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IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURS' PERSONAL VALUES, ATTITUDES, AND ROLE PERCEPTIONS ON BRAND IMAGE FORMATION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF BRAND AMBIDEXTERITY

Solomon Tawiah Yeboah, PhD 

Senior Lecturer, Department of Marketing Studies,
Cape Coast Technical University, Ghana
solomon.yeboah@cctu.edu.gh

Haider Yasmeen, PhD

Crescent School of Business, B.S. Abdur Rahman
Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, India
And, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

George Kofi Amoako, PhD

Prof., Marketing Department and Director at the Directorate for Research, Innovation,
and Consultancy, Ghana Communication Technology University Accra, Ghana
And, Durban University of Technology South Africa, South Africa

Abstract

The study examined the relationship between apparel fashion entrepreneurs' personal attitudes, values, role perceptions, and brand image formation, focussing on the moderating role of brand ambidexterity. A cross-sectional and quantitative research design was used to collect data from 245 apparel fashion entrepreneurs through convenient sampling. Analysis with SmartPLS3 revealed personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions significantly influence brand image formation. Brand ambidexterity also moderated the relationship between personal values and brand image formation, but not the relationships involving personal attitudes and role



perceptions. This study supports Resource-Based View theory, showing that enterprise performance and behaviour are influenced by both observed and unobserved characteristics of the owners over time. Practical implications suggest that the ability to appreciate and understand entrepreneurs' values, attitudes, role perceptions, and brand ambidexterity can enhance the formulation of brand strategy, growth, and development for small apparel fashion enterprises' success.

Keywords: Personal values, Attitudes, Role Perceptions, Brand Image Formation, Brand Ambidexterity, Apparel Fashion Enterprises

INTRODUCTION

The apparel fashion industry in emerging markets offers a lot of potential for value additions and employment opportunities in the global world, from production level to marketing, and occurs at every step of the process (England *et al.*, 2021). The projections indicate that the global apparel market will generate a significant revenue of US\$1.79 trillion in 2024, with an annual growth rate of 2.81% from 2024 to 2028. The women's apparel segment alone is expected to dominate, reaching a market volume of US\$0.94 trillion in 2024. The United States, for example, leads in revenue, estimated at US\$359 billion. Experts predict a per capita revenue of US\$230.90 and predict a market volume of 196.1 billion pieces by 2028, with a 1.3% volume growth in 2025 (Statista, 2024). Non-luxury sales will also account for 95% of the market, while China's demand for luxury brands continues to rise.

The apparel fashion industry in Sub-Saharan Africa represents a significant business opportunity, particularly in emerging markets across the value chain from design to marketing (Morris *et al.*, 2016; Vittayakorn *et al.*, 2015). This study examines the relationship between entrepreneurs' personal attitudes, values, role perceptions, and brand image formation, and highlights the moderating role of brand ambidexterity. A strong brand image is crucial for the industry, and can lead to premium pricing, strong word-of-mouth, brand association, and quality customer engagement (Naeem & Ozuem, 2021; Naeem & Ozuem, 2022). Major changes such as shifts in consumer perceptions, technological advancements, and creative models have impacted both emerging and established markets (Jin & Shin, 2021; Abnett, 2016; Beltrami *et al.*, 2019). Increased brand awareness and recognition enable entrepreneurs to create powerful brands, enhancing positive brand image formation (Camahort *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the link between personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions among small apparel fashion entrepreneurs is essential for brand image formation, particularly regarding brand ambidexterity.

Brand ambidexterity, the ability to exploit existing capabilities while exploring new opportunities, moderates how entrepreneurs manage brand image complexities (Beverland *et al.*, 2015a). This dual capability is vital in the fast-evolving apparel fashion industry, where consumer preferences and sustainability concerns shift frequently. Entrepreneurs who balance exploiting established brand equity with exploring innovative practices are more likely to influence a positive brand image. This is supported by findings that suggest a strong relationship between brand awareness and consumer attitudes, where awareness can mitigate perceived risks associated with new product offerings (Hyllegard *et al.*, 2010; Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017). The ability to adapt and innovate in response to consumer feedback and market trends is crucial for maintaining relevance and competitiveness (Lin, 2023; Shiratina *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, brand ambidexterity helps entrepreneurs respond to external pressures, such as sustainability demands from consumers and regulatory bodies, enhancing brand image and fostering consumer loyalty (Han & Chung, 2014; Kang *et al.*, 2013). This adaptability, coupled with a consumer-centric approach, can lead to a more robust brand image (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016; Joung & Park-Poaps, 2011).

