing in branding and the customer (Leek & Christodoulides, 2011). For instance, branding enhances the perceived value of a product/service, and consequently, makes it more appealing (Cretu & Brodie, 2007; Rindell et al., 2014). A brand, according to Michell, King and Reast (2001), gives identity and a consistent image to a product/service, and in turn, confers uniqueness unto that product. In situations where firms bid for contracts, those with strong brands are favoured as they get unto the bid lists and can request premium prices (Michell et al., 2001; Low & Blois, 2002; Ohnemus, 2009). Furthermore, promotional efforts of branded products are accepted more readily, and the firms behind the brands enjoy the transfer of positive brand evaluations from one product category to the other in the event of brand extensions (Michell et al., 2001; Low & Blois, 2002; Ohnemus, 2009). Plus, strong B2B brands stand a higher chance of receiving referrals (Holt, Quelch & Taylor, 2003; Bendixen, Bukasa & Abratt, 2004).

On the side of the business client, brands reduce perceived risks and intricacies involved in purchase decisions, as brands act as guarantors of product origin, quality and performance (Belch & Belch, 2012). According to Low and Blois (2002) and Mudambi (2002), brands boost the confidence of business clients, increase satisfaction and promote comfort as well as the "feel good" factor. Moreover, the buying firms may attain some legitimacy from being connected to a reputable company or brand (Low and Blois, 2002).

3.4.1.1 Service Branding

Services have a fundamental characteristic of intangibility, which makes service quality evaluations difficult (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). Berry (2000), however, points out that branding presents consumers a means of substantially differentiating between offerings of competing brands. Murray and Schlacter (1990) assert that in comparison to the branding of goods, service branding is more pertinent because of the intricacy of service purchases. This is especially true for B2B services (Geigenmuller & Bettis-Outland, 2012).

Contrary to product branding, services rely on the image and designation of the firm that provides then when being branded. Consequently, the entire firm is perceived as the service provider by consumers (Berry, 2000). Thus, as stated by Alexandris, Douka, Papadopoulos and Kaltsatou (2008), the core of a service brand is dictated by the characteristics of the firm. For instance, how employees of the firm offer services and the nature of the relationship between the firm and its clients. Furthermore, business services, according to Parasuraman (1998), are frequently highly individualistic and require intensive correspondence between the consumer and provider. Thus, information asymmetry between the client and provider could make effectively evaluating strategies for the provider; and service quality for the client difficult (Karantinou & Hogg, 2001; Hausman, 2003).

As Marquardt, Golicic and Davis (2011) point out, in B2B transactions goods and services provided across firms in the industry are more susceptible to speedy standardisation, resulting in commoditisation. Webster and Keller (2004) thus stress the need for brand managers to focus on consistently creating and promoting points of difference, including the reputation strength and technical competence of a firm as a way of differentiation and providing superior value (Webster & Keller, 2004). Services notably possess high credence and experience qualities, consequently associate more with high risk and uncertainty. However, when services are branded, the uncertainty decreases as the brands act as proxies for quality (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999; Grace & O'Cass, 2005). Moreover, service brands assure customers of consistency in service delivery, whereas brand equity is very instrumental in B2B service differentiation (Gordon, Calantone, di Benedetto & Kaminski, 1993; Berry, 2000).

3.4.1.2 Brand Equity

Brand equity has been interpreted severally in literature. From a financial viewpoint, brand equity is regarded as the disparity in cash flow a firm sees when they add a brand name to their service or product against when they do not (Simom & Sullivan, 1993). Also, brand equity is described as the financial worth generated by a brand, as evidenced by the profit generated by the brand (Biel, 1992; Bailey & Ball, 2006). Kimpakorn and Trocquer (2010) point out, however, that, the financial approach to defining the concept fails to assist brand managers to fully grasp the various processes that feed into the development of brand equity. Aaker (1991) from a marketing viewpoint defines brand equity as an amalgamation of assets and liabilities associated to a brand which results in the increment or reduction of value attained by a firm and its clients from a market offering. Additionally, these assets are broken down into five categories: perceived quality, brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty, as well as other proprietary assets (Aaker, 1996). Tsiotsou, Ratten, Rosenbaum & Wong (2010) also add that the extra value added to a product or service to attain brand equity comes from acquiring some brand attributes such as a name, reputation, association and symbols. Furthermore, Keller (1993), who takes it from a consumer-based view, considers brand equity as a resulting reaction brand knowledge generates to marketing efforts. According to Hoeffler and Keller (2003), positive brand equity is attained when in the event of brand recognition, the customer responds more favourably in comparison to how he/she would respond in the absence of brand recognition.

In conceptualising Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE), Keller (1993) notes that by comprehending brand equity from where the consumer stands, a firm understands some consumer reactions to marketing efforts and can consequently improve their marketing programs. Berry (2000) posits that brand equity places brands/firms in a favourable position. Various studies point out that brand equity provides significant merits in marketing, such as forming a concrete and distinct bond between a firm and its shareholders and engenders long-terms patronage (Capron & Hulland, 1999; Davis, 2000; Ambler, 2003). Moreover, Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) assert that an appreciation of and investment into brand equity increases profitability and makes market accessibility and penetration difficult to other firms.

Contrary to the concept of positive brand equity is negative brand equity. According to Lee (2007), there are some instances where a brand may be negatively re-created in the process of marketing or consumption, which may result in its avoidance or rejection. This rejection, as argued by Lee (2007) leads to a market-based liability which is the reverse of the improved efficiency and effectiveness a firm attains as a market-based asset. Drawing from the conceptualisations of Keller (1993) and Aaker (1996), the repeated rejection of brand results in negative brand equity as the reaction from consumers to the brand is unfavourable. Thus, rather than enhancing the value creation assets of the firm, the brand may stifle cash flow and impede the overall possibility of value generation of the firm (Lee, 2007).

3.4.2 Brand Avoidance

Brand avoidance is described as an antithesis of brand loyalty, implying that whereas satisfaction results in loyalty, dissatisfaction breeds avoidance (Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006). According to Kavaliauske and Simanavicinte (2015), the first attempt at formally defining brand avoidance was made by Lee at al. (2009a). They define brand avoidance as a deliberate choice by consumers to reject or keep away from a brand. This phenomenon represents a form of consumer behaviour which involves the pre-meditated rejection of a brand despite the consumer having access to it, and the resources and ability to purchase it (Lee et al., 2009b; Rindell et al., 2014). Thus, being a dimension of the parent anti-consumption concept, brand avoidance is identified as an anti-choice behaviour (Hogg, 1998; Lee et al., 2009a). Knittel et al. (2016) highlight the necessity of brands and firms understanding the origins and motivations of brand avoidance as they bear the brunt. Backed by Kavaliauske and Simanavicinte (2015), they argue that brand avoidance has a significant impact on the brand or firm's reputation and profitability.

The study of brand avoidance has mainly concerned end-consumers or individual consumers. These studies have identified that no matter the promises brands offer or not, customers avoid brands when the negative emotions, beliefs and attitudes they have towards the brand strengthens or grows and serves as a barrier to purchasing (Thompson et al., 2006; Nenycz-Thiel & Romaniuk, 2011; Romani, Grappi & Dalli, 2012). Although business clients are prime contributors to the success of brands in the B2B market (Turka & Sasan, 2015), and avoid certain brands at points in time, little attention has been given to brand avoidance by business clients. Arguments in areas of organisational purchasing behaviour have stressed on rationality over emotionality (Robinson et al., 1967; Turka & Sasan, 2015) however, the introduction of branding and relationship-building in B2B markets introduces emotional elements as branding efforts and development of brand equity thrive on the affective for the optimal result (Mudambi, 2002; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003; Lynch & De Chernatony, 2004).

Also, every organisation comprises of individuals who make both cognitive and affective considerations in decision-making, despite the ratios (Kotler & Pfoertsh, 2006). Besides, in situations where affective measures are disregarded, brands may be rejected or avoided by business clients for other reasons, making their investigation critical. Due to the scanty literature in brand avoidance in the B2B context, discussions on the motivations and types of brand avoidance will be heavily reliant on studies from the consumers.

3.4.2.1 Types of Brand Avoidance

3.4.2.1.1 Experiential Avoidance

Potentially the most perceptible type of brand avoidance, experiential avoidance relates to situations where the result of service delivery or product performance falls short of fulfilling the brand promise or meeting customer expectations, sourced from poor performance, unpleasant store environment or consumption hassles (Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b). Halstead (1989) posits that in market exchange, consumer expectations could be either confirmed or disconfirmed, hinged on the juxtaposition of the product or service performance with their initial expectations. When there is a match between expectations and product or service execution, there is confirmation (satisfaction). There is, however, disconfirmation when performance falls either below or above expectations. In the occurrence of the latter, the customer is delighted when performance falls above expectation and dissatisfied when the reverse transpires, in which case brand avoidance may be triggered (Oliver, 1980; Lee et al., 2009b).

Kim et al. (2013), supported by Lee et al. (2012) argue that unmet expectations are effective in eliciting brand avoidance behaviour. This argument is reiterated by Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk (2011), who state that negative brand experiences spur anti-consumption behaviour. Thus, the occurrence of experiential avoidance of a brand reveals that a customer has been disappointed by a brand's service – experienced a service that fell short of their expectations because of poor performance, inconvenience, service environment or service encounter failures (Lee et al., 2009b; Berndt et al., 2019). Similar to B2C relations, core service failures such as unmet expectations will logically spur brand switching in B2B markets, (Naumann, Haverila, Khan & Williams, 2010). Poor performance, consumption hassles and unpleasant store appearance are the outstanding dimensions of unmet expectations, resulting in experiential avoidance (Lee et al., 2009a).

Poor performance

As reported by Lee et al. (2009a), service experiences that fail to meet customer expectations account for most occurrences of experiential avoidance. In such situations, where the customer perceives the brand's inability to execute its promises or fails to affirm its image, poor performance is evident (Odoom et al., 2019). De Chernatony and McDonald (2003) in their conceptualisation of a brand, highlight the significance of functional benefits offered. Delasus and Descotes (2012) in like manner, place gravitas on the performance of a product or service when they link it to its functional value. Particularly in industrial markets, functional value performs a pivotal role (Doyle, 2001). Within the service industry, poor service covers all actions and events associated with the service brand that may result in disappointing service experiences (Berndt et al., 2019). Poorly functioning products or services result in the waste of time, distress, feeling of loss of control and dissatisfaction (Thompson, 1997; Cho & Song, 2012). Furthermore, business clients may encounter major setbacks and frustrations in attending to their external and internal customers (Kapustina & Babenkova, 2010), which could result in the displeasure and defection of their customers.

Hassle

The term hassle captures the additional effort and stress of consumers encounter when handling product or service failures and complaints when dissatisfied; leading to avoidance of the brand or service (Lee at al., 2009; Knittel at al., 2016). In a situation where a customer is presented with a defective product or encounters a poor service and needs to act to remedy the underperformance, reaching out to customer service is often considered unworthy of the effort. After consideration of the inconvenience suffered, avoidance of the service or product may seem a plausible alternative in the future (Lee et al., 2009a).

Similarly, the findings of Keaveney (1995) reveal that customers are more likely to switch brands when they are inconvenienced and encounter poor employee response to service failures, resulting in avoidance of the failed brand. In the B2B setting, the effect of service failures heighten, because the failures are not limited to the client's operations, but due to "domino effects", spreads to the client's customers (Zhu & Zolkiewski, 2015). Even in the instance where service recovery schemes such as product returns or service warranties are available and invocable, the consumer could still regard them as complicated and additionally inconveniencing, strengthening the feeling of dissatisfaction (Lee at al., 2009a, 2009b).

Store environment

Lee et al. (2009a, 2009b) point out that an unpleasant store environment or service delivery setting could add up to a negative brand experience. The store environment delineates the non-interpersonal and interpersonal components of the shopping experience, such as ambience, stimuli and social factors (D'Astous, 2000; Arnold, Reynolds, Ponder & Lueg, 2005). It may also be described as the tangible settings of a firm inclusive of lighting, signs, music and people (staff uniforms, behaviours and characteristics (Turley & Milliman, 2000; Lin & Chiang, 2010). Per the assertions of Kotler (1973) and Donovan, Rossiter, Marcoolyn and Nesdale (1994), these factors within a service environment or store setting could create positive feelings in the consumer and increase the chances of purchase or vice versa.

A store or service environment of a brand is considered strategic; aimed at influencing consumer cognition and behaviour, while adding to the delivery of distinctive experiences (Turley & Milliman, 2000; Lemoine, 2005). Nevertheless, Lee et al. (2009b) hint that customers generally have expectations of the kind of experiences a brand's store or office should present. Thus, when reality deviates from the expectations, the negative store experience could spur avoidance (Lee et al., 2009b). Findings of Noad and Rogers (2008) reveal that just like in B2C settings, store atmospherics plays a significant role in affecting purchase decisions in B2B transactions, with product display being the major influencer. Similar to how as an appealing environment favours positive consumer reaction, an unappealing environment created displeasure, dissatisfaction and avoidance (Tai & Fung, 1997; Knittel et al., 2016).

3.4.2.1.2 Identity Avoidance

It is normal to find consumers choose certain brands because they perceive a correspondence between the brand and their self-concept or self-image (Belk, 1988). Conversely, still driven by a desire to enhance their self-concept, some brands may be rejected by consumers (Hogg & Banister, 2001). Similar to individuals, organisations strive to protect their identities. Organisational identity, as defined by Albert and Whetten (1985), is a set of statements concerning the organisation which are considered as distinct, central and enduring by the members of the organisation. This identity gives the organisation a sense of who they are, what they do and what they should strive to attain in future (Lin, 2004). Albeit, with a solid comprehension of an organisation's identity, managers and other firm leaders develop a fundamental base that guides all decision-making activities (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Identity avoidance refers to brand avoidance that stems from a consumer's perception of the discordance between the symbolic meanings of a brand and their actual or preferred self-concept (Lee et al., 2009a). Simply put, identity avoidance happens when a brand is unable to attain a customer's self-concept requirements (Lee et al., 2009b). In such instances, the consumer may perceive the brand as unauthentic, affiliated with an unacceptable reference group (Charmley, Garry & Ballantine, 2013; Kim et al., 2016), and other attachments and values they do not want to associate with (also known as the consumer's undesired self) (Ogilvie, 1987; Lee, 2007). According to Lee et al. (2009b), the concept of identity avoidance is informed by undesired self-concept and disidentification.

Also known as self-identity, self-concept describes the desire of a customer to establish a psychological attachment with a corporate brand (Hudson, Roth, Jadden & Hudson, 2015). Disidentification theory postulates that in constructing their self-concept, consumers may dissociate themselves from groups and organisations with values and standards that are inconsistent with theirs (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002). Thus, the inconsistencies and symbolic connotations a brand presents, as well as the self-concept of a consumer could stir up antagonistic feelings towards the brand (Hegner et al., 2017). Just like brands and consumers, business clients have organisational concepts they uphold and with which they operate (Hunt, Wood & Chonko, 1989; Beyer, 1981; Dose, 1997) and are likely to reject a brand that does not identify with these values. Lee et al. (2009a) highlight inauthenticity, negative reference groups and deindividuation as the sub-themes of identity avoidance.

Inauthenticity

Lee et al. (2009a) make the argument that a brand's lack of authenticity is a reason why it will be avoided. Authenticity, as elucidated by Arthur (2006), connotes trustworthiness, genuineness and realness. On that account, a consumer that avoids a brand based on inauthenticity regards the brand as a counterfeit (Lee et al., 2009). Thompson et al. (2006) mention that obtaining and maintaining associations of brand authenticity is challenging for brands. Holt (2002) and Beverland (2006) share in this view and link the difficulty to the brand's growth in popularity and over-commercialisation. Thus, a brand can be perceived to have lost its authenticity or unique symbolism (or termed ordinary) as it loses its ability to keep hardcore clientele and convey the positive associations it initially represented (Lee et al., 2009a). Lee (2007) further iterates that embedded in brand inauthenticity is the disparity between the image of a brand as perceived by a consumer and intended image of the brand.

Negative reference groups

A consumer is likely to reject a brand because of its association with a negative reference group (Lee et al., 2009a). As postulated in the social identity theory, the uniqueness of a person is reliant on the associations he/she makes as well as the significance of these associations to the person (Hogg, 1998). Additionally, various studies suggest that consumers develop and define their social reference and self-concept by what they do or do not consume (Hogg, 1998; Banister & Hogg, 2001). Moreover, consumers hold the view that as they consume brands, they display self-concepts akin to those of other consumers of the same brands (Grubb & Hupp, 1968). Thus, in respect of self-congruity, consumers relate self-concepts to the image of the product or brand-user (Sirgy, 1982). Consequently, firms invest a lot into connecting their brands to preferred reference groups in hopes that their targets will lean towards their brands (Lee, 2007). Knittel et al. (2016), therefore, assert that the basis for evading a product or brand is evident in consumers' eagerness to be dissociated from a specific group.

Deindividuation

Deindividuation may be described as an emotional state of diminished self-assessment and diminished regard for judgment, resulting in disinhibited and anti-normative behaviour (Zimbardo, 1969; Diener, 1980). Lee et al. (2009a) contend that deindividuation results from brand consumption due to a loss of individuality. Knittel et al. (2016) add that it is also seen when consumers reject popular brands to avoid losing their uniqueness and individuality. Hence, instead of promoting significance by using the brand (Banister & Hogg, 2000), the consumer's individuality is rather eroded or concealed. The brand loses its ability to build distinctive individuality as more and more people patronise the brand (Lee, 2007).

3.4.2.1.3 Moral Avoidance

This typology of avoidance is driven by ideological incompatibility and is often the outcome of brand promises that socially or politically oppose the belief system of customers (Lee et al., 2009; Sandikci & Ekici, 2009). This absence of like-mindedness in moral values between the brand and the customer may prompt the customer to avoid the brand (Lee et al., 2009a); for instance, portraying some behaviours considered as immoral per the standards of consumers (e.g. forced labour, discrimination, unfair trade prices, cruelty, non-transparency, monopolistic), engaging in unethical practices as well as socially irresponsible behaviours (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Rindell et al., 2014). Lee et al. (2009) and Knittel et al. (2016) label country effects, anti-hegemony and consumer cynicism as the ideological sub-themes that underlie moral avoidance.

Country of origin

Country of origin is of importance to the customer (Abrashi & Beurer, 2013). According to Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2010), it is a critical determinant of the behaviours, attitudes and purchase intentions of consumers. As stated by Peterson and Jolibert (1995), country of origin is considered as a prompt based on which consumers assess the consistency and superiority of products from a country and progressively influences consumption intents. Although the country of origin signals are properties that are not substantially associated with the product itself, interacting with the other conditions surrounding the purchase, it may serve as an assessment criterion for consumers (Elliott & Cameron, 1994; Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu & Hyder, 2000). Underpinning the concept of country of origin is the idea that once a consumer becomes aware of the source of a product or brand, it affects their behaviour towards the product/brand (Lee, 2007). Furthermore, as expressed by Aiello et al. (2009), it influences consumer evaluation of a product or brand.

Existing literature discloses animosity and financial patriotism as some sub-themes of the country of origin (Lee, 2007; Lee et al., 2009). Per the postulates of the animosity model, consumers may baulk a product or brand from a country, not because of the product or brand quality but for reasons relating to military, economic and political activities regarded as serious and reprehensible (Klein, Ettenson & Moris, 1998). Financial patriotism, on the other hand, relates to instances where consumers keep away from brands, they believe could have destructive implications on the resident economy (Lee, 2007).

Anti-hegemony

The idea that a multi-cultural group is dominated or controlled by just one group is termed as hegemony; thus, anti-hegemony may be depicted as "against domination" (Lee, 2007). Gramsci (1971) submits that anti-hegemony involves consumers contesting multi-national brands that are perceived to wield too much authority in the marketplace, otherwise known as hegemonic brands. As maintained by Kozinets and Handelman (2004) and Rindell et al. (2014), consumers are driven to maintain a strategic distance from dominant brands in anticipation of monopoly prevention or to combat corporate irresponsibility whiles protecting the society and environment. Here, customers are not motivated to lessen overall consumption but reject brands because of their conduct in the marketplace (Cromie & Ewing, 2009). Moreover, consumers may also be driven by the lop-sidedness of power between a multi-national brand and the consumer (Lee et al., 2009a; Odoom et al., 2019). In these cases, consumers are drawn to brand avoidance because of their feelings of disempowerment from lack of freedom of choice (Cromie & Ewing, 2009), and a desire to lessen the power wielded by the organisation (Berndt et al., 2019).

3.4.2.1.4 Deficit-Value Avoidance

According to Lee et al. (2009a, 2009b), deficit-value avoidance comes about when consumers perceive a brand as parading unacceptable cost-to-benefit trade-offs. This brand avoidance typology is built on concepts of quality and value (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Lee et al., 2009b). Research has shown that the benefits consumers attain from brands are two-fold: functional and symbolic (Ligas, 2000; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Lee (2007) links this dimension of brand avoidance to the inability of brands to fully satisfy the functional desires of consumers, per the brand promises, thus, offering poor value. Murphy and Narkiewicz (2012) mention that, value, is always defined from the viewpoint of the customer, and irrespective of how valuable a firm may perceive their brand, consumers will keep away if they do not perceive value. In the study of Dodds, Munroe and Grewal (1991), the impact of price-perceived quality on perceived value preference and purchase intention is established.

Knittel et al. (2016) explain that although there are some similarities between experiential avoidance and deficit-value avoidance, a critical disparity is that in deficit-value avoidance, unlike experiential avoidance, customers evaluate value against cost without necessarily experiencing the product or service. The underlying sub-themes of deficit-value avoidance are aesthetic insufficiency, unfamiliarity and food favouritism (Lee et al., 2009b).

Aesthetic insufficiency

The features of a product could be extrinsic or intrinsic, where intrinsic signals relate directly to the product (e.g. texture, taste, freshness, ingredients, nutritive value and aroma) and extrinsic signals do not (Mendez, Oubina & Rubio, 2011). The aesthetics of a product, according to Lawson (1983) refer to the physical appearance of the product and is instrumental in attracting consumers. These include the colour, size, shape, reflectivity and proportion of the product (Brunel & Kumar, 2007). It is evident from findings of prior studies that aesthetics stimulate positive reactions from consumers on multiple levels (cognitive, affective) (Postrel, 2003; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008; Reiman, Zaichkowsky, Neuhaus, Bender & Weber, 2010). For instance, attractive aesthetics enhance favourable consumer judgement as well as trust

(Behrendt, 2010; Belch & Belch, 2012). However, consumers are repelled by brands or products that are not aesthetically appealing or have insufficient aesthetics (Lee et al., 2009), thus tend to avoid them. This is attributable to the fact that many customers assess brands based on external cues (Lee et al., 2009a; Behrendt, 2010; Belch & Belch, 2012).

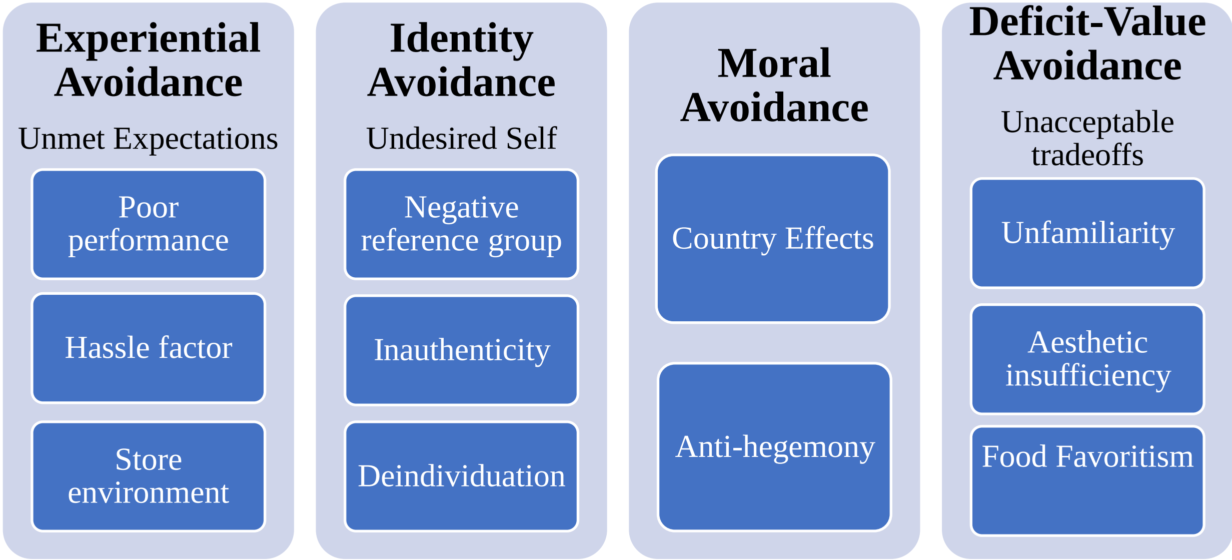
Unfamiliarity

Deficit-value avoidance is also related to unfamiliarity. Consumers are likely to distance themselves from unfamiliar brands because they could be considered as risky and of low quality (Berndt et al., 2019). Hence, comparing unfamiliar or new brands to known brands, the former is likely to be avoided due to how value-perceptions (Stewart, 1992; Lee et al., 2009b). Underlying this phenomenon is brand familiarity and awareness. Once a consumer develops knowledge structures of a brand, it only needs trigger recall from a consumer's memory to stimulate purchase (Keller, 2003); however, an unfamiliar brand lacks this ability (Stewart, 1992).

Food favouritism

This cause of avoidance pertains mainly to food-related services. Prior studies suggest that customers are prone to becoming wary and avoiding contaminated, harmful, unfamiliar or cheap food (Green, Draper & Dowler, 2003) because they have a higher sensitivity and demand for food from a deficit-value angle. Thus, the presentation of food alone, for instance, can influence how customers evaluate the quality of the service (Green et al., 2003). In regard of this sub-theme of deficit-value avoidance, Lee et al. (2009) assert that consumers may patronise some products or services of a brand, though of insufficient value, however, reject other food-related products of the same brand.

Figure 3. 1: Four types of Brand Avoidance



(Source: Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b)

3.4.2.1.5 Advertising Avoidance

Knittel et al. (2016) conceptualised advertising avoidance as another type of brand avoidance, stemming from 'failed communication'. Advertisement, according to Rosenbaum-Elliot, Percy and Pervan (2015, p.123) is "any message where the primary communication objective is brand awareness and brand attitude, regardless of the media used". A consumer who assesses a brand's advertisement as negative is most likely incentivised to avoid that brand (Knittel et al., 2016). The work of Knittel et al. (2016) focused mainly on television and radio advertisements, but personal selling has been established as the most prominent means of promotion in B2B markets (Turka & Sasan, 2015). Lord and Gupta (2010) however argue that organizational buyers, although bound by purchasing policies, requirements and constraints at work (Kotler, 2000), do not spend all their life-seconds in their professional roles. Outside work, they read magazines, newspapers, listen to the radio, play videogames and go to movies. According to Lord and Gupta (2010), while engaging in these activities, they are exposed to various commercials, acquire information and form perceptions about the products and brands which they commit to memory and draw on when making work decisions. Findings of Knittel et al. (2016) expose that brand avoidance does not only occur when the commercial is current but may be from the past. The authors name four distinct categories of advertising that prompt brand avoidance: content, music, celebrity endorsement and response.

Content

The content of an advertisement is an indication of the information and vision to be communicated to the public; and includes the storyline and message (Knittel et al., 2016). Advertisements have been noted to significantly affect consumers (Anderson, Ciliberto & Liaukonyte, 2013; Liaukonyte, Teixeira & Wibur, 2015). Knittel et al. (2016) found that provocative (such as sex and nudity) and annoying or offensive commercials may spur avoidance. The authors, supported by Sabri and Obermiller (2012), also posit that violence in commercials is regarded as forbidden and may result in brand avoidance. Business clients in consideration of the perceptions of their end-users may reject a brand for fear of suffering the consequences of negative associations.

Celebrity Endorser

Canning and West (2006) describe endorsement as getting the "backing, support or approval from a third party", otherwise known as a spokesperson. A brand endorser is someone who appears in the brand's commercials and promotes the brand through his/her voice, image and patronage of the brand (Debevec & Iyer, 1986). An endorser provides an imaginary look and tone or face to the brand and builds a connection with customers (Debevec & Iyer, 1986; Apaolaza-Ibanez, Zander & Hartmann, 2010). A celebrity is a popular individual with the ability to affect the behaviours of people (including purchasing behaviour), thus may act as brand endorsers (Erdogan, Baker & Tagg, 2001). These individuals are usually looked up to by many who seek to share their lifestyles and values (Muda, Musa & Putit, 2012), thus, are selected to capture and translate the interest of customers to the endorsed brand (Aperia & Back, 2004). In the B2B context, the spokesperson may be a typical customer, company president, celebrity or product class expert (Friedman & Friedman, 1979), and involves the spokesperson communicating the benefits of patronizing the brand to the prospective client (Canning & West, 2006).

Although celebrity endorsers are regarded as effective marketing tools because of their positive influence on brand recognition, intentions to purchase and advertising effectiveness (MarketWatch, 2006; Till, Stanley & Priluck, 2008), there may be some downsides. Fong and Wyer (2012) explain that due to the differences in consumer preferences, they may respond in different ways to the same endorser. Just as some customers may accept the endorser and respond favourably towards the brand, others may reject the endorser and consequently reject the advertisement and brand (Loui, Kulik & Jacobson, 2001).

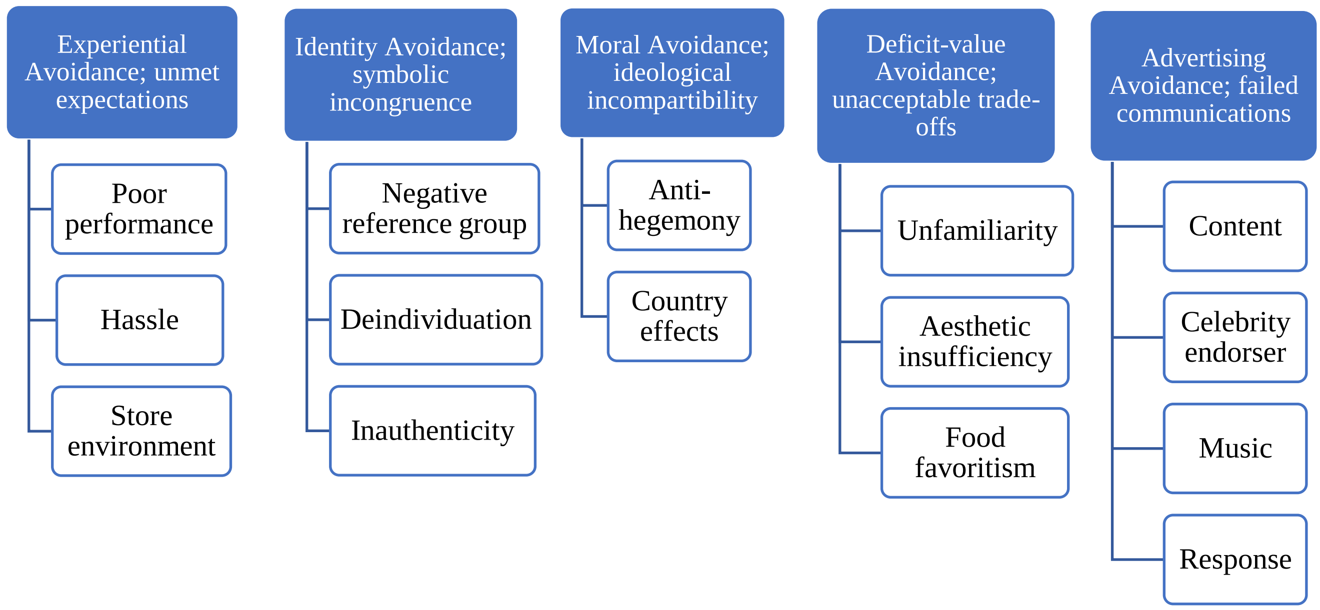
Music

Music is considered very instrumental in advertising. It is determinative in advertising as it draws attention, transmits both implicit and explicit messages, assists in message retention, evokes various emotions and impacts perceptions in many respects (Gorn, 1982; Alpert & Alpert, 1991). Oakes (2007) also notes that a suitable match of music with a brand could enhance recall, purchase intention, affective response and attitude, thereby advancing communication effectiveness. However, in situations where the music is disliked, it could elicit unfavourable consumer attitudes towards the brand (Lantos & Craton, 2012). Thus, just as music can draw consumers in and make them act favourably, Knittel et al. (2016) submit that it could also be a reason for brand avoidance.

Response

There is great subjectivity in the interpretation of marketing communications; thus, for every advertisement, consumers react differently (Kotler, 2011). Response refers to how an individual interprets information in the process of communication (McQuail & Windahl, 2015). According to Kotler (2011), advertisement response is the phase of the marketing communication process that is reliant in the consumer. Some reactions may be positive (e.g. brand choice, preference, purchase), whilst some may be negative leading to brand avoidance (Percy, 2008; Knittel et al., 2016).