The relationship between personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions of small apparel fashion entrepreneurs is crucial for brand image formation, with brand ambidexterity serving as a critical moderating factor. This dynamic interplay underscores the importance of aligning personal values with business strategies, particularly in an environment where sustainability and ethical practices are paramount to consumer decision-making (Kordrostami & Kordrostami, 2020).

Brand image plays a fundamental role in the apparel fashion industry by enhancing customer trust (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2021; Lari *et al.*, 2021). Through personal branding, customers can better identify fashion CEOs, differentiating them among competitors and associating them with the brand (Bhakuni *et al.*, 2021; Md Saad & Yaacob, 2021). The industry presents a situation where entrepreneurs' attitudes, values, and role perceptions converge with cultural and socioeconomic development (Md Saad & Yaacob, 2021; Langevang, 2017). These factors are crucial in defining what the enterprises represent. Entrepreneurs' personal values and attitudes significantly influence their employees, customers, and growth performance (Tomczyk *et al.*, 2013; Ling *et al.*, 2007).

Given that these owners are part of the apparel fashion brand and directly interact with customers, it is important to understand how personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions affect brand image formation. In markets with many brand imitations and options, consumers are influenced by small differentiators (Saxena & Dhar, 2021). The challenge is for entrepreneurs to create these differences to excite customers. This calls for identifying

untapped opportunities to enhance brand image formation. Key studies in brand literature include the effects of brand equity on financial performance (Miao et al., 2022), strategic branding decisions in China (Zhou et al., 2022), the relationship between branded content on Instagram and brand followers (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022), and the role of engagement in forming value for luxury brands (Gallart Camahort et al., 2021).

A critical review of branding, attitudes, values and brand image formation literature highlights several key studies. Schwartz (2012) delved into how personal values and attitudes influence entrepreneurial behaviour and decision-making, suggesting that individuals act in ways that express their core values and achieve their underlying goals. Sagiv, Roccas, Cieciuch, and Schwartz (2017) further posited that entrepreneurs' personal values shape their self-perception and likelihood of success. Boer and Fischer (2013) expanded this by examining the relationship between personal values and attitudes across cultures and highlighted the significant role of cultural context in shaping these dynamics. They emphasized that understanding these relationships can deepen insights into cross-cultural psychology (Boer & Fischer, 2013; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

While values and attitudes such as innovation, risk-taking, and customer orientation are critical for entrepreneurial success (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), the role of brand ambidexterity in moderating these relationships remains unexplored. Role perceptions, including how entrepreneurs view their responsibilities within their enterprises, also impact business performance (Morris et al., 2013). Evidence suggests that role clarity and role conflict significantly affect entrepreneurial outcomes (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Likewise, brand image formation has also been studied, particularly in the context of consumer perceptions and marketing strategies (Keller, 1993). Thus, brand image enhances customer trust, helps in building customer loyalty, and enables brand patronage (Aaker, 1996).

Moreover, the concept of brand ambidexterity, which involves balancing exploration and exploitation in brand management, has been discussed in the context of organizational ambidexterity (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Studies highlight the importance of ambidexterity for innovation and sustained competitive advantage (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). Despite these contributions, the integration of personal values and brand ambidexterity remains underexplored. Limited research exists on how entrepreneurs' personal values influence their ability to balance exploration and exploitation in brand management. Similarly, the relationship between entrepreneurs' role perceptions and their brand ambidexterity practices is also underexplored. Understanding how role clarity or conflict affects their ability to manage brand ambidexterity could provide valuable insights for entrepreneurial success. Hence, further research is needed to explore how brand ambidexterity moderates the relationship between

personal values, attitudes, role perceptions, and brand image formation. This could help understand the conditions under which brand ambidexterity enhances or diminishes the impact of these factors on brand image. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the relationship between entrepreneurs' personal values, attitudes, role perceptions, and brand image formation, with brand ambidexterity as a moderating factor in small apparel fashion enterprises.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resource-Based View (RBV) theory in Apparel Fashion Enterprises

This study builds a conceptual foundation on the premise on Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. RBV posits that a firm's competitive advantage stems from its unique resources and capabilities, which are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). This theory is ideal for this study as it emphasizes internal resources like entrepreneurs' personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions, as critical for strategic decision-making and brand image formation.