Figure 3. 2: Five types of Brand Avoidance



(*Source:* Knittel et al., 2016)

Prior studies provide evidence that the purchasing decisions of consumers are significantly impacted by their emotions towards brands even in the business setting (Kotler & Pfoertch, 2006; Sinha, Ahuja & Medury, 2011). In like manner, the literature reveals that consumer emotions amidst environmental factors contribute to their behaviours and actions (Dalli, Grappi, Romani & Gistri, 2007; Romani, Sadeh & Dalli, 2009). Thus, just as positive emotions precede favourable behaviours, negative emotions spur unfavourable actions such as avoidance (Romani et al., 2012). Negative emotions here refer to negative or unfavourable emotional reactions induced by a consumer's assessment of a brand-related stimulus (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). Some examples include brand hate, disgust, anger and fear. As disclosed by extant literature, the more pronounced consumers' negative opinions about a brand get, the stronger their negative emotions towards the brand, increasing the chances of brand avoidance (Thompson et al., 2006; Nenycz-Thiel & Romaniuk, 2011).

3.5 TYPE OF BUSINESS

The diverse settings within which organizations operate have unique and specific attributes that contribute to making them distinct (Kisengo, 2014). Wallace, Naser and Mora (1994) labelling it as industry type categorise the type of business as a market-related firm characteristic. This organizational feature interplays with other structure, performance and capital-related characteristics; as firm age, size, capital intensity and liquidity ratios to influence the successes and failures of a business (Golan et al., 2003; Kogan & Tian, 2012; Kisengo, 2014). Furthermore, it contributes to the differences in strategic actions, reaction to stakeholder actions and resulting outcomes in various businesses (Tsai & Wang, 2005).

A business may be categorised as merchandising, service, manufacturing or a hybrid based on the nature of its market offering, and each of these presents a unique setting within which the firm operates. Woon (2000) describes a manufacturing firm as one that produces tangible goods and assigns majority of its operations to the production of these goods. Same may be said for service firms, except that their products are predominantly intangible (Woon, 2000; Pino, 2008). Manufacturing firms make use of raw materials, components and pieces of various things to make goods which may be sold directly to consumers, market intermediaries or other manufacturers. Notably, the offerings of service firms are characterised by intangibility, perishability, inseparability and heterogeneity (Woon, 2000; Kotler, 2003).

A merchandising firm may be described as one that procures finished products and resells them to other consumers; examples being wholesalers and retailers. Also, a hybrid business is one that combines any two or all three of the other business types. According to Buttle (1984), both manufacturers and merchandisers have great interests in driving purchasing behaviour, however, whilst the latter strive to intensify store traffic and multiply volume sales per customer, the former focus on stimulating sales of their products whilst diminishing that of competitors. Powell (1995) also observes that for manufacturing firms, a narrow relationship with suppliers may be heavily consequential on output and performance, but not so much for service firms.

The disparities in operations and clientele undoubtedly inform differences in organizational purchasing behaviour, supply and supplier options as well as the assessment of and reaction to brands. Existing literature on branding reports that brands incorporate both intangible and tangible elements (including the product/service, support and distribution services and company components) which appeal to and are regarded by customers at varying degrees (Mudambi, Doyle & Wong, 1997; Veloutsou & Tay, 2012). Thus, while a manufacturing client may look out for the service quality of the brand, a merchandising client may be more interested in its distribution services, whereas a service would focus mainly on brand/company components such as company associations. Impliedly, the nature of a business informs its service requirements and expectations of brands, thus could account for some disparities in how various businesses respond to brand activities. Additionally, Odoom, Mensah and

Asamoah (2017) assert that the sector within which a business operates (which informs the business type) may inform some variations in its response to branding activities.

3.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

3.6.1 Drivers of Brand Avoidance and Brand Avoidance

For any brand to sell on the market, it comes with promises; known as the brand promise, which create expectations in customers (Lee et al., 2009a). As Morganosky and Cube (2000), also put it, brand promises affect the kind of expectations customers have of the brand. Nevertheless, when the brand is patronised, and customers perceive a mismatch between reality and expectations, they get disappointed (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). Findings from the study of Dalli, Romani and Gistri (2006), for instance, reveal that in the event of consumer discontentment with a product or service features, distaste and avoidance of the brand become imminent. Literature presents proof that when services fail or are unsuccessful, consumers articulate their dissatisfaction in their behaviour (Dart & Freeman, 1994; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004).

Previous studies disclose that quality and trust in B2B suppliers increase continuance intentions for business clients (Zhou, 2011, 2012; McKnight, Lankton, Nicolaou & Price, 2017). Here, incorporated in the trust is the supplier's ability to keep its commitments and perform all roles as promised (McKnight et al., 2017). The absence of these could thus discontinue the buyer-supplier relationship. According to Naumann et al. (2010), low product or service performance from the brand results in minimised levels of satisfaction higher probability of switching and consequently, avoidance. Furthermore, as part of ‘push’ factors that cause business clients to switch brands, service failure, poor complaint handling as well as disconfirmed or unmet expectations were identified (Dabholkar & Walls, 1999; Sirdeshmukh, Singh & Sabol, 2002).

Business clients are more likely to have a low tolerance for low performing brands or those that disappoint, because ultimately, the performance and quality of the supplying brand influences their performance. Hence, for business clients to perform highly in their marketspaces and deliver on their promises, they are expected to avoid brands that underperform or disappoint them. Based on this discussion, the following is hypothesised:

H1: *Unmet expectations have a significant positive effect on brand avoidance*

In respect of symbolic incongruence, consumer issues are mostly related to the undesired image (Dalli et al., 2006). As reported by Escalas and Bettman (2005), consumers reject brands that do not agree with their self-concepts and identities. Hence, the anti-choices of a consumer are geared towards removing the consumer from all associations of their undesired self (Hogg & Banister, 2001; Banister & Hogg, 2004). Besides, Kim et al. (2013) maintain that consumers avoid brands that may damage their identities. Per the findings of Hogg (1998), a consumer's definition of themselves could come from their distastes and other related negative stereotypes. On occasion, consumers disapprove of brands that are unable to communicate their individuality properly; also, brands that are connected to unfavourable, condescending and money-centred stereotypes they disregard (Dalli et al., 2006).

Identity avoidance occurs because the attractiveness of a customer in a community or society is symbolically affected by the brands they purchase (Lee et al., 2009). Thus, when a brand makes promises that are unattractive in comparison to the kind of identity they transfer to the customer, avoidance occurs. Similarly, business clients are unlikely to associate with brands that do not agree with their organizational identity and culture or confer an unappealing image on them as it may breed some identity inconsistencies or tarnish their images to their customers and other stakeholders. Moreover, per the argument of Lee et al. (2009a), when customers come to the realization that patronizing a certain brand separates them from their ideal identity, they stay away from the brand. Considering the discussion above, this study hypothesises that:

H2: *Symbolic incongruence has a significant positive effect on brand avoidance*

Ideological incompatibility involves a consumer's perception of social, legal or moral wrongdoing of a brand or the firm behind it, which stimulates negative feelings towards the brand (Hegner et al., 2017). These wrongdoings may manifest in deceptive communication, moral misconducts or value inconsistencies (Lee et al., 2009a; Hegner et al., 2017). It may also be seen when consumers perceive that brands may have negative effects on humanity (Lee et al., 2012). According to Dalli et al. (2006), regardless of the features of a product or service, consumers disapprove of or criticise firms that behave unjustly. Business clients, like individuals, have core values, norms and ethical codes of conduct that underlie their organizational culture and define what is right and wrong (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton & Corley, 2013). Consequently, a business that considers a brand's set of beliefs (ideologies) and conducts as unlawful, irresponsible or incompatible with theirs is likely to avoid that brand. Also, consumers may reject a brand that wields so much power in the market and acts unfairly to create some power balance in the market (Berndt et al., 2019). However, scholars argue that this form of avoidance is more contextual as it involves consumers looking beyond their own needs and images to seek the welfare of society and preserve a moral code (Lee et al., 2009b; Nencyz-Thiel & Romaniuk, 2011; Rindell et al., 2014). Prior studies additionally reveal that brands may be condemned for abandoning human rights, damaging the environment or engaging in immoral business activities (Sandikci & Ekici, 2009). From the above discussion, this study hypothesises that:

H3: *Ideological Incompatibility has a significant positive effect on brand avoidance*

Lee et al. (2012) posit that brands may face rejection if they make offerings that are not valuable enough to offset the costs involved in patronage. The value consumers perceive from a brand or firm's offerings is derived from the trade-off between the benefits they are presented with and the sacrifices they have to make (i.e. monetary and non-monetary costs) (Zeithaml, 1988). According to Brady and Cronin (2001), the benefits are not limited to the functionality of the product or service but may involve some emotional components. Businesses exist to solve problems through their market offerings with the aim of making profits (Webster & Wind, 1972). Besides revenue from customers, expenses and cost of production feed into this ultimate objective. Prudent businesses would thus go in for offers that give them the value of their money's worth or even more. If clients perceive a shortfall in the value they pay for and expect to receive, a negative response such as avoidance is likely (Homburg, Kuester, Beutin & Menon, 2005; Lee et al., 2009). From the above discussion, this study hypothesises that:

H4: *Unacceptable trade-offs have a significant positive effect on brand avoidance*

Failed communication effort was found to be one of the precursors of brand avoidance (Knittel et al., 2016). Supported by Felix and Borges (2014), Knittel et al. (2016) reveal that consumers are drawn to brand avoidance when they dislike or do not identify with the celebrity (the endorser) that represents the brand. This is because the celebrity image is conferred to the brand in their association. The wrong choice of an endorser in the business market could be particularly fatal for the brand, as they risk rejection (Canning & West, 2006). Additionally, deceptive advertising messages affects the image of the brand and its offerings (Muda, Musa, Mohamed & Borhan, 2014). In light of this, this study hypothesises that:

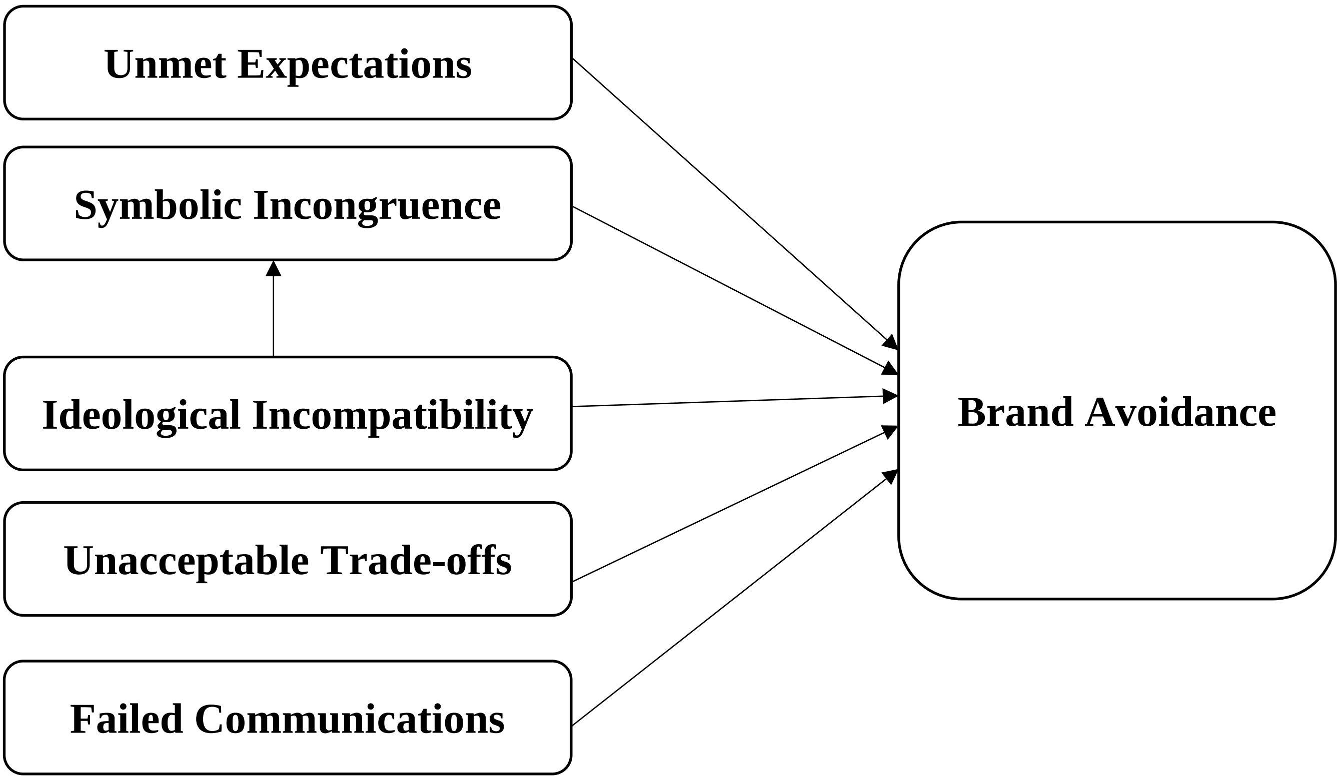
H5: *Failed communications have a significant positive effect on brand avoidance*

Ideology, as defined by Anwar and Hasnu (2013, p.173) describes a "systematic body of beliefs, philosophy or concepts, especially about human life or culture". The authors add that embedded in a firm's ideology are its purpose, core values and principles, which form the spirit and soul of the firm; motivating, guiding and superintending its vision (Anwar & Hasnu, 2013). Prior studies have identified a link between an organization's values and principles and its identity (such as Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Fiol, 1991; Corley et al., 2006; Schein, 2010). For instance, Deal and Kennedy (1982), seconded by Collins and Porras (1994) in defining organizational identity highlight values as antecedents of the unique character and attitude of the firm which creates its sense of identity. Also, Corley et al., (2006) stress the criticality of values to any organization's identity due to the centrality, distinctiveness and continuous nature of values in the organization.

Furthermore, Schein (2010) proposes that organizational identity is deeply rooted in its cultural assumptions, which are composed of beliefs, values, policies and principles (Schein, 1983; Martin, 2003). Moreover, the moral and ethical conduct of an organization influences its image in the marketplace (Asemah, Okpanachi & Olumuji, 2013). Concurrently, the image of a firm has been described as the perceptions of a firm's external stakeholders about the firm, making it one of two components (external and internal perceptions) of an organization's identity (Brown, Dacin, Pratt & Whetten, 2006; Whetten, 2006; Gioia, Hamilton & Patvardhan, 2014). Based on the aforementioned arguments, this study proposes that a business' perceptions of ideological incompatibility with a brand could influence its perceptions of symbolic incongruence with the brand. The study thus hypothesises that:

H6: *Ideological incompatibility has a significant positive effect on symbolic incongruence.*

Figure 3. 3: Conceptual Framework



(*Source:* Author's own conception)

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed relevant literature related to this study; specifically, it discussed the nature of the business market, how businesses act as customers and the underlying concepts of the study; anti-consumption and brand attachment. Also, from an empirical perspective, literature on branding, brand equity, brand avoidance, as well as firm characteristics, were reviewed. The final part of the chapter focused on the formulation of the hypotheses to be tested, based on the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The chapter discusses the research methodology of this study. It explains the methodological approaches employed by the study. It brings to light, among others, the research paradigm, design as well as strategies for sampling and data collection.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Kuhn (2012), a research paradigm refers to "a set of beliefs, values and techniques that is shared by members of a scientific community, and which acts as a guide or map, dictating the kinds of problems scientists should address and the types of explanations that are acceptable to them". It informs the constituents of knowledge in a field of study and highlights the researcher's assumptions and perspectives about reality and the world (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Shannon-Baker (2016) posits that research paradigms provide academics with guidelines to aid monitoring of decisions in the research process and helps new researchers situate their decisions within their morals. The author, supported by Kuhn (2012), further asserts that research paradigms are instrumental in the selection of the approach, design and method of research as well as how to interpret data.

Johnson and Duberly (2000) argue that research paradigms can be considered as a continuum with objectivism and subjectivism at the extremes. Myers and Avison (2002) add that between the extremes, other distinct paradigm classifications exist. In social science research, paradigms such as interpretivism, critical realism, positivism and relativism are commonly used (Chan, 2015). Collis and Hussey (2014) opine that the two key research paradigms are: interpretivism and positivism. Each paradigm is distinguished by its methodological, epistemological and ontological assumptions that make up its structure as summarised in Table 4.1.

4.2.1 Positivism

Positivism is a research paradigm grounded on the thoughts of Auguste Comete, a French Philosopher, who stressed on observing and reasoning as a means of comprehending human behaviour (Dash, 2005). Most philosophers share the view that this paradigm forms the base for contemporary management research (Johnson & Duberly, 2000). In positivism, an established detectable and measurable reality is adopted to construct impartial knowledge in an orderly and thorough manner (Petty, Thomson & Stew, 2012). Based on this, in the social sciences, positivists apply scientific approaches employed in natural sciences to investigate social occurrences. This research paradigm bases on causal connections to examine occurrences with reason and severity (Collis & Hussey, 2014) and link to and operates within multiple perspectives and principles including naturalism, empiricism, scientism, behaviourism, reductionism and determinism (Creswell, 2013).