RBV is particularly relevant in the apparel fashion industry, where entrepreneurs' unique capabilities significantly influence brand success. Their personal values and attitudes shape strategic choices, and directly impact brand image and consumer perceptions. The ability to leverage these resources, entrepreneurs can create a strong brand image that differentiates their offerings in a competitive market.

Scholarly works on brand image formation reveal three assumptions: owners' identity (features of offerings, personality, attitudes) (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990); the image view (positioning to internal and external publics) (LeBlanc & Nguyen, 2001); and the reputation view (distinctiveness shaped by reliable performance). These imply that entrepreneurs' personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions are crucial for brand image formation. Brand ambidexterity, as a moderator, affects this relationship. The study's argument is based on literature linking entrepreneurs' actions to enterprise performance and strategic success (Wilson, 2020; Buyl *et al.*, 2011). Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model.

Entrepreneurs' Brand ambidexterity

Brand ambidexterity is the ability of an entrepreneur's aptitude to balance exploration and exploitation in brand management, and it allows for innovation while maintaining consistency. This balance is crucial for enhancing brand performance in dynamic markets. Iyer *et al.* (2020) emphasizes that managing both types of innovation is essential for maximizing brand performance, as ambidexterity reconciles the conflicting goals of relevance and

consistency. Yang and Zheng (2022) highlight the role of social media strategic capability in facilitating brand innovation, noting that resource constraints often influence the choice between exploration and exploitation strategies. Ferreira and Coelho (2020) underscore that ambidexterity captures a firm's pursuit of seemingly conflicting goals, which is key to achieving competitive advantage. The interplay between brand ambidexterity and organizational capabilities is vital, enabling firms to adapt to market changes while leveraging existing brand equity. Overall, the literature suggests that successful brand ambidexterity enhances brand performance and innovation, making it a critical focus for businesses in complex environments.

Brand Image Formation

Brand image formation studies aim to identify influential sources that enhance the process through brand infrastructures or communications (Nemati, 2009; Hassan et al., 2021). These studies examine both tangible and intangible values, including brand values, logos, mission, personality, benefits, attributes, and product ingredients (Hassan et al., 2021; Janonis & Virvilaitė, 2007; Wijaya, 2013). Kapferer (2008) identified two routes for brand image formation: communications emphasizing functional benefits and those stressing emotional benefits. Wilkins and Huisman (2015) highlight recommendations and feedback from personal relationships as influential antecedents.

Customers buy not only the product but also the image linked with it (Kosteljik & Alsem, 2020; Berndt & Hollebeek, 2019). Branding is crucial for apparel fashion enterprises' success (Miao et al., 2022). A quality brand image enhances competitive advantage (Lewis & Hawksley, 1990), financial performance (Kim & Lee, 2018), and consumer patronage of retail brands (Veloutsou et al., 2004). A powerful brand image fosters unique customer relationships, trust, attraction, and loyalty (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Anggraeni, 2015; Mosaad et al., 2022). Enterprise brand image influences customers' purchase decisions and repeat behaviour (Lee & Lee, 2018). It encourages defensive marketing tools to drive loyalty (Shah et al., 2012). High brand image enhances customer satisfaction's indirect effect on loyalty through quality relationship management (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016). Entrepreneurs, as brand representatives, must exhibit positive cues to enhance brand image formation, as apparel fashion enterprises are driven by opinions, perceptions, judgments, and image (Lada, 2018; Ponis & Lada, 2021).