Dash (2005) defines determinism as occurrences that are caused by various circumstances, hence taking note of the linkages becomes critical to controlling the occurrences. The author also explains that empiricism is gathering verifiable empirical evidence so that a hypothesis can be confirmed. Per the positivist's view, people are observed, measured, tested and will behave in accordance with some generalizable rules (Bruce, Scrosati & Tarascon, 2008). Petty et al. (2012) mention that although the observer wields his/her personal facts and stereotypes, he/she must remain impartial by isolating these ideas from the study. The authors also opine that the study could be replicated to improve reliability. Furthermore, the hypothesis is confirmed by scientific observational approaches and measurement; the inferential reasoning approach may be adopted (Petty et al., 2012). Moreover, the approach that mostly relies on statistical interpretation from quantitative research could be buttressed by impartiality, logical reasoning and accuracy (Collis & Hussey, 2013).

4.2.2 Interpretivism

In contrast to positivism, interpretivism holds that social reality exists in multiple perspectives and is highly subjective as it is informed by individual discernments (Collis & Hussey, 2014). According to Dyson and Brown (2005), the meaning is moulded by individuals rather than automatically presented in social events or objects. Similarly, Creswell (2009) suggests that there are many different connotations to events, as each human develops hi/her own connotation to events. Thus, social work cannot be examined as the natural world is but involves asking research questions that should capture the variations and evolves as the study proceeds (Petty et al., 2012). Also, the researcher goes through an iterative process in data collection and analysis, chasing leads and inductively thinking through the data, and progressively narrowing focus on issues from the data; proving the adjustability of the research process (Robson, 2011). Petty et al. (2012) recognise that individual connotations and partiality feed into the research process; referred to as reflexivity. Moreover, interpretivism is built on exploring people's perspectives; considering their morals and ideals by assessing their social lives (McLaughlin, 2007) and making use of the qualitative research approach (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Having gained a considerable grounding in the various research paradigms as discussed above, this study holds a positivist research philosophy. Based on this perspective, this study is aimed at finding the prime motives for brand avoidance among Ghanaian service business clients and the role firm characteristics play. From a review of the literature, testable hypotheses have been developed and are to be tested and proven.

Table 4. 1: Research Paradigms

ONTOLOGY (What is the nature of reality?)	**EPISTEMOLOGY** (What is the nature of knowledge generated?	**METHODOLOGY** (How is knowledge created?)
POSITIVISM "There is a single, tangible and objective reality"	"Value free. Knowledge generated is objective, free of time impacts and context free as well"	"Researchers formulate research questions and hypotheses that are tested empirically under carefully controlled circumstances. Deductive reasoning"
INTERPRETIVIST "Multiple realities exist subject to human experiences and interpretations. Reality is socially constructed"	"Value laden. Knowledge generated is subjective, time bound and context dependent"	"Knowledge is made through researchers recognizing the different interpretations and constructions of reality that exist and endeavouring to establish patterns. Inductive logic and emergent design"
REALISM "Reality is "real" yet just incompletely and probabilistically understandable, so triangulation from different sources is required to attempt to know it"	"Value cognizant/value-aware. Findings are probably true. Researcher needs to triangulate any perceptions collected"	"Social phenomenon is understood through hypotheses that are tested to establish patters of associations and hence the most possible explanation. Hypothetic-deduction"
RELATIVISM "Multiple realities exist. Reality as truth is not "absolute", it is relative, it is dependent on something and it does exist"	The interpretation of the world requires some form of human processing"	"The construction of knowledge is influenced by the world view and research paradigm of a researcher. Researchers should focus more on building new useful theories – useful solutions to specific problems"
CRITICAL REALISM "Two worlds – transitive and intransitive. Transitive is what we observe and learn with the mind – the perceptions or reality. Intransitive embodies the reality, which is independent of what the mind thinks."	"Transitive world is value-laden, and it is changing continually. Intransitive world has underlying structures and mechanisms that are 'relatively' enduring; that is what we want to study."	Researchers seek to deconstruct and understand the structures and mechanisms underlying the subjective realities that exist. Triangulation from several sources is required to know it. Retroductive reasoning"

(*Source*: Boateng, 2014)

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2009) describes a research design as the all-inclusive strategy a researcher employs when attending to the research objectives whereas Boateng (2014) defines it as the how, where and when answers to questions on information gathering and examination. Creswell (2009) alongside Kothari (2008) opines that it motivates the researcher’s choice of techniques for sampling, data collection and analysis. According to Omair (2015), the selection of an appropriate research design is the most important step in developing any study’s methodology. There are various categories of research designs which are dependent on the research purpose, logic and process of the study (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

4.3.1 Research purpose

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) assert that in respect of a study’s purpose, the study could be considered as exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. The authors add that there may be some studies with multi-dimensional purposes, such as descriptive and explanatory, exploratory and descriptive or exploratory and explanatory.

Extant literature reveals that exploratory research is usually employed to examine fresh issues or shed light on new concepts (Saunders et al., 2012; Manerikar & Manerikar, 2014). This type is generally considered as preliminary; building the foundation for more decisive work and may be instrumental in shaping the method of sampling, research design and technique (Singh, 2000). Furthermore, exploratory is preferred where there is little information or familiarity about a research type (Manerikar & Manerikar, 2014). Moreover, this type of study allows the researcher to make adjustments to his/ her orientation as new concepts, and new data are discovered (Saunders et al., 2012).

Descriptive research is explained as an attempt to define, regulate or recognise a phenomenon (Ethridge, 2004). Saunders and Lewis (2012) mention that the main object of descriptive research is to profile or detail a phenomenon or event. This type of study, according to Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2014) play out an occurrence without detailing the reason for which it is happening, while Robson (2002) opines that it provides a rich picture of an occurrence. In the view of Brown (2008), this study type intends to distinguish between contemporary issues through data collection in order to provide a more accurate definition of occurrences. Omair (2015) assert that descriptive studies are useful for depicting selected properties of a sample under consideration. Similarly, Grimes and Schulz (2002) argue that based on data from a sample from a larger target population, a general view of phenomenon is attained.

Explanatory research seeks to establish cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Yin, 2014). That is to say, this research aims to examine causal associations between constructs and establish how these relationships result in a specific outcome (Eriksson & Wierdersheim-Paul, 2001). Thus, Maxwell and Mittapalli (2008) claim that the study seeks to clarify rather than simply describe the phenomenon under study. Additionally, they assert that explanatory research is by nature quantitative, and usually investigates hypotheses by making estimations of how correlated variables are.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between brand avoidance and its drivers and examine the effect firm characteristics have on this relationship. In order to attain this, hypotheses were developed from the study's conceptual framework, which was adapted from Lee et al. (2009a, 2009b). The research is thus explanatory by design.

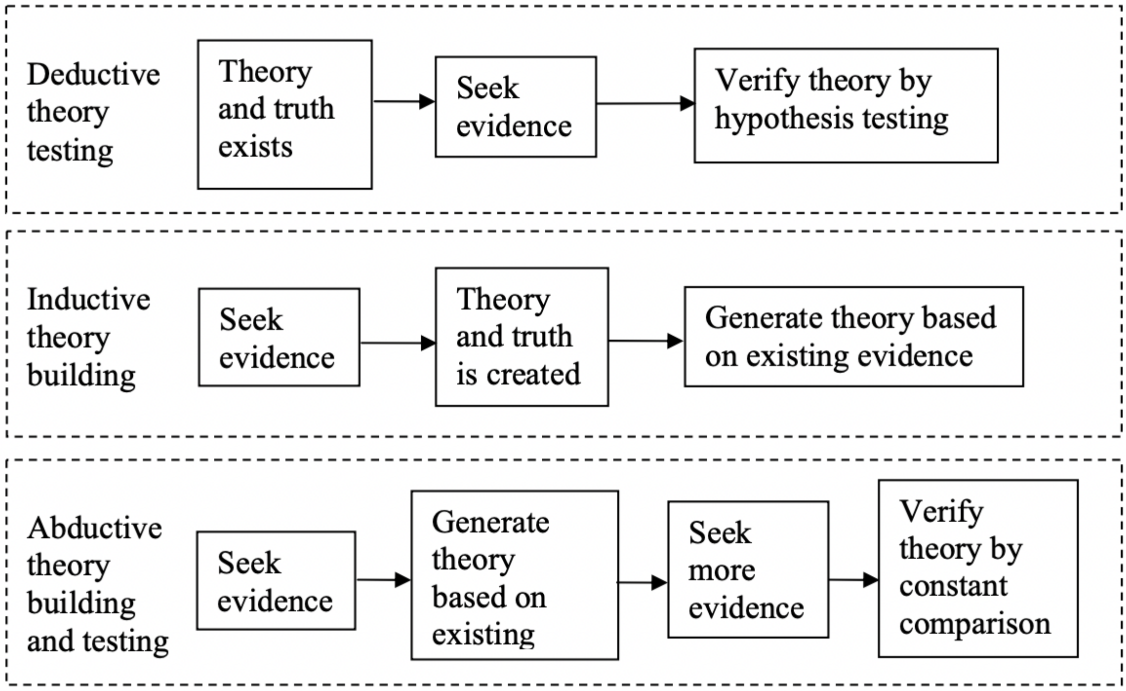
4.3.2 Research logic

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), research logic is necessary for the construction of theories and provision and comprehension of practicable implications while leveraging various cognitive philosophies. Collis and Hussey (2013) as well as Hyde (2000) identify two categories of research logic: deductive research logic and inductive research logic. A third category known as abductive research logic is gaining considerable attention as well (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). Figure 4.1 displays the role of theory and evidence in each form of research logic.

Deduction is motivated by the logic that "when the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true" (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016 p.144). The deductive research approach involves an examination of an existent theory to investigate and understand its applicability in anticipated contexts and situations (Beiske, 2007). It involves the development of an assumption based on an existing theory while formulating research strategy to apply in examining the assumption (Wilson, 2010). With the deductive approach, the study begins with a theory and results in a new assumption, and the collected data is examined to reject or fail to reject the hypothesis based on the applicability of the theory in the particular context (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Zalaghi & Khazaei, 2016).

Contrary to the deductive approach, induction adopts a "bottom-up" approach (Hayes et al., 2012). The authors further explain that this approach begins from a specific level and works conceptually towards the development of a theory. Bryman and Ball (2011) mention that the approach may commence with a collection of data, the establishment of a concept, then, theories and frameworks are developed. Abductive reasoning, according to Patel and Davidsson (2003), combines both inductive and deductive approaches. It is applicable in situations where an existing theory does not suit a context or requires some adjustments. In such cases, a new or adjusted theory is developed from gathered data (Patel & Davidsson, 2003), then, the theory is deduced again and verified with new data (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Figure 4. 1: Theory and Evidence in Research Logic



(*Source*: Lee, 2007, p.27)

This study aims to examine the hypotheses informed by existent theory and based on the statistical assessment of the data, make deductions (Lee & Lings, 2008). Thus, evident from the above discussions, this study employs a deductive research logic.

4.3.3 Research process

Collis and Hussey (2014) posit that research may be conducted in either of the two processed: qualitative and quantitative research. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018) and Boateng (2016) also mention the mixed-method process which integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Qualitative research, according to Malhotra and Gupta (2013), provides knowledge and understanding of the problem set. This form of research offers a comprehensive assessment and interpretation of a research topic without restricting the scope of the study and nature of replies from respondents (Collis & Hussey, 2003). In actuality, qualitative studies aim at attaining details on the motivations and justifications behind a phenomenon (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Additionally, they are targeted at delving deep into human behaviours and drivers of those behaviours, thus, may be referred to as interpretive research (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Qualitative research also makes use of inductive reasoning (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Woodwell (2014) notes that relative to quantitative studies, data collection is more difficult. Qualitative, unlike quantitative research, is appropriate for smaller samples, which may either be representative or non-representative of the population under consideration (Bell, 2005; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). In cases where the research problem and approach are unclear, exploratory methods which fall under qualitative research are utilised (O'Leary, 2013). Data collection approaches, such as observations and interviews, may be used. According to Boateng (2016), the major merit of this research process is flexibility and reiteration.

On the contrary, quantitative research is implemented when the research problem is available and distinct (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2013). It also involves making use of numerical measurements and analytical tactics (Hair et al., 2013). It applies questions that have been pre-decided to represent choices that are presented in a questionnaire administered to a substantial number of respondents, giving way for credible statistical assessment (Hair et al., 2013). This approach uses the quantification of variations in different facets of a phenomenon to identify the pervasiveness of a problem or relationship (Boateng, 2016). In quantitative research, inferences are made from investigating statistical hypotheses, resulting in general deductions about the study population's characteristics (Harwell, 2011). The researcher is also able to assess significant relationships and gain a deeper appreciation of the relationships (Hair et al., 2013). Woodwell (2014) points out that contrary to qualitative research, quantitative studies result in an acknowledgement of universal propensities.

This study adopts the quantitative approach to research as it facilitates the appreciation of ideal cause-and-effect associations (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, quantitative data is appropriate for instances where a theory with hypotheses is being examined, or data is to be juxtaposed in an orderly fashion (Tashakkon & Teddlie, 2010) making it ideal for this study.

4.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Thomas (2001) outlines six data collection procedures; media information, documents and records, surveys, interviews, focus groups and internet information. Yin (2003) however posits five major research strategies for collecting data, namely survey, experiment, history, case study and analysis of archival records. Yin (2003) further mentions that each of the strategies could be adopted for exploratory, descriptive and explanatory studies. However, the choice of a research strategy is contingent on the degree to which the examined issue is emphasised, the nature of research questions and the extent to which the researcher has control over activities. In consideration of these, this study utilised a survey strategy.

4.4.1 Survey

Survey is a research structure meant for data gathering for examining views and development (Creswell, 2009). It is among the most frequently used strategies that provide researchers with the opportunity to gather huge amounts of data affordably (Saunders et al., 2009; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Bryman and Bell (2011) add that this strategy allows for attaining information from a large pool of respondents with minimal disturbances. Conducting surveys involves administering questionnaires to a sample representative of the study population and allows for descriptive and inferential statistics in data analysis (Hair et al., 2014). According to Robson (2002), based on explicit regard for period measurement, surveys could be either longitudinal or cross-sectional by design. This strategy of research has the advantage of affording the researcher more control over the research process as well as permitting the generalization of study outcomes.

This study’s respondents are all businesses in Accra, which patronise the services of telecommunication networks and are avoiding the services of any telecommunication brands. The survey strategy was appropriately employed as this group of business clients is relatively large.

4.5 SAMPLING DESIGN

Hair et al. (2013) stress the criticality of developing a sampling design. The authors further assert that a sampling design can be considered as a framework that delineates the target population appropriate for the study, identifies the potential respondents, determines the procedures to be followed in selecting the sample and specifies the ideal sample size. Moreover, the sampling design connotes critical stages implemented to ensure that data is properly attained from the target population (McDaniel & Gates, 2010).

4.5.1 Target population

As proposed by Neuman (2005), a target population typifies the absolute set of units a study's outcomes are intended to generalise. In other words, it is the total number of cases or items that are the focus of the study (Elliot, Eder & Harmon-Jones, 2013). Besides, Fraenkel and Wallen (2007) moot that the entire target population may, at times, be challenging to reach; thus, a more reachable or closely distinct population is measured. The target population for this study is all businesses in Accra that avoid a telecommunication network brand. The rationale for selecting this population is that Accra is the capital city of Ghana and the centre of most commercial activities. Also, because of the heterogeneity within the metropolis, businesses within the Accra metropolis could be considered as representative of all other businesses in Ghana (Daama, 2018).

4.5.2 Sampling technique

Cooper and Schindler (2014) delineate sampling as the process of choosing elements in a population as a representation of the population due to its large size and the inability of the researcher to reach all elements within the population. Consequently, a sample is considered a representation of a study population features based on which conclusions regarding the entire population can be drawn (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The elements of a sample may be selected by adopting either probability or non-probability techniques (Malhotra & Dash, 2005; Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Cooper and Schindler (2008) submit that the type of technique used in sampling has implications on the variety of characteristics that fall out of the sample's representativeness as well as time, cost and accessibility concerns. Moreover, the technique is adopted in consideration of the nature, kind and drive of the research.

Malhotra and Dash (2005) posit that in probability sampling techniques, each member of the population stands an equal chance at selection, whereas in non-probability sampling techniques population members do not have an equal chance at selection. Saunders et al. (2012) are the view that the discretion and judgement inform sample selection in non-probability techniques of the researcher. Comprised of probability sampling techniques are systematic sampling, simple random sampling, cluster sampling and stratified sampling, while quota sampling, convenience sampling, judgemental sampling and snowball sampling make up the non-probability sampling techniques (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2012). Non-probability sampling methods are best suited for instances where it is practically impossible to attain an appropriate sampling frame (Malhotra & Dash, 2005; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003). Also, they offer researchers the chance to select from a variety of techniques which allow respondent selection based on subjective judgement (Saunders et al., 2012).