Entrepreneurs' Personal Value (EPV)

A review of the literature shows various definitions of entrepreneurs' personal values (EPV). Jaén et al. (2013), Sánchez-Báez et al. (2018), and Kirkley (2016) define personal

values as principles and standards guiding individuals' lives. Entrepreneurs' personal values are crucial for defining strategic direction and brand image formation (Kirkley, 2016). Articulating personal values provides clarity, sound decision-making, responsiveness, and consistency in the marketplace, essential for brand image formation (Bolzani & Foo, 2018; Choongo *et al.*, 2018). Values are influenced by beliefs, experiences, education, and social links (Kirkley, 2016). Personal values also predict entrepreneurial intentions (Hueso *et al.*, 2020). Entrepreneurs need core values to follow natural laws and establish relationships (Dahlgaard-Park, 2012). Personal values set benchmarks for strategic decisions and preferences (Hemingway, 2005). Kirkley (2016) asserts that self-determined actions stem from values guiding decisions and behaviours. Apparel fashion entrepreneurs' values contribute to firm performance and are key to entrepreneurial decisions (Tomczyk *et al.*, 2013; Gaile *et al.*, 2020), guiding success through personal and firm principles.

Hypotheses Development

Influence of Entrepreneurs' Role Perception on Brand Image Formation

Role perception involves the direction in which an individual channelizes his or her efforts (Kumar and Kaur, 2017). The concept was coined from MARS model of individual behaviour which seeks to understand individual's behaviour as a result of both internal and external stimulus (Wang *et al.*, 2016, McShane and Von Glinow, 2011). The term MARS represents motivation, abilities, role perception, and situational factors. Role perception, therefore, describes the extent to which individual entrepreneurs appreciate and understand their task responsibilities expected of them (Von Glinow and McShane, 2005). Different role perceptions give rise to different entrepreneurs' competencies, skills requirements and the determination of such behaviour (THIN and AK, Wang *et al.*, 2016).

Studies on perception are very relevant as people's perception are influenced by others towards a behaviour (Karadakal *et al.*, 2015). Entrepreneurs' understanding of the role they play importantly influences their behaviour both within and outside the enterprise. Entrepreneurs are believed to act upon their perceptions. Therefore, how they understand situations and react towards it are crucially important in establishing an imprint in their minds and consequently influences their customers with such imprints (Karadakal *et al.*, 2015). Entrepreneurs' role perception serves as one of the utmost components in today's business interactions. RP enhances both performance and excellence especially when the roles are clearly defined. Internal factors such as personality, values, beliefs, attitudes, and past experiences have been credited to influence individual's role perception. (THIN and AK)

When apparel fashion entrepreneurs understand what is required of them and act as such, it can consequently lead to customer satisfaction thereby enhancing positive impressions about the firm. In view of this, it is assumed that owner-managers who understand their roles very well and can perform them competently to the delight of customers, will create positive brand impression among customers. On this basis, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Role perception contributes significantly to brand image formation in small apparel fashion enterprises.

Entrepreneurs' Personal Values and Brand Image Formation

Strong personal values are a solid foundation to achieve brand distinctiveness in the small apparel fashion enterprises which is a prerequisite tool for a favourable brand image impression. The values usually associated with fashion entrepreneurs are creativity, change-mindedness, uniqueness, accomplishment, competitiveness, hard work, success, and risk orientation among others (Schindehutte *et al.*, 2008). Values deal with mental resources when it is tactically applied in fashion strategy formulation will impact the attributes of the strategies. Rindova and Martins (2018) have argued that entrepreneurs' strategic decisions are made from the influence of deeply held personal values. Since values are held beliefs, owner-managed fashion entrepreneurs' courses of action will be moved by such beliefs and consequently impact their product and service offering.

Customer-centric, honest, and quality-oriented entrepreneurs will be more likely to move apparel fashion customers and will, as a result, enhance customer experience and satisfaction which may lead to a favourable brand image. However, the public or stakeholders may respond undesirably when owner-managers are perceived to be violating their own stated personal values (Edmondson and Cha, 2002, Black *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, owner-fashion entrepreneurs' who establish a connection between their values and customers will be more likely to influence their brand perception. Based on the above assertions, we hypothesize that:

H2: Entrepreneurs' personal values significantly influence brand image formation in small apparel fashion enterprises.