In consideration of those mentioned above, this study employed a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling. The degree of practicality in obtaining a sampling frame of all telecommunication business clients that avoid a telecommunication network brand is negligible, making it difficult to employ a probability sampling technique. Also, purposive sampling, according to Saunders et al. (2012), allows researchers to select respondents that are ideally suited and knowledgeable on the specific phenomenon in order to attain appropriate answers to researcher questions.

4.5.3 Sampling size

According to Saunders et al. (2012), there are no formal guidelines as to sample size for non-probability techniques, except for quota sampling. In the view of Patton (2012), a study's sample size is reliant on the questions and objectives the study seeks to answer, and the researcher's logical, analytical expertise. Yamane (1967) proposes a simplified formula called Taro Yamane's formula for calculating sample sizes, based on the population size and level of precision. $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$, where N= population size, n= sample size, e= level of precision.

The number of registered businesses in Accra is 79,887 (RGD, 2019); thus, with a level of precision of 0.05, the appropriate sample size for this study is 398. Moreover, Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010) make a case for a sample size not less than 200, as it is sufficient to ensure statistical power for analysis. Coakes and Steed (2009) opine that the sample size should be 200 and above, whereas Kent (2007) argues that in a quantitative study, a sample size of 100 and above is sufficient. Furthermore, Hair et al. (2013) posit that the smallest sample size for a quantitative study should be 100. Besides all these, Mercado (2006) maintains that often, sample sizes are informed by the time and money at the disposal of the researcher. Thus, this study employed a sample size of 398 business.

4.6 DATA SOURCE AND DATA COLLECTION

Bernard (2002) submits that collection of data plays a pivotal role in research as the data provides better insights into theoretical frameworks and facilitates the attainment of study objectives. Malhotra and Birks (2007) identify primary and secondary data as the two principal sources of data. Secondary data is defined as data collected for other purposes rather than that of the current study (Malhotra & Dash, 2005; Babin & Zikmund, 2016). It could come in the form of published summaries of new information (Saunders et al., 2012). On the other hand, primary data describes data purposefully gathered to solve the research problem of the current study (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). It is collected from the prime source and could be attained through personal interviews, observation and surveys (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

This study made use of secondary data in exploring and reviewing the research topic. This facilitated the identification of research gaps and permitted efficient and collection of clearly defined primary data (Denscombe, 2014). Secondary data is promptly available and accessible, making it quick to collect and valuable to time-bound studies (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). Despite these, secondary data may have some downsides such as its tendency to lack precision, be outdated and irrelevant to the problem at hand (Saunders et al., 2012). Consequently, to guarantee the reliability of the secondary data, an ongoing process of evaluation was conducted concerning relevance and value. This involved ensuring that the data was up-to-date, accessible, contributed sufficient methodological information and assisted in providing answers to the research questions (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). The overarching objective was to point out peer-reviewed academic journals since such publications are written and assessed by experts, suggesting high quality (Saunders et al., 2016). The author also made use of information from books on marketing and articles from the university library. Primary data, the main source of data for this study was attained through close-ended self-administered questionnaires and a URL through google forms.

4.6.1 Questionnaire design and administration

The instrument this study employed for data collection was the questionnaire. A questionnaire is described as collected of measures and questions targeted at igniting distinct and noteworthy responses and are employed to attain primary data that has not been refined in order to answer a research question (Hair et al., 2013; McDaniel & Gates, 2013). Saunders et al. (2012) mention questionnaires as one of the most prominent data collection tools in business and management studies. The authors further discuss that questionnaires, leaves little to no room for researchers' particularly in the data collection process, rendering it the most suitable tool for attaining data from huge numbers of respondents.

According to Straub, Gefen and Boudreau (2005), using formerly authenticated questionnaires is crucial in providing accurate survey evaluations. Thus, this study adapted measurement items that have been authenticated for constructs. In total, six constructs were measured, comprised of 27 items. Three (3) of them – unmet expectations, unacceptable trade-offs and failed communications were measured with items adapted from Odoom et al. (2019). The other three (3) constructs – symbolic incongruence, ideological incompatibility and brand avoidance were measured with items adapted from Hegner et al. (2017). The study's questionnaire was partitioned into three. The first part measured firm characteristics and inquired information on the type of business, size of the organisation (measured by the number of employees), age of the organization and type of ownership. Some questions inquired the telecommunication network brands respondents are currently using as well as the brand they are avoiding. The second section of the questionnaire measured brand avoidance, while the third section collected data on the factors that drive brand avoidance. A 7-point Likert scale for assessing the extent of agreement for each statement in parts B and C was used, where one represented strongly disagree, and seven represented strongly disagree. According to Robson (2011), Likert scale questions are easier to complete. In all, the questionnaire had 33 questions.

Data collection was done between January and February 2020. Three hundred ninety-eight (398) questionnaires were administered either face-to-face or electronically to respondents who were willing to fill them. Questionnaires were filled mainly by the deciders or influencers in the buying centres of the sampled organizations. Dependent on the size of the business, type of ownership and nature of the buying centre, a questionnaire was filled by the owner, information technology (IT) manager, marketing manager, human resource manager or executive assistant of the firm. The respondents were drawn from several suburbs within the Accra metropolis. The authors approached each business either by walk-in, phone call or email, explained the purpose, implications and other details of the study (e.g. what brand avoidance means), and were directed to the appropriate quarters to fill the questionnaire. Each respondent was asked if the business is avoiding a telecommunication brand before filling the questionnaire, to ensure the provision of relevant answers.

4.7 PRETESTING OF QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire is tested to guarantee the cogency of the instrument and improve its scale, questions and layout (Creswell, 2009). Thus, a pilot test was conducted with 20 businesses within the Accra metropolis. This process assisted the researcher to improve the clarity of some questions as well as identify and take out duplications.

4.8 THE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE SCALE

In research, the validity and reliability of scales are necessary to ensure the acquisition of accurate results. According to Read (2013), scale reliability and validity are means of evaluating how dependable the instrument is in avoiding biases and distortions. Questionnaires can be considered as valid and reliable if they produce similar results when the study is replicated (Hair et al., 2010).

4.8.1 Reliability

Reliability tests for scales are important to ensure the internal consistency of items (Pallant, 2011). Prior studies highlight that a construct’s internal consistency may be assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Werts, Linn & Jöreskog, 1974; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). Urbach and Ahlemann (2010), however, propose that CA is the prime measure for reliability while CR acts as an alternative. In contrast, Peterson and Kim (2013) consider CA a weaker assurance that CR. Hence, this study employed both measures, as is frequently done in structural equation modelling (Hair et al., 2014; Hair, Wolfinbarger, Money, Samuel & Page, 2015). A CA or CR value of 0.7 and above constitutes the recommended threshold for construct reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Pallant, 2011). Cronbach (1971) emphasise that an alpha value above the stipulated threshold assumes that all indicators within the construct have the same meaning and range.

4.8.2 Validity

The validity of a scale measures how suitable the indicators of an instrument are to measure the construct they are supposed to examine (Burns & Burns, 2008; Cook, Campbell & Shadish, 2002). Construct validity was determined in this study to assess the degree to which the outcome attained from the measurement scale is in line with theoretical expectations (Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2015). Construct validity is evaluated using the discriminant validity and convergent validity.

4.8.2.1 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity (CV) refers to the extent to which the items of a construct associate or correlate to one another (Lewis, Templeton & Byrd, 2005). Whereas correlations among the indicators provide a sense of CV; the average variance extracted (AVE) provides an adequate measure. A construct will be considered to have CV once its AVE is 0.5 and above (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to Urbach and Ahlemann (2010), an AVE value above the recommended threshold implies that on average, the construct under review can explain over 50% of the variance of its indicators, consequently providing reasonable evidence of CV.

4.8.2.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity (DV) is a measure of how sufficient difference between constructs are in measures (Henseler, Ringle & Sinkovics, 2009). This test is conducted to ascertain whether the items of the construct in a study are distinct from one another in the path model (Lewis et al., 2005; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010; Tajeddini, 2016). Thus, considering both DV and CV, a high correlation between the indicators of the construct indicates CV whereas a high correlation among constructs of the study indicates the absence of DV (Guo, Aveyard, Fielding & Sutton, 2008).

Extant studies point Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings as suitable measures of DV (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler, Ringle & Sinkovics, 2009). The Fornell- Larcker criterion determines the association among constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This criterion assumes that, relative to other constructs in a study, a construct shares a higher degree of variance with its indicators. Thus, the square-root of the construct's AVE should exceed the correlation between the construct and other constructs to attain DV. In the case of the cross-loadings, the correlation constructs have with other indicators besides their own is estimated. The goal here is to determine whether the construct has higher associations with its indicators or others. If the association is higher between the construct and other constructs' items, it becomes unclear which construct the indicators measure (Chin, 1998).

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In academic research, maintaining ethical standards is of great concern (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Per the assertions of Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010), the issue of ethics in research is fundamentally hinged on a conflict between the respondents' interest and that of the researcher. Primarily, the ethical practice involves seeking the assent of respondents. Therefore, before administering the questionnaires, the assent of the respondents was properly sought. Comprised of this was the assurance that all information given would be treated in confidentiality and used purely for academic purposes.

4.10 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

The process of analysis commenced with data editing and coding. The data was imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM version 22, where the descriptive analysis was done. Scholars assert that a suitable data analysis technique for a study is dependent on the nature of data, research design and the study's assumptions (Lacobucci & Churchill, 2009). The test of normality showed that the data was normally distributed. Additionally, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and the test of differences were conducted. After this, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was conducted with SmartPLS 3 to assess the validity and reliability of the research model as well as test the causal relationships indicated in the hypotheses. In respect of EFA, Bartholomew, Knott and Moustaki (2011) explain that factor analysis relies on the assumption that observable and examinable constructs can be condensed to unobserved latent variables with similar variance. Consequently, EFA is conducted to ascertain the number and nature of shared factors underlying a study's measures as well as test the robustness of the associations between each factor and each observed variable (Byrne, 2010).

Concerning SEM, there are two approaches; covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM). These approaches, combining factor analysis and linear regression models assess latent variables first in the measurement model (observation level), then the structural model (theoretical level) (Bollen, 1989; Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014). Scholars present the rules of thumb for choosing either PLS or CB-SEM (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2009). They assert that PLS-SEM is appropriate when the goal of the study is to confirm or test a theory, whereas CB-SEM is useful for developing theories and predicting relationships. Also, PLS-SEM is appropriate for models with formative constructs and CB-SEM reflective constructs (Chin, 1998). CB-SEM works with assumptions of normality of data distribution and requires large sample sizes. Conversely, PLS-SEM operates efficiently with complex models, small sample sizes and "makes practically no assumptions about the underlying data distributions" (Ringle, Sarstedt, Schlittgen & Taylor, 2013; Hair et al., 2014). Additionally, PLS-SEM corrects measurement errors (Hair et al., 2014). Considering the objectives, nature of the observed variables, sample size, model and data distribution of this study, PLS-SEM was employed.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the research methodology employed in conducting this study. Specifically, it highlighted the research approach, design as well as strategies for sampling and data collection. The data analysis procedures and ethical considerations were also mentioned.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the outcome of the empirical analysis conducted in this study and discusses the findings in reference to extant literature. The method of data entry and editing is first presented, followed by discussions of respondent profiles, descriptive statistics, a test of differences and exploratory analysis. Next, the outcomes of the confirmatory analysis and hypotheses tests are presented and discussed with reference to existing studies.

5.2 DATA EDITING AND ENTRY

Pallant (2011) outlined data editing as an important component of data analysis. According to Baumgartner and Homburg (1996), data editing is crucial in ensuring error-free data, during data gathering, coding and entry. They add that it ensures consistency and coherency of the data to maximise the functionality of the data. During the screening process, data is scrutinised for outliers as well as missing data and wrong inputs to avoid skewness and incorrect results (Coakes & Steed, 2009). With respect to missing data, Sekaran (2000) and Sekaran and Bougie (2013) postulate that a questionnaire should be at least 75% completed to qualify to be included in the analysis. Considering this, a careful examination of useful questionnaires revealed no missing data or wrong inputs.

Questionnaires were administered to 398 businesses within the Accra metropolis. Out of these, 360 questionnaires were obtained, representing a 90.5% response rate. However, after screening and editing, 346 were useable, thus used for analysis.

5.3 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

A descriptive was run on the data to assess the profiles of the 346 respondents using SPSS software; the results are shown in Table 5.1. The businesses used in the study were mostly service firms representing 74.3% of the respondents, followed by manufacturers (11.3%), merchandisers (7.8%) and then businesses that combine any of the aforementioned, referred to as hybrid firms (6.6%). Also, a majority (49.4%) of the businesses were small-sized as they employed 50 or fewer employees. This was closely followed by large businesses with an employee size of 251and above representing 34.1% and then medium-sized businesses with 51 to 250 employees representing 16.6%. Additionally, a larger portion of the businesses that partook in the study was young, particularly those aged between 5 and 15, representing 36.7%, followed by those below 5 with 26%, then those from 16 – 25 years with 12.4%. Holding 0.9%, businesses aged from 36 – 45 years were the least represented.

In respect of ownership, almost half, specifically 47.7% of the respondents were limited liability companies. This was followed by sole proprietorships with 23.1%, partnerships with 15% and corporations with 14.2%. An inquiry of the telecom network brands businesses are currently patronising was made. The response revealed that 61.6% of businesses patronise the services of MTN, 50.6% patronise Vodafone, 17.9% patronise Airtel-Tigo and whilst 3.9% use Glo. Moreover, 23.12% of businesses used for this study patronise the services of two telecommunication network brands concurrently, whilst 4.34% patronise the services of three brands.

Table 5. 1: Profile of Respondents

	Item	Frequency (N=346)	Percentage (100%)
	Manufacturing	39	11.3
Type of business	Service	257	74.3
	Merchandising	27	7.8
	Hybrid	23	6.6
Size of business	Small (50 and below)	171	49.4
	Medium (51 – 250)	57	16.6
	Large (251 and above)	118	34.1
	Less than 5 years	90	26.0
	5 – 15 years	127	36.7
	16 – 25 years	43	12.4
Age of business	26 – 35 years	36	10.4
	36 – 45 years	3	0.9
	46 – 50 years	4	1.2
	Above 50 years	43	12.4
	Sole proprietorship	80	23.1
Type of ownership	Partnership	52	15.0
	Corporation	49	14.2
	Limited Liability Company	165	47.7
	MTN	213	61.6
Telecom Network brand use	Vodafone	175	50.6
	Airtel-Tigo	62	17.9
	Glo	11	3.9
	MTN & Vodafone	60	17.3
	MTN & Airtel	9	2.60
Multiple Telecom Network brand users	MTN & Glo	1	0.29
	Vodafone & Airtel	10	2.89
	MTN, Vodafone & Airtel	14	4.05
	MTN, Airtel & Glo	1	0.29
	MTN	47	13.6
Telecomm Network brand avoidance	Vodafone	27	7.8
	Airtel-Tigo	90	26.0
	Glo	182	52.6

5.4 EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

All six constructs used in the study were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to assess their dimensionality. This is because they were adapted from multiple sources and utilised in a different context (B2B) from their initially intended contexts (B2C).

First, using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, the sufficiency of the association between the constructs was assessed. A KMO statistic of 0.895 was attained, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974). Hence, it can be assumed that there exists "probably a factor structure underlying the data" (Holmes-Smith, 2011). Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity submitted x^2 (378): 5602.297 ($p = 0.000$), thus was statistically significant. This result reflects considerable correlations amongst the variables (Holmes-Smith, 2011).

Furthermore, based on the recommendations of Yong and Pearce (2013), factors were rotated (using the Varimax rotation) to enhance the clarity of the factors. According to these authors, factors without rotation are equivocal and prove difficult to interpret. In all, six factors were extracted. All 26 indicators loaded well (above 0.5) on the factors extracted, corresponding to their constructs as established in literature. The factor loadings from the rotation are displayed in Table 5.3.

5.5 TEST OF NORMALITY

Scholars submit that the normality of a dataset distribution should be examined in research to facilitate SEM analysis of the data (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2014). In accordance with recommendations from Bai and Ng (2005), this study tested for normality of the dataset distribution using skewness and kurtosis. Kim and White (2003) describe skewness as an assessment of the irregularity of a data's distribution, whereas kurtosis refers to the degree of a data point's peak. By providing succinct observations and summaries of the research sample, kurtosis and skewness assist researchers in explaining and understanding the dimensions of a specific dataset to identify notable patterns (Hopkins & Weeks, 1990).

Per the assertions of Gravetter and Wallnau (2014), values of skewness greater than $|2|$ or kurtosis greater than $|7|$ represent an extreme case of non-normality. An examination of this study's dataset, as shown in Table 5.2 revealed that none of the skewness values exceeded $|2|$ (i.e. the largest skewness estimate: $|1.392|$). Also, none of the kurtosis statistics exceeded $|7|$ (i.e. the largest kurtosis estimate: $|2.187|$). Consequently, the data could be regarded as normally distributed.

Table 5. 2: Skewness and Kurtosis

Constructs	Skewness	Kurtosis
Brand Avoidance		
We do not purchase the services/products of the brand anymore.	-0.969	0.051
We reject the services/products of the brand.	-0.552	-0.709
We refrain from buying the brand's products or using its services.	-0.843	-0.135
We avoid buying the brand's products/using its services.	-0.875	0.113
We do not use products or services of the brand.	-1.392	2.187
Unmet Expectations		
Poor performance of the brand	-0.700	-0.400
Inconvenience (hassle) associated with acquiring the brand	-0.285	-0.973
The brand failed to meet its promised value	-0.709	-0.529
Expectations of the brand were not met during our experience	-0.800	-0.354
Symbolic Incongruence		
The brand does not reflect who we are	-0.131	-0.894
We do not want to be associated with people who use the brand	0.585	-0.787
The brand does not fit our business' personality	0.072	-1.115
The brand symbolises the kind of brand we would never want to become	0.134	-1.024
The brand's image does not match our image	0.051	-1.102
Ideological Incompatibility		
In our opinion, the brand acts irresponsibly	0.143	-1.004
In our opinion the brand is unethical	0.329	-0.809
The brand does not match our business' values and beliefs	0.065	-1.023
The brand violates our business' moral standards	0.395	-0.810
Unacceptable Trade-offs		
The quality of the brand is low as compared to its cost	-0.382	-0.950
The brand is not familiar	0.060	-1.244
The packaging of the brand lacks relevant details (insufficient aesthetics)	0.187	-0.930
The brand is deficient in terms of the value linked with it	-0.296	-0.910
Failed Communications		
The content of the brand's advertisement is unpleasant	-0.580	-0.585
We do not like the celebrity(ies) used in the brand's advertisements	-0.533	-0.699
The music used in the brand's advertisement is not satisfactory	-0.593	-0.576
We are unable to deduce any meaning from the brand's adverts	-0.475	-0.822

5.6 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The constructs' descriptive statistics painted a clear picture of how various businesses perceive telecommunication network brands in relation to their ability to fulfil promises, meet expectations and moral standards, promote their brands effectively and provide value. It also revealed businesses perception of the brand's image and how they identify with it as well as the current status of their relationship with the brand. Displayed in Table 5.3 are the mean scores and standard deviation for each construct and item used in the study. Out of all six constructs, brand avoidance had the highest cumulative mean of 5.12, with the item "We do not use products or services of the brand" having the highest mean of 5.73. This indicates that most businesses avoiding a telecom network brand have had prior experience of the brand. On the other hand, ideological incompatibility had the lowest cumulative mean of 3.41, with the item "The brand violates our business' moral standards" having the lowest mean of 3.22. This is an indication that most of the business clients did not consider the ethics and moral standards of the network brands they are avoiding as problematic.

Table 5. 3: Descriptive on Constructs and Exploratory Factor Analysis

Code	Constructs	Factor Loadings	Mean	Std. Dev.
BA	**Brand Avoidance**		**5.12**	
BA1	We do not purchase the services/products of the brand anymore.	0.707	5.35	1.717
BA2	We reject the services/products of the brand.	0.804	4.74	1.793
BA3	We refrain from buying the brand's products or using its services.	0.843	5.08	1.631
BA4	We avoid buying the brand's products/using its services.	0.799	5.14	1.572
BA5	We do not use products or services of the brand.	0.633	5.73	1.284
UE	**Unmet Expectations**		**4.84**	
UE1	Poor performance of the brand	0.729	4.93	1.724
UE2	Inconvenience (hassle) associated with acquiring the brand	0.666	4.40	1.782
UE3	The brand failed to meet its promised value	0.825	4.96	1.778
UE4	Expectations of the brand were not met during our experience	0.801	5.05	1.749
SI	**Symbolic Incongruence**		**3.68**	
SI1	The brand does not reflect who we are	0.576	4.12	1.750
SI2	We do not want to be associated with people who use the brand	0.530	2.98	1.798
SI3	The brand does not fit our business' personality	0.742	3.76	1.830
SI4	The brand symbolises the kind of brand we would never want to become	0.770	3.75	1.853
SI5	The brand's image does not match our image	0.749	3.79	1.870
II	**Ideological Incompatibility**		**3.41**	
II1	In our opinion, the brand acts irresponsibly	0.813	3.53	1.764
II2	In our opinion the brand is unethical	0.801	3.30	1.687
II3	The brand does not match our business' values and beliefs	0.702	3.60	1.719
II4	The brand violates our business' moral standards	0.646	3.22	1.734
UT	**Unacceptable Trade-offs**		**4.06**	
UT1	The quality of the brand is low as compared to its cost	0.723	4.47	1.832
UT2	The brand is not familiar	0.603	3.83	1.924
UT3	The packaging of the brand lacks relevant details (insufficient aesthetics)	0.513	3.59	1.714
UT4	The brand is deficient in terms of the value linked with it	0.720	4.34	1.711
FC	**Failed Communications**		**4.82**	
FC1	The content of the brand's advertisement is unpleasant	0.688	4.82	1.708
FC2	We do not like the celebrity(ies) used in the brand's advertisements	0.768	4.85	1.700
FC3	The music used in the brand's advertisement is not satisfactory	0.786	4.90	1.685
FC4	We are unable to deduce any meaning from the brand's adverts	0.786	4.72	1.803

5.7 ASSESSING THE MEASUREMENT MODEL

The SEM process takes place in 2 main phases, namely; assessment of the measurement model and assessment of the structural model. The measurement model, critical to analysis, is assessed first. In fact, scholars express that the structural model may be regarded as insignificant unless the measurement model is established to hold after assessment (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996; Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). The ideal criteria of the measurement model are attained by testing indicator reliability, internal consistency, discriminant validity and convergent validity (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; Lewis et al., 2005).

5.7.1 Internal Consistency

Internal consistency measures the degree to which a set of items measure the same construct. Prior studies reveal that this is evaluated using Cronbach Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) (Werts et al., 1974; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978; Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). Urbach and Ahlemann (2010) however identify CA as the traditional measure with CR as the alternative. For internal consistency to be considered as adequate, CR or CA values must satisfy the minimum threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1979; Hair et al., 2009). In this study, internal consistency was determined by both CA and CR. The results, as outlined in Table 5.4, show that for all six constructs, internal consistency was attained, as both CA and CR values exceeded the stipulated threshold.

5.7.2 Indicator Reliability

Indicator reliability is a determination of each indicator's contribution to their respective constructs. This is determined using indicator loadings. For ideal indicator reliability to be attained, the standardised factor loading estimates for each indicator must be equal to or above 0.7; however, factor loadings of 0.5 and above may be accepted given all other diagnostic tests are satisfied (Hair et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2010). As detailed in Table 5.4, in this study, the least indicator loading was 0.590, which exceeds the recommended threshold. Thus, indicator reliability was duly attained.

5.7.3 Convergent Validity

Hair et al. (2009) describe convergent validity as the degree to which variance in a set of indicators is accounted for by a single construct. In other words, it is the degree to which a set of indicators share a portion of variance (Hair et al., 2009). It is measured using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which must be equal to or greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Urbach and Ahlemann (2010) explain that a construct with a high AVE is an indicator that on average, that construct is able to explain over 50% of the variance of its indicators, thus is considered to have convergent validity. In this study, all the AVE values, as seen in Table 5.4, exceeded the recommended threshold, thus confirms the attainment of convergent validity.

Table 5. 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Constructs	Outer Loadings (Path Co-efficient)	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
BA		0.838	0.886	0.613
BA1	0.739			
BA2	0.842			
BA3	0.876			
BA4	0.832			
BA5	0.590			
UE		0.819	0.880	0.648
UE1	0.860			
UE2	0.698			
UE3	0.843			
UE4	0.810			
SI		0.857	0.899	0.641
SI1	0.683			
SI2	0.735			
SI3	0.850			
SI4	0.849			
SI5	0.869			
II		0.894	0.927	0.760
II1	0.877			
II2	0.899			
II3	0.873			
II4	0.836			
UT		0.772	0.849	0.586
UT1	0.774			
UT2	0.666			
UT3	0.764			
UT4	0.847			
FC		0.908	0.935	0.783
FC1	0.837			
FC2	0.905			
FC3	0.916			
FC4	0.880			

(*Source:* Field Data, 2020)

5.7.4 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity indicates how peculiar a construct is from other constructs in the model. It guarantees that besides what they are intended to measure, indicators do not measure other constructs (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). A high discriminant validity means that a construct measures a phenomenon that is distinct from all constructs in the model (Hair et al., 2009).

This may be evaluated using cross-loadings (Chin, 1998) or the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This study employed the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of the AVE of a construct be greater than the correlation between that construct and all other constructs. As outlined in Table 5.5, the square of the AVEs for the various constructs (indicated in bold) surpasses the correlations between the constructs, thus confirming discriminant validity.

Table 5. 5: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	BA	FC	II	SI	UT	UE
Brand Avoidance	**0.783**					
Failed Communication	-0.094	**0.885**				
Ideological Incompatibility	0.234	-0.619	**0.872**			
Symbolic Incongruence	0.297	-0.600	0.649	**0.801**		
Unacceptable Trade-offs	0.249	-0.479	0.487	0.517	**0.766**	
Unmet Expectations	0.407	-0.163	0.267	0.374	0.348	**0.805**

(*Source:* Field Data, 2020)

By way of double-checking, the cross-loadings of the indicators were also evaluated, and as stipulated by Chin (1998), all indicators loaded highest onto their respective constructs, confirming discriminant validity between all the constructs.

5.8 ASSESSING THE STRUCTURAL MODEL

Analysis of the measurement model is followed by an assessment of the structural model. The structural model describes the part of a model that details how variables interact and associate with each other (Byrne, 2016). In other words, it tests the associations between constructs as well as the predictive capabilities of the constructs (Hair et al., 2013). This test was conducted to make certain that the constructs in the model were not associated, as that could maximise errors in estimating the effects of each construct. Multicollinearity is assessed with Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), which must not exceed the limit of 10. An ideal VIF is a value lower than or close to 3 (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). As outlined in Table 5.6, all VIF values in this study's model are below 3 (i.e. the highest value is 2.187). Thus, all constructs have no problem with multicollinearity.

Table 5. 6: Inner VIF Values

	Model 1		**Model 2**	
	Brand Avoidance	**Symbolic Incongruence**	**Brand Avoidance**	**Symbolic Incongruence**
FC	1.920		1.953	
II	2.068	1.000	2.059	1.312
SI	2.187		2.181	
UT	1.561		1.584	1.312
UE	1.234		1.229	

(*Source:* Field Data, 2020)

Furthermore, the effect sizes (f^2) of each construct was attained from the PLS Algorithm output. The f^2 value enables researchers to evaluate the magnitude of the cause variable effect indicated by the path coefficient on the outcome variable (Kock, 2014). Per the guidelines of Cohen (1988), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 indicate small, medium and large effect sizes respectively. As displayed in Table 5.7, the f^2 value in respect of brand avoidance were 0.02, 0.01, 0.02, 0.01 and 0.10 for failed communication, ideological incompatibility, symbolic incongruence, unacceptable trade-offs and unmet expectations respectively in models 1 and 2. Also, with respect to symbolic incongruence, the f^2 value for ideological incompatibility was 0.73 in model 1 and 0.39 in model 2, whilst that of unacceptable trade-off was 0.10 in model 2.

Table 5. 7: Effect sizes
(*Source:* Field Data, 2020)

	Model 1 (f^2)		Model 2 (f^2)	
Construct	**BA**	**SI**	**BA**	**SI**
FC	0.02		0.02	
II	0.01	0.73	0.01	0.39
SI	0.02		0.02	
UT	0.01		0.01	0.10
UE	0.10		0.10	

Subsequently, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of the constructs was evaluated through bootstrapping (using 5000 re-sample) (Rezaei & Ghodsi, 2014; Ainin, Salleh, Bahri & Faziharudean, 2015). R^2 assesses the aggregate variance of the outcome variable explained by the model (Sarstedt, Ringle, Raithel & Gudergan, 2014). The R^2 of the main outcome variable (brand avoidance) for both model 1 and 2 was 0.207, showing. Also, the R^2 for symbolic incongruence in model 1 was 0.421 and 0.475 in model 2. These values reflect that this study's model has a moderate predictive capacity in determining the endogenous variables (Chin, 1998). The R^2 and Adjusted R^2 values for both models are reported in Table 5.8.

Table 5. 8: R-square and Adjusted R-square

	Model 1		Model 2	
	R-square	**Adjusted R-square**	**R-square**	**Adjusted R-square**
Brand Avoidance	0.207	0.195	0.207	0.195
Symbolic Incongruence	0.421	0.420	0.475	0.472

(*Source:* Field Data, 2020)

Next, blindfolding was executed to assess the predictive relevance of the independent variables (Hair et al., 2014). The blindfolding procedure provided the construct cross-validated redundancy (Q^2), which must be greater than zero (0) (Hair et al., 2014). As outlined in Table 5.9, the Q^2 values of brand avoidance in both model 1 and 2 (0.122) indicated moderate predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2010), whilst the Q^2 values of symbolic incongruence in model 1 (0.266) and model 2 (0.299) indicated above-average predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 5. 9: Cross-Validated Redundancy

Constructs	Q^2	
	Model 1	**Model 2**
Brand Avoidance	0.122	0.122
Symbolic Incongruence	0.266	0.299

(*Source:* Field Data, 2020)

5.8.1 Analysis of Hypothesised Relationships

This study sought to investigate six main hypotheses represented as Model 1. Hypotheses 1 – 5 were aimed at examining the factors that influence service brand avoidance in business markets, whilst hypothesis 6 assessed the relationship between 2 of the hypothesised drivers; symbolic incongruence and ideological incompatibility. The model examination focused on the path coefficients (considering signs and magnitude) as well as statistical significance. The t-value for a significant (alpha) level of 0.01 is 2.575, and an alpha level of 0.05 is 1.96.

The output, as seen in Figure 5.1, shows that of the six path coefficients, two were statistically significant at 0.01 alpha level and two others at 0.05 alpha level. Thus, this study showed a significant relationship between unmet expectations and brand avoidance (H1) (5.950), ideological incompatibility and symbolic incongruence (H6) (17.602) at a 0.01 alpha level. Also, the relationship between symbolic incongruence and brand avoidance (H2) (2.329) as well as failed communication and brand avoidance (H5) (2.129) were statistically significant at the 0.05 alpha level. Contrarily, the results showed non-statistically significant relationships between ideological incompatibility and brand avoidance (H3) (1.270) and unacceptable trade-offs and brand avoidance (H4) (1.305) at 0.05 alpha level. The p-values and standard path coefficients are displayed in Table 5.10.