Entrepreneurs' Personal Attitudes and Brand image formation

Attitude describes a behaviour a person assumes towards other people, objects, or situation (Robbins *et al.*, 2003). It can be defined as an individual's response to people, places, things, or events in life (Verplanken and Orbell, 2022). Attitudes relate to a person's viewpoint, mindset, beliefs, etc (Corbett *et al.*, 2018). A strong attitude influences one's behaviour, and the

more favourable the attitude towards the behaviour, the more must be the individual's intention to perform it (Khalil *et al.*, 2022, Fennis and Pruyn, 2007, Corbett *et al.*, 2018).

Attitude plays a key role in the small apparel fashion enterprises. Apparel fashion entrepreneurs need the right attitude to succeed especially in their interactions with the market. An improvement of the business can be materialized with the improvement of the owner's personality and attitudes (Elmassah *et al.*, 2022, ElMassah *et al.*, 2019, Rangarajan *et al.*, 2017). Attitude influences financial decisions and the success of fashion enterprises (Rasheed and Siddiqui, 2018). Attitude enables fashion entrepreneurs to focus on the enterprise's goals and visions and facilitate the ability to put time and energy into what they can control to solve away problems or obstacles. A conscious exhibition of positive attitudes which utilizes capabilities, aptitudes, and available resources more effectively, will likely improve brand image formation and enterprises' performance (Rangarajan *et al.*, 2017).

Personal attitude is everything that enhances excellence in business (Harrell, 2004). It is the passion of the firm's activity, and therefore controls the quality of the result expected to receive by the market (Rohn, 2000). Since the owner is largely a critical part of the firm's brand identity, their attitude will significantly affect the firm's brand positioning. The issue is owner managers occupy the central role in the firm where customers will normally have direct connection with. Therefore, the quality of interactions, competencies, knowledge and dedication arising from the attitude of the owner-managers and even employees, will directly or indirectly affect the kind of mental image formed by customers towards the firm (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011). In view of the above discussion, we hypothesized that:

H3: Entrepreneurs' personal attitudes significantly influence small enterprises' brand image formation.

Entrepreneurs' Brand Ambidexterity and Brand Image Formation

Entrepreneurs' brand ambidexterity, which is the ability to balance exploration and exploitation in brand management, is crucial for forming a strong brand image in apparel fashion enterprises. This balance enhances brand innovation while maintaining consistency. By exploring new market opportunities and innovating product offerings, entrepreneurs can create a dynamic brand image that resonates with consumers (Nguyen *et al.*, 2016). At the same time, exploiting existing brand equity ensures the brand remains relevant and trusted.

A strong brand image is vital in the competitive fashion industry as it significantly influences consumer perceptions and purchase intentions (Halepoto *et al.*, 2021). The link

between brand ambidexterity and brand image formation suggests that entrepreneurs who manage both innovative and traditional branding strategies effectively are more likely to build a favourable brand image. This leads to enhanced customer loyalty and market performance (Chen et al., 2022). This relationship emphasizes the importance of brand ambidexterity in enhancing brand image, which is essential for the success of apparel fashion enterprises in a competitive market. On this basis, it is hypothesized that,

H4: Entrepreneurs' brand ambidexterity positively influences the formation of a strong brand image in apparel fashion enterprises.

The Moderating Role of Brand Ambidexterity and Brand Image Formation

Enterprise ambidexterity in general refers to the continuing process of balancing a trade-off between the pursuance of enterprise's strategic alternatives simultaneously (Clauss *et al.*, 2021). It stresses that the enterprise needs to excel equally in its tasks performance relative to both exploration and exploitative opportunities (Atuahene-Gima, 2005, Brix, 2019). The key objective of enterprise ambidexterity is to secure both long and short-term competitiveness of the enterprise with the two hands of the enterprise (Clauss *et al.*, 2021, Krinke *et al.*, 2021). The concept allows the enterprise to focus on its existing competencies, while striving to obtain new fundamental competencies in addition to the implementation of enterprises' previous activities (Hill and Birkinshaw, 2006, Vahlne and Jonsson, 2017).

However, the concept of brand ambidexterity enables the enterprise to similarly pursue two distinct strategic brand goals concurrently (Beverland et al., 2015b, Nguyen et al., 2016). This includes the enterprise's ability to align the management of the current's brand activities within the environmental uncertainties with tomorrow's one (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004, Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013). As the enterprise brands keep growing, the owner managers will strategize to maintain such brands relative to the old ones. The enterprise combines the management of the existing brands while exploring new ones. Owner-managers today face a clear contradiction - on one side, is the uncertainty of the brand performance relative to the unfavourable brand impressions and the powerful competition that comes with it. On the other side, is the continuous pace of change which means owners need to stress on innovation if quality impression can be formed. Therefore, the disparity demands ambidextrous competencies – involving the ability to explore new brands while exploiting existing brands. Firms' brand ambidexterity enhance the quality of its brand image formation as ambidextrous brand ensures quality brand innovations (Nguyen *et al.*, 2016).

Although, the foundation for a direct relationship between entrepreneurs' attitude, values, and role perception and image formation have some level of studies in existing literature, available literature has over the years failed to identify the gap between brand ambidexterity and enterprise brand image formation. Therefore, an understanding of the presence or absence of the differences between how brand ambidexterity dimensions affect consumers brand image formation relationships will enhance small apparel fashion businesses' brand management strategies (Krinke *et al.*, 2021). Based on the above discussions, the study proposed the following hypotheses:

H5: Brand ambidexterity moderates the relationship between entrepreneurs' personal attitudes and brand image formation.

H6: Brand ambidexterity significantly moderates the relationship between entrepreneurs' personal values and brand image formation.

H7: Brand ambidexterity moderates the relationship between entrepreneur's role perceptions and fashion brand image formation.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the hypothesized relationship, the conceptual model in Figure 1 was created to illustrate the phenomena of relationship that influence apparel fashion brand image formation and the role of entrepreneurs' brand ambidexterity. These include three independent variables, entrepreneurs' role perception, entrepreneurs' personal values', and entrepreneurs' personal attitudes. These variables indicate that brand ambidexterity moderates the relationship between the independent variables and brand image formation. The model suggests that personal attributes of entrepreneurs, namely, role perception, personal values, and attitudes, collectively contribute to the formation of an enterprise's brand image, which by implication, influences the entrepreneur's brand's ability to balance exploration and exploitation.

The framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how the characteristics of the entrepreneurs' impact broader enterprises' outcomes, such as brand image, particularly in the context of small apparel fashion enterprises. It is argued that entrepreneurs' ambidextrous behaviour can balance the link between his firm's exploration and exploitative behaviour which can help entrepreneurs adapt to changing market conditions while maintaining a strong brand presence. This can further ensure sustainable growth, while ensuring the stability and reliability of the entrepreneurs' brand.