Figure 5. 1: Model 1 (PLS Bootstrap Output)

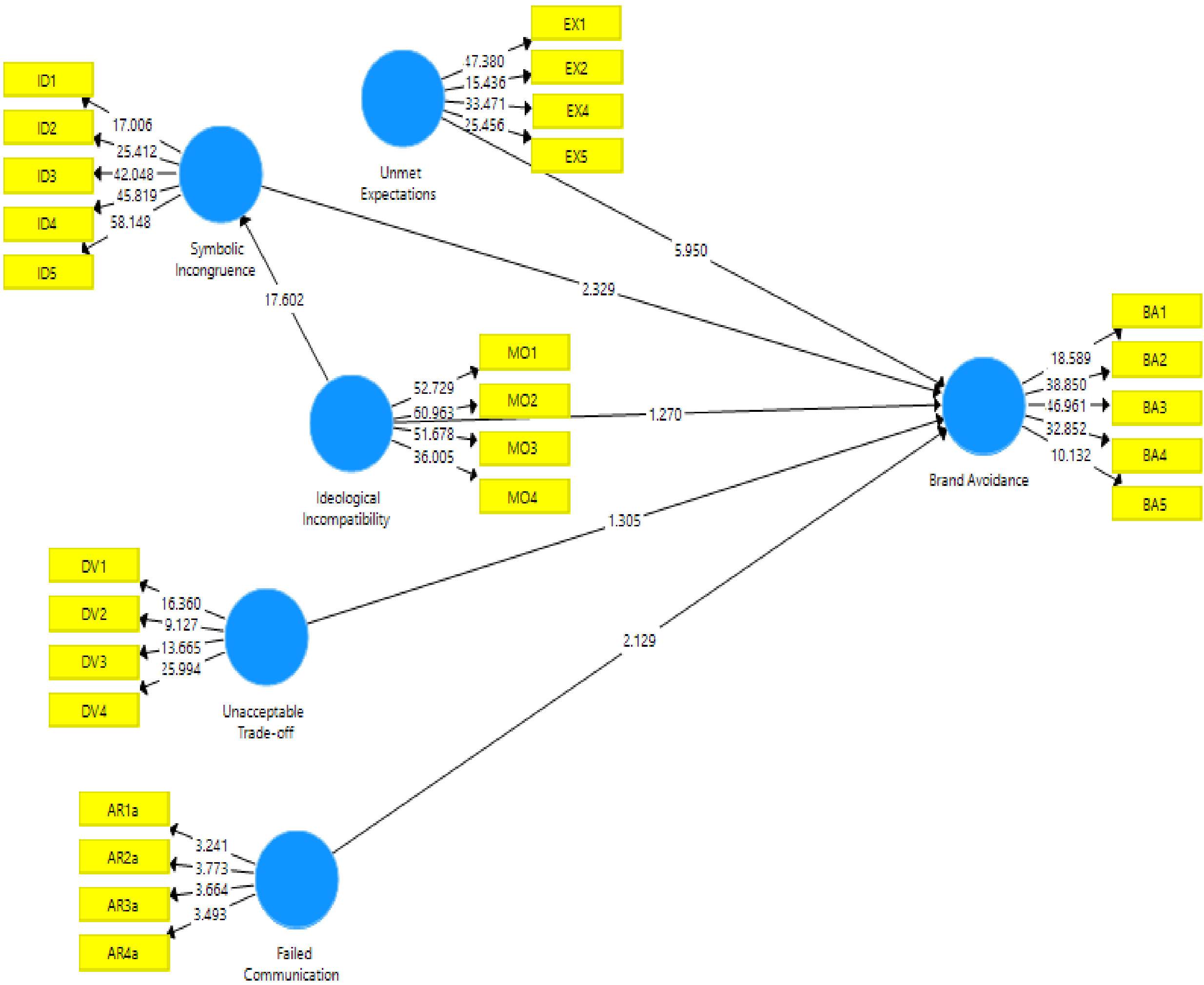


Table 5. 10: Standard Coefficients and Significance values for Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Path	Standard Coefficient	Direct Effect (P-value)	Result
H1	Unmet Expectations → Brand Avoidance	0.314	0.000***	Accepted
H2	Symbolic Incongruence → Brand Avoidance	0.168	0.020**	Accepted
H3	Ideological Incompatibility → Brand Avoidance	0.100	0.204	Rejected
H4	Unacceptable trade-offs → Brand Avoidance	0.079	0.192	Rejected
H5	Failed Communications → Brand Avoidance	0.158	0.033**	Accepted
H6	Ideological Incompatibility → Symbolic Incongruence	0.649	0.000***	Accepted

****** = P-value < 0.01 ** = P-value < 0.05***

5.9 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA)

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed to examine dissimilarities in responses from the various businesses based on the type of business they operate (manufacturing, service, merchandising or hybrid). The outcome of this test, as displayed in Table 5.11, reveals that the type of business accounted for some statistically significant disparities in responses in Unmet Expectations.

Table 5. 11: ANOVA Output

Construct	F-statistic	P-value
Brand Avoidance	1.302	0.274
Unmet Expectations	2.937	0.033
Symbolic Incongruence	1.302	0.274
Ideological Incompatibility	1.461	0.225
Unacceptable Trade-offs	1.927	0.125
Failed Communication	0.084	0.969

Further, a Tukey's Honest Significant Difference (Tukey HSD) test was conducted to ascertain exactly where the differences (Brillinger, 1984) in unmet expectations lie. This test revealed significant dissimilarities between mean responses of service and merchandizing firms (p=0.082) as well as merchandising and hybrid firms (p=0.024).

5.10 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This aspect of the report discusses the findings from the analyses in respect of the two main objectives of the study.

5.10.1 Objective One: Determine the factors that influence service brand avoidance in B2B relations

The prime objective of this study was to determine the factors that influence brand avoidance among business clients of service brands, particularly brands within the Ghanaian Telecommunication Industry. In order to achieve this, the study tested the direct relationships between brand avoidance and the five drivers propounded by Lee et al. (2009a, 2009b) and Knittel et al. (2016). The outcome of this study's analysis revealed that three drivers (namely, unmet expectations, symbolic incongruence and failed communications) directly influenced brand avoidance, whereas the remaining (ideological incompatibility and unacceptable trade-offs) did not affect brand avoidance directly.

Unmet Expectations

Business clients, like consumers are likely to quit the transactional relationship in the event of dissatisfaction or unmet expectations (Ferguson & Johnson, 2011). In promoting and selling their services, brands make promises (Brodie et al., 2006) be it implicit or explicit, which gives their target a sense of what to expect from the brand (Grönroos, 2006). As made evident in this study and confirmed by prior studies (Das & Bharadwaj (2017), in the instance where customers patronise the service and regard their experiences as below expectations, they stop patronizing the brand and avoid it. As Kotler and Armstrong (2012) aver, the buying behaviour and choices of businesses are influenced by the demands of their final consumers as well as internal stakeholders. Thus, purchases made by business clients are expected to seamlessly feed into their production or service delivery process and enhance the satisfaction of both internal and external stakeholders. Consequently, a failure or underperformance of the brand negatively affects how the business, in turn, serves its customers, which not only causes dissatisfaction of their customers but may ruin their reputation (Naumann et al., 2010). According to Bansal, Taylor and Yannik (2005), these can be considered as 'pull' factors which necessitate avoidance in the occurrence of service failures. As expected, rather than disappoint customers, businesses keep away from the brand. This is proven by this study's findings that show that in most cases of brand avoidance, the business clients had prior experience of the brand that went bad.

Symbolic Incongruence

In respect of symbolic incongruence, this study's outcome agrees with Khan and Lee (2014) that consumers keep away from brands that mostly contradict with their self-image. Like other consumers or entities, every business has an identity or self-image, which reflects how the members perceive themselves as an organization (Whetten, 2006; Price & Gioia, 2008). Scholars also opine that a component of an organization's identity is the reputation or image their external stakeholders have of them (Whetten, 2006; Price & Gioia, 2008). Extant literature as confirmation of this study's findings reveal that to protect or enhance their self-images businesses will keep away from brands that are incongruent with their organizations' identities (Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000; Brown et al., 2006).

Brown et al. (2006), in their study, highlighted "intended image" as a positive, aspirational identity of an organization. Further studies identified that to attain and sustain that intended or desired image organizations would go to great lengths to change strategies to get there (Gioia et al., 2000; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011). Thus, a brand that does not support the attainment or sustenance of the desired image is avoided. In like manner, consumers avoid brands that represent an undesired image or what they would not want to be known as (Lee et al., 2009b; Knittel et al., 2016). Particularly for businesses that benefit heavily from having good images and reputations, associating with a brand that does not promote or symbolise that could be detrimental; thus, avoidance occurs.

Failed Communications

Similar to the report of Knittel et al. (2016), failed communication proved to be a significant driver of brand avoidance in this study. Advertisement is recognised by marketing literature as pivotal to brand promotion (Netemeyer et al., 2004; West & Prendergast, 2009), as it enhances brand awareness and propagation of brand promises (Martinez, Montaner & Pina, 2009). Brands may be rejected because of a wrong choice of endorsers or representatives, e.g. inauthentic endorsers and celebrities that prospects do not identify with (Louie et al., 2001; Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011). Telecommunication networks in Ghana invest a lot into advertisement and mainly use entertainment celebrities to promote their brands. Whereas these celebrities may appeal to certain decision makers within the organization, businesses are more likely to look out for endorsers with field expertise. Also, though Ghanaian telecommunication network brands serve a lot of businesses, their advertisement is mainly targeted at consumers rather than businesses, and personal selling is targeted more at the larger organizations. What then becomes to the smaller firms that may not consume as much as the larger firms but still require their service for daily activities? As reflected in the study’s findings, businesses that perceive communications as wrongly designed or irrelevant will pay no attention or look away and inadvertently look away from the brand (Sabri & Obeimeller, 2012).

Ideological Incompatibility

Although appropriately signed as per the provisions of literature (Lee et al., 2009; Khan & Lee, 2014), ideological incompatibility proved to have insufficient strength to influence the occurrence of brand avoidance. This outcome is not entirely affirmed by literature, as some studies have shown that ideological incompatibility directly affects brand avoidance (Hegner et al., 2017; Odoom et al., 2019). In like manner, Knittel et al. (2016) and Lee et al. (2009a) suggest that consumers react negatively to corporate actions that conflict with their moral values or fail to meet ethical standards. However, some other studies (Kim et al., 2014; Safana, 2018) reported similar findings. Ideological incompatibility may be overlooked in brand relations due to contextual and cultural influences (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2011) as well as considerations of economic and market factors such as price, quality and other service incentives (Baumol & Blackman, 1991; Kulshreshtha, 2005). Thus, though there may be some ethical concerns with brands, businesses may overlook them to attain better service deals.

The study's findings, however, reveal a strong positive link between ideological incompatibility and symbolic incongruence. This connotes that an organization's assessment of mismatching ethical standards with a service brand could affect its assessment of symbolic compatibility with the brand. In other words, an organization that disagrees with the values and morals of a brand is likely to have a different self-concept from that brand or regard the brand as one that would derail it from attaining its desired image.

Unacceptable Trade-offs

As per the results of this study, the association between unacceptable trade-offs and brand avoidance is positive as postulated in the literature (Lee *et al*., 2009a; Odoom *et al*., 2019) yet statistically insignificant. Impliedly, clients may still patronise a brand though they perceive it as below the desired value. Although avoiding a brand that offers unacceptable trade-offs seem logical, some situations could change the narrative. For instance, situations where a brand though not ideal is considered as the better of two evils or best amongst 'bad' options. In such a situation, the client is forced to settle rather than avoid the brand.

5.10.2 Objective Two: Assess dissimilarities in customer responses to service brands based on customer business type

The second goal of the study was to assess dissimilarities in customer responses to service brands based on customer business type. In order to achieve this, the study conducted an ANOVA test to ascertain the presence of a statistically significant difference in mean responses. The test revealed that out of 6 constructs, a significant difference was noticed in only unmet expectations. In further analysis, Tukey HSD test was conducted, which revealed that the differences in means were between service firms and merchandisers as well as merchandisers and hybrid firms.

Unmet expectations of consumers as established in literature result from a failure of brands to perform up to the expectations of customers because of service failure, inconvenience, bad service environment or an inability to deliver on promises (Grönroos, 2006; Thompson et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2009; Knittel et al., 2016). Thus, per this study's findings, based on a customer's business type, their response to a brand's service performance may differ. In other words, the brand performance a service firm may consider as disappointing may be considered as satisfactory by a merchandising or hybrid firm. This is attributable to disparities in organizational focus, market type and what each business type requires and expects from the brand (Batson, 2008). As Lee et al. (2009) put it, the definition of an undelivered brand promise is hinged on the consumer's perception or construction.

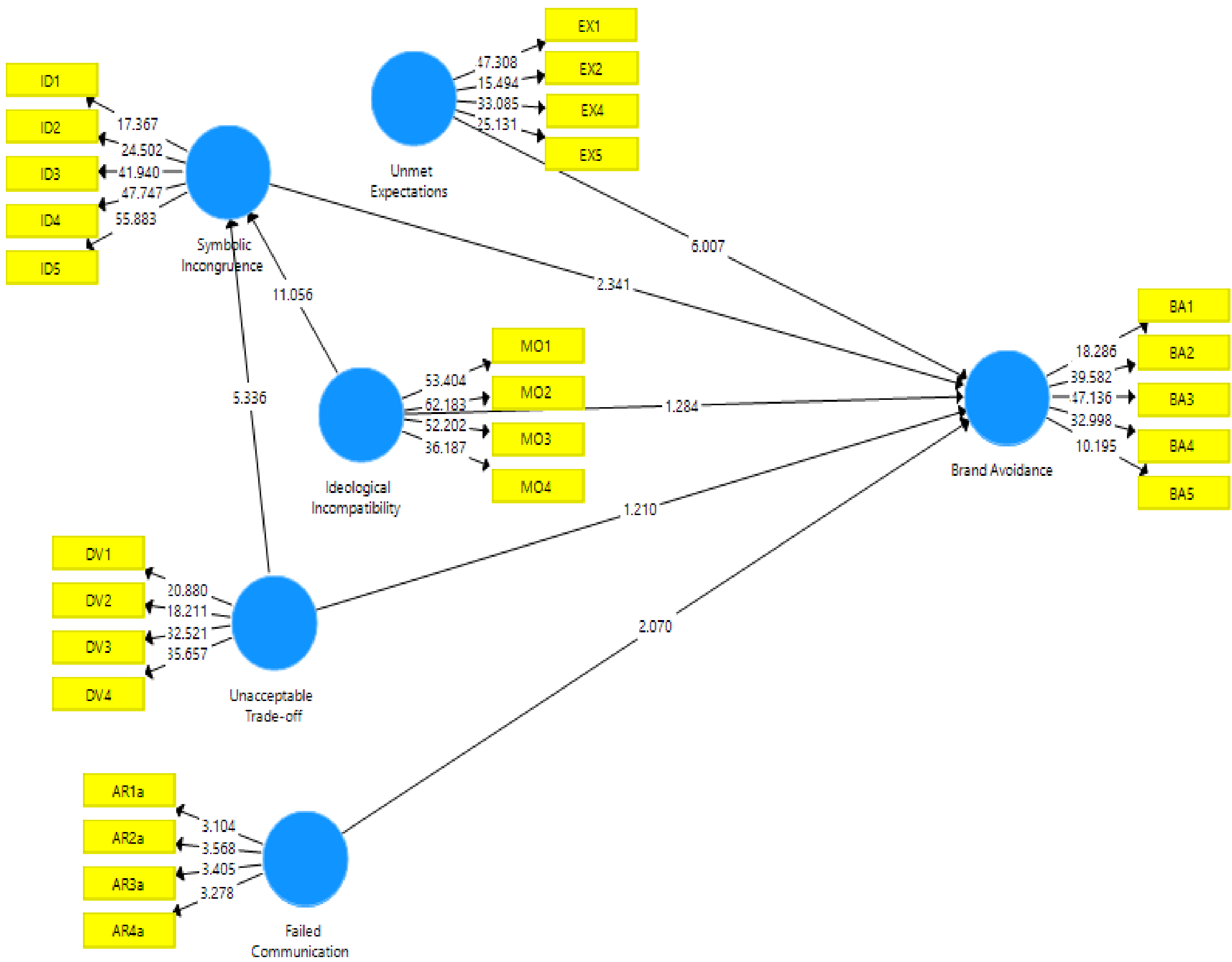
5.11 POST-HOC ANALYSIS (TEST OF MEDIATION)

After examining the main hypotheses of the study, the findings revealed that the relations between ideological incompatibility (H3) and unacceptable trade-offs (H4) and brand avoidance are statistically insignificant. Thus, the study proceeded to conduct a post-hoc examination based on existing literature, to investigate the conditions under which ideological incompatibility and unacceptable trade-offs could influence brand avoidance. A second model, as seen in Figure 5.2, was thus examined that tested symbolic incongruence as a mediator of ideological incompatibility and brand avoidance as well as unacceptable trade-offs and brand avoidance.

Based on arguments made in previous studies (Whetten, 2006; Corley et al., 2006; Schein, 2010), it is reasonable to aver that a firm's identity, image and reputation are key to its survival and growth. A firm's identity largely informs the manner in which the firm strategises and conducts business (Melewar, 2003); thus, all activities and associations of the firm should be an affirmation of its identity (Olins, 1989). The findings of this study also reveal the pertinence of concurrence between a customer's identity and that of a brand to purchase decisions. Furthermore, Freeman, Harrison and Wicks (2007, p.6) opine that organisations are established on a 'logic of values', which provide justification for the firm's existence. Thus, Camillus (2011) advances that values constitute the lifeblood of a firm's identity, adding that they remain a distinct, pivotal and enduring constituent of an organisation's identity. Additionally, scholars

(Olins, 1989; Leitch, 1999) stress the need for businesses to consider their values and standards, associations and product quality, presentation and value as well as the entire organization as manifestations of their identity in order to stay unique and authentic. This goes to say that a business would go through great lengths to protect its self-image and identity (Lin, 2004). Consequently, factors that may not directly or ordinarily cause the business to avoid a brand may do so if the originality or integrity of their identities is at stake.

Figure 5. 2: Model 2 (PLS Mediation)



5.11.1 Results of Post-Hoc Analysis

First, the results as shown in Table 5.12 revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between symbolic incongruence and brand avoidance ($\beta = 0.168$, $\alpha = 0.019$) whilst, ideological incompatibility was significantly related to symbolic incongruence ($\beta = 0.519$, $\alpha = 0.000$) at 0.01 alpha level. Also, the direct relationship between ideological incompatibility and brand avoidance was positive and insignificant ($\beta = 0.101$, $\alpha = 0.199$), however, the indirect effect of ideological on brand avoidance was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.087$, $\alpha = 0.026$) at 0.05 alpha level. This indicates that symbolic incongruence is a full mediator of ideological incompatibility and brand avoidance.

Furthermore, the relationship between unacceptable trade-offs and symbolic incongruence was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.266$, $\alpha = 0.000$) at 0.01 alpha level. Again, the direct effect of unacceptable trade-offs was positive and insignificant ($\beta = 0.078$, $\alpha = 0.226$), whereas the indirect effect of unacceptable trade-offs on brand avoidance was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.045$, $\alpha = 0.035$) at 0.05 alpha level. This also reflects that the relationship between unacceptable trade-offs and brand avoidance is fully mediated by symbolic incongruence. Finally, the relationships between unmet expectations and brand avoidance ($\beta = 0.317$, $\alpha = 0.000$) as well as failed communication and brand avoidance ($\beta = 0.161$, $\alpha = 0.039$) were statistically significant at 0.01 and 0.05 alpha levels respectively.

Table 5. 12: Model 2 (PLS Mediation output)

Path	Direct Effect		Indirect Effect	
	Standard Coefficient	**P-value**	**Standard Coefficient**	**P-value**
Ideological Incompatibility → Symbolic Incongruence	0.519	0.000***		
Symbolic Incongruence → Brand Avoidance	0.168	0.019**		
Ideological Incompatibility → Brand Avoidance	0.101	0.199	0.087	0.026**
Unacceptable Trade-offs → Symbolic Incongruence	0.266	0.000***		
Unacceptable Trade-offs → Brand Avoidance	0.078	0.226	0.045	0.035**
Unmet Expectations → Brand Avoidance	0.317	0.000***		
Failed Communication → Brand Avoidance	0.161	0.039**		

****** = P-value < 0.01 ** = P-value < 0.05***

5.11.2 Discussion of Post-Hoc Analysis Results

Results from the post-hoc analysis revealed that symbolic incongruence fully mediates the relationship between ideological incompatibility and brand avoidance. Scholars point out that consumers reject brands they perceive will alter their self-image or individuality (Banister & Hogg, 2000; Lee et al., 2009a). Thus, businesses that perceive some value inconsistencies with brands that could alter or put a strain on their self-concept or sense of individuality will avoid those brands. Moreover, ethical upstanding has been underlined in literature as an imperative for healthy reputation building, which in turn, scores organizations some competitive advantage (Teo & Chan-Serafin, 2013). In fact, some scholars are of the view that organizations behave ethically (e.g. undertake corporate social responsibility activities) only to enhance their reputations and gain public favour (Branco & Rodrigues, 2007; Asemah et al., 2013). Thus, though businesses may not be driven directly by corporate wrongdoings and unethical behaviour to avoid brands, they will avoid the brands once their identities and images (reputations) are on the line.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that unacceptable trade-offs are significantly related to symbolic incongruence, which in turn fully mediates the relationship between unacceptable trade-offs and brand avoidance. As established, businesses work hard to preserve their self-images and reputations, which may involve keeping away from brands that do not promote that course (Whetten, 2006). New and unfamiliar brands, particularly in the services space are generally considered as high risk, as customers have no prior experience and assessment of their services thus may be uncertain of what to expect (Lee et al., 2009). Consequently, businesses that patronise such brands do so at the risk of experiencing service failure, waste of resources, disappointing their own customers and directly or indirectly endorsing a bad brand which may tarnish their reputations.

5.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter thoroughly discussed the outcome of the study's data analysis. More specifically, it displayed and reviewed the demographic statistics of respondents, descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, a test of differences and assessment of the measurement and structural models.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

After presenting and discussing the study's empirical tests and results in the preceding chapter, this chapter presents the summary of the study, major findings, implications as well as recommendations for future research.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the factors that drive service brand avoidance in business markets. It thus sought to answer the question, "what are the factors that influence service brand avoidance in business-to-business relations?". With respect to the type of service brands, the study focused on brands from the Ghanaian telecommunications industry. Additionally, this study probed the dissimilarities in customer responses to service brands based on customer business type. As a means of attaining these objectives which were also indicated in the opening chapter, the study reviewed the reports of prior studies on anti-consumption (Zavestoki, 2002; Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee et al., 2009), service branding (Berry, 2000; Geigenmuller & Bettis-Outland, 2012), brand equity (Keller, 1993; Davis, 2000; Ambler, 2003) and brand avoidance (Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b; Knittel et al., 2016; Odoom et al., 2019).

The literature review exposed theories and five factors proposed as pertinent to the occurrence of brand avoidance – unmet expectations, symbolic incongruence, ideological incompatibility, unacceptable trade-offs and failed communications (Lee et al., 2009b; Rindell et al., 2014; Kavaliauske & Simanavicinte, 2015; Knittel et al., 2016), based on which a conceptual framework was constructed and hypotheses formulated. To examine the hypotheses, 398 structured questionnaires with 33 items were self-administered. Three hundred and sixty (360) questionnaires were recovered out of which 346 provided valid and useable responses for data analysis. Data were collected only from businesses within the Accra metropolis avoiding the services of any of the Ghanaian telecommunications network brands. Profiling of these businesses revealed that most were patrons of MTN, followed by Vodafone, then Airtel-Tigo and Glo, with a large portion patronizing multiple brands at the same time. Glo was the most avoided brand. 74.3% of the respondents were service firms, 11.3% manufactures, 7.8% merchandisers and 6.6% hybrid firms.

The data was further analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. This was particularly used for conducting exploratory factor analysis, normality test and ANOVA. Smart PLS 3 was also used to test and confirm the validity and reliability of the measurement model as well as the fitness of the structural model. This study assessed two structural models. The first, based on the research hypotheses assessed the direct effects of unmet expectations, symbolic incongruence, ideological incompatibility, unacceptable trade-offs and failed communications on brand avoidance and the relationship between symbolic incongruence and ideological incompatibility. The second model then assessed the mediating effect of symbolic incongruence on the relationships between ideological incompatibility and brand avoidance as well as unacceptable trade-offs and brand avoidance. Further, the ANOVA test was conducted to ascertain the existence of differences in mean responses of businesses to the proposed drivers of brand avoidance with regards to business type.

6.3 MAJOR FINDINGS

The outcomes from the analyses conducted in the study have been discussed in relation to the objectives of the study. Regarding the first objective of this study, which was to determine the factors that influence service brand avoidance in B2B relations, specifically, the telecommunications industry, the study disclosed that out of 5 proposed drivers, only 3 (unmet expectations, failed communications and symbolic incongruence) had direct positive significant influences on brand avoidance. These confirmed the findings of several brand avoidance studies (Lee et al., 2009; Khan & Lee, 2014; Knittel et al., 2016; Hegner et al., 2017). Evidently, businesses in Ghana regard it prudent to keep away from service brands that are symbolically discordant, fail to perform to expectations or communicate poorly.

The study additionally revealed that standing alone, influences of unacceptable trade-offs and ideological incompatibility (Kim et al., 2014; Safana, 2018) though positive were not strong enough to drive brand avoidance. However, when fully mediated by symbolic incongruence, they both had significant positive effects on brand avoidance. In other words, though incompatibility with a brand's values and moral standards alone may not keep a business from patronising their services when the brand's morals and ethics affect the business' self-image and reputation avoidance occurs. Similarly, a business may not reject a service brand just because it is unfamiliar or too pricey in comparison to what it offers but will do so when the brand's unfamiliarity affects the business' image.

In respect of the second objective of this study, which was to assess dissimilarities in customer responses to service brands based on customer business type, the study revealed that of all six constructs, only unmet expectations recorded significant difference in mean responses. Moreover, further analysis revealed that the differences were between responses of service and merchandizing firms as well as merchandising and hybrid firms. This confirms that every industry or business type has its own market characteristics, demands and priorities which influence decisions and purchasing behaviour (Kisengo, 2014), consequently, there are varying expectations and criteria for assessing brand performance. Thus, though all organizations have some similar properties, the type of business could inform who stays or leaves after a service encounter.

6.4 CONCLUSION

As previously mentioned in this study, negative consumer responses to brands are a cause for great concern to managers and academics across the globe. Although recent studies in brand management have sought to gain some understanding in this regard, they have proven scanty relative to studies on positive consumer brand reactions. Additionally, the studies place emphases on end-consumers to the neglect of business-consumers. This study thus attends to this gap in literature by examining the factors that drive businesses to avoid service brands, particularly in the Ghanaian Telecommunication Industry. Apparent from the findings of the study is the existence of brand avoidance in the Ghanaian business market. Brand avoidance, as seen in this context, is driven by unmet expectations, symbolic incongruence and failed communication. Also, though not directly, unacceptable trade-offs and ideological incompatibility when mediated by symbolic incongruence influences brand avoidance.

6.5 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study offers useful insights for brand and business managers as well as other marketing practitioners that seek to develop and sustain strong service brands. First and foremost, the need for brands and sellers in business markets to shift from the traditional focus on developing only factors considered as rational, such as price, availability, feasibility and accessibility is confirmed. There are the other soft and somewhat emotional factors such as symbolism, image and values that also come to play. A careful blend of both emotional and rational factors will better position brands to be competitive. Also, there is the need for brands to look beyond just what attracts and satisfies their business clients to what could drive them away, as this would better assist brands to scope out and address elicitors of negative brand outcomes.

Although scholars argue that businesses tend to be more forgiving and reluctant to exit customer-brand relations due to perceptions of switching costs (Bansal, Irving & Taylor, 2004; Alba & Lutz, 2013), the outcome of this study demonstrates that provision of poor or inadequate service (particularly within the telecommunication sector), as well as struggles with attaining and rectifying service-related problems, could lead to brand avoidance. This is because business clients rely on the performance of service brands to satisfy their customers and protect their business and brands. Failure of the supplying brand could thus mean failure for the business. Hence, brands must not lose sight of the severity of damage that could be caused by low or failed service rendered or failure to meet brand promises. Supplying service brands within B2B markets would have to understand the nature of their clients' businesses and commit to helping those businesses succeed. It is recommended that brands make sincere promises, based on their true capabilities rather than overpromise to avoid disappointments and client rejection.

Additionally, whilst in some developed countries, ethics and value perceptions are considered supreme in making brand choices, the same may not be said for developing countries such as Ghana. Though it may be picking up gradually, businesses in Ghana are concerned more with their identities and how they look in the public eye. Thus, just like customers are scoped out and well-profiled in B2C markets, brands have to properly understand their business clients and prospects, in terms of who they are, what they stand for and whom they want to be, then, design market offerings that may enhance their self-images.

Furthermore, considering that promotion in business markets is mostly done via personal selling, key markers such as sales representatives and message (sales pitch) must be well thought out and designed to suit the organization. Additionally, care must be taken not to oversell the brand and its offerings lest expectations are raised too high to be met. However, in the case of advertising, the choice of brand endorsers and music must resonate well with the target clients and not trigger negative connotations. Also, though targeted at businesses, promotional efforts should also appeal to individuals that work with the firm (particularly members of the buying centre) and owners and managers of small and medium enterprises. As Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) point out, it is people who make decisions within the organization and may not necessarily put away their personal idiosyncrasies while doing so.

6.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study adds to marketing literature new insights on brand avoidance from a developing economy perspective, particularly Ghana, which, according to IMF (2019) is among the fastest-growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. More specifically, it gives a better appreciation of brand avoidance in the service business market, in terms of how businesses respond to brands before or after a service experience. Further, it offers a deeper understanding of what drives businesses to keep away from service brands – particularly telecommunication network brands. The study offers an appreciation of factors the cut across consumer and business markets in influencing brand avoidance and probably brand preference, thus, highlighting the relevance of studying businesses not only as one whole but also composed of individuals (Turka & Sasan, 2015). Moreover, this study highlights the pertinence of business type in influencing disparities in customer expectations and brand assessment in B2B relations.

The concept of brand avoidance amongst other anti-consumption behaviours is still gaining prominence, thus requires more investigation. In order to expand knowledge in this domain, it is recommended that future studies delve deeper into understanding brand avoidance in business markets. For instance, an examination of the subject on brands from other industries as well as specific sectors within the industries could be considered. Also, this study considered service brand avoidance by businesses in general, however, future research could consider brand avoidance by businesses that operate within specific industries (e.g. avoidance of commercial bank brands by FMCG retailers or hotels). This would provide essential insights that would either confirm or disconfirm the findings of this study as well as guide the strategies and activities of brands in various sectors. Additionally, per this study's findings, the most prominent drivers of brand avoidance within the Ghanaian telecommunication industry are symbolic incongruence, unmet expectations and failed communication. Prospectively, researchers could thoroughly investigate and assess the reasons behind these drivers inductively. Scholars could also examine the effect of b2b brand avoidance on co-branding agreements.

6.7 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The number of businesses operating in Ghana is approximately 131,546 (RGD, 2019), however, in this study only 398 businesses located within the Accra metropolis were examined. The relatively small sample size, though attained by using Taro Yamane's Formula, was also influenced by time and monetary constraints. There was also some difficulty in getting many respondents due to bureaucracy in some organizations and the general apathy people in Ghana show towards social researchers.

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APPENDICES

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BUSINESS SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

The researcher is a Master of Philosophy Marketing student at the Marketing and Entrepreneurship department of the University of Ghana Business School, Legon. This questionnaire is designed to understand ***Service brand avoidance in business-to-business relations*** particularly with Telecommunication brands in Ghana. It is purely for academic purpose and as such any information provided would be treated as confidential. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND

1. **Type of business:**

Manufacturing [ ] Service [ ] Merchandising [ ] Hybrid [ ]

2. **Size of organization (number of workers)**

20 workers and below [ ] 21 – 50 [ ] 51 – 100 [ ] 101 – 150 [ ] 151 – 200 [ ] 201 – 250 [ ] 251 – 300 [ ] Above 300 [ ]

3. **Age of the organization**

Less than 5 years [ ] 5 – 15 years [ ] 16 – 25 years [ ] 26 – 35 years [ ] 36 – 45 years [ ] 46 – 50 years [ ] Above 50 years [ ]

4. **Type of ownership**

Sole proprietorship [ ] Partnership [ ] Corporation [ ] Limited Liability Company [ ]

5. **Telecom service(s) you are currently patronizing**

MTN [ ] Vodafone [ ] Airtel-Tigo [ ] Glo [ ]

6. **Telecom service you are avoiding**

MTN [ ] Vodafone [ ] Airtel-Tigo [ ] Glo [ ]

SECTION B: BRAND AVOIDANCE

For each statement in the tables, kindly indicate the extent to which they apply to your relationship with your stated telecommunication brand in **Ques 6**, using the ratings:
1 – Strongly disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Somewhat disagree
4 – Neither agree or disagree 5 – Somewhat agree 6 – Agree
7 – Strongly agree

Brand Avoidance	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
We do not purchase the services/products of the brand anymore.							
We reject services/products of the brand.							
We refrain from buying the brand’s products or using its services.							
We avoid buying the brand’s products/using its services.							
We do not use products or services of the brand.							

SECTION C: DRIVERS OF BRAND AVOIDANCE

For each statement in the tables, kindly indicate the extent to which they influence why you would avoid your stated telecommunication brand in **Ques 6**, using the ratings:

1 – Strongly disagree **2 – Disagree** **3 – Somewhat disagree**
4 – Neither agree or disagree **5 – Somewhat agree.** **6 – Agree**
7 – Strongly agree

Experiential	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Poor performance of the brand							
Inconvenience (hassle) associated in acquiring the brand							
Negative/unpleasant store environment where the brand is sold							
The brand failed to meet its promised value							
Expectations of the brand were not met during our experience							
Identity							
The brand does not reflect who we are							
We do not want to be associated with people who use the brand							
The brand does not fit our business' personality							
The brand symbolises the kind of brand we would never want to become							
The brand's image does not match our image							
Moral							
In our opinion, the brand acts irresponsibly							
In our opinion the brand is unethical							
The brand does not match our business' values and beliefs							
The brand violates our business' moral standards							
Deficit-value							
The quality of the brand is low as compared to its cost							
The brand is not familiar							
The packaging of the brand lacks relevant details (insufficient aesthetics)							
The brand is deficient in terms of the value linked with it							
Advertising-related							
The content of the brand's advertisement is unpleasant							
We do not like the celebrity(ies) used in the brand's advertisements							
The music used in the brand's advertisement is not satisfactory							
We are unable to deduce any meaning from the brand's adverts							