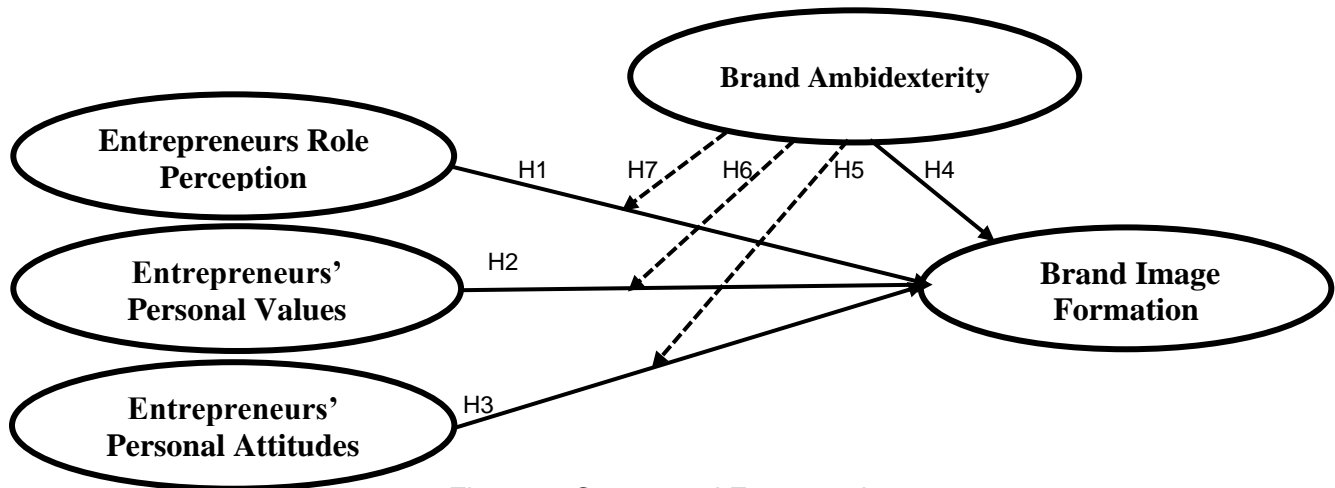


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This quantitative study examined small apparel fashion enterprises' brand image formation concerning entrepreneurs' attitudes, values, and role perception. An empirical design tested seven hypotheses, assuming that attitudes, values, role perception, and brand ambidexterity are crucial. Small enterprises, comprising 90% of Ghana's economy, contribute 70% of GDP and employ over 85% of the labour force (Addae-Korankye & Aryee, 2021). Understanding these factors can help in strategic brand decisions among apparel fashion entrepreneurs.

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional and explanatory research design. Cross-sectional research involves collecting data from multiple subjects at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the study variables (Banerjee, 2013). The explanatory design was used to analyse data patterns and test research hypotheses, particularly examining how brand ambidexterity moderates the relationship between entrepreneurs' personal values, role perceptions, and brand image formation in small apparel fashion enterprises.

Data was gathered from small apparel fashion enterprises located in shopping malls, supermarkets, open marketplaces, and in-house operations. This method ensured convenience, accessibility, and a readily available population (Alalwan et al., 2016).

Existing scales were adapted to measure entrepreneurs' attitudes, values, and role perceptions as predictors of brand image formation. Items on personal values were adapted

from Pushpakumari (2009, 2011) and Gaile *et al.* (2020). Scales for brand image formation were guided by Ayungga (2018), Kandampully *et al.* (2011), and Narteh and Braimah (2019). Role perception items were inspired by THIN and AK. Brand ambidexterity, involving both exploratory and exploitative strategies, was measured using items from Nguyen *et al.* (2016), all empirically validated.

Unit of Analysis and Sampling

This study on small apparel fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana, characterized by fluid population sizes (Clottey *et al.*, 2023; Essel, 2019; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Sarpong *et al.*, 2023), employed a convenience sampling technique due to scarce formal data and sampling frame challenges (Gobodzo, 2022; Obeng, 2007). Convenience sampling is suitable for situations with budgetary limitations, time constraints, and infinite populations (Omona, 2013). Sample size determination followed Louangrath's (2014) method for infinite populations, considering a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Consequently, the study utilized 245 valid responses out of 300 distributed questionnaires, which is sufficient for exploratory studies (J. Hair *et al.*, 2017; J. F. Hair *et al.*, 2019; J. F. Hair *et al.*, 2012).

Missing Value Analysis

Missing value analysis is essential for addressing issues from missing data (Curley, Krause, Feiock, & Hawkins, 2019). Biased results can occur if there are systematic differences between cases with and without missing values. Excessive missing data reduces available data, potentially decreasing statistical accuracy (Curley *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, statistical techniques assuming complete cases may be compromised by missing values. Therefore, handling missing data appropriately is crucial to ensure the validity of results.

In this study, we did not encounter missing value challenges. The 245 valid responses were selected based on the absence of missing values, outliers, and extreme central tendency biases, and ensuring data quality and reliability for analysis. This approach maintained the validity and generalizability of our findings and addresses potential data variability (Louangrath, 2014).

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires. Ethical approval was granted, and informed consent was obtained from apparel fashion entrepreneurs, who were briefed on the study's purposes. Entrepreneurs, primarily owners of prominent apparel fashion businesses in Ghana, were selected from five regions: Central, Western, Greater Accra, Bono,

and Ashanti, where small apparel fashion enterprises are more dominant. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. The exercise was carried out with the assistance of five trained research assistants. Questionnaires were distributed to entrepreneurs across these regions. Initial contact was made to explain the study and seek participation. Surveys were administered through face-to-face visits, with responses collected directly from the entrepreneurs. This approach ensured accessibility and accommodated diverse preferences. Clear instructions were provided, and potential barriers to participation were addressed.

Data collection took eight weeks, using structured, personally administered questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire had three parts: demographic profiles, personal values, attitudes, role perceptions, and brand ambidexterity, and brand image formation.

Tools for Analysis

Survey data was analysed using SmartPLS3, suitable for examining models with latent variables and testing moderating effects. The bootstrapping method assessed the significance of path coefficients. Additionally, SPSS.V21 was used for initial data set and demographic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The descriptive statistics extracted from SPSS V.23 indicate that out of the total of 245 respondents, 54.3% [133] were made up of male, while the female counterparts consisted of 45.7% [112]. The age distribution shows active participants of ages between 18 and 25 representing the total majority of 66.6% [163] of the total respondents. The other distribution involves the following: 26—33 years, 19.2% [47], 34-41 years, 27%, 42 and above is made up of 3.3% [8]. Moreover, most of the respondents were single consisting of 65.7% [161], whilst those in marriage bracket is made of 27.3% [67]. Those who have once experienced married life for some reasons consist of 6.9% [17] of the entire respondents.

Assessment of Measurement Model

It is advisable to verify the weaknesses of any measurement model. The examination of the reflective measures includes the assessment of factor loadings, the average variance extracted (AVE), the composite reliability, and Cronbach alpha. Ordinarily all the outer loadings must meet a minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2017). The study satisfied the criterion

and all those items which were not closer were deleted to enable the model fit into the parameters.

Also, Hair *et al* (2011) have suggested that coefficient of determination and the level of significance of the path coefficients can be measured using R. Square (R^2). Overall, the model explanative power accounted for a significant variance of 64.5% in enterprise brand image formation by four latent variables (brand ambidexterity, owner-managers' personal values, role perceptions, and attitude) as shown in figure 2.

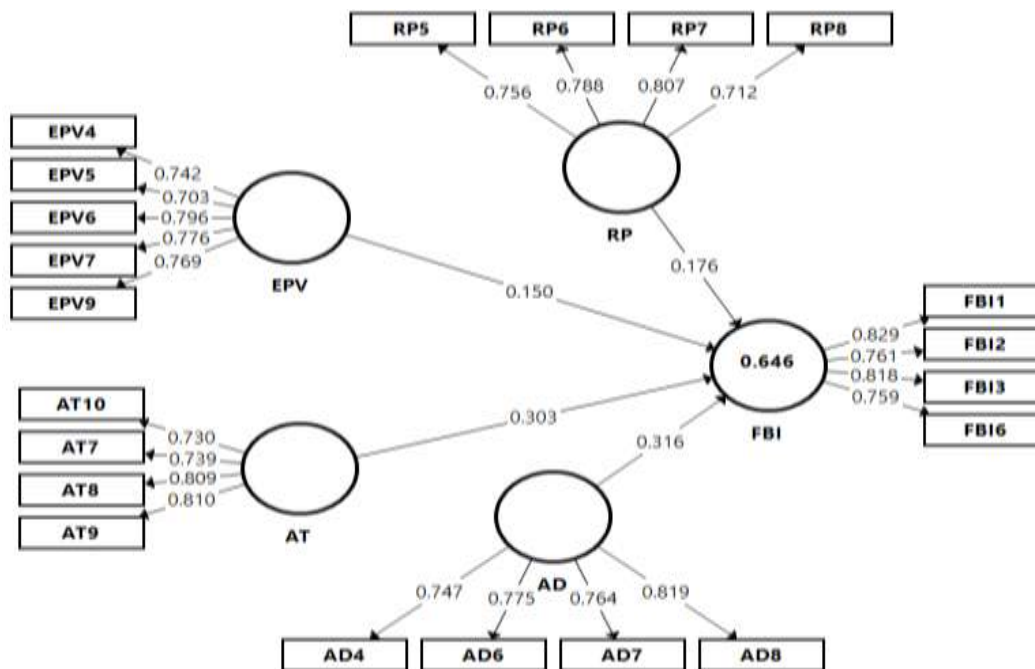


Figure 2: Measurement model

NB: EPV-Entrepreneurs' Personal Value; AT-Entrepreneurs' Personal Attitudes;
RP – Entrepreneurs' Role Perception; FBI - Brand Image Formation, AD - Brand Ambidexterity.

Again, the composite reliability (CR) was used to assess the internal consistency among the items for each construct and adopted factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) to measure convergent validity. The results indicated that all the composite reliability for the constructs were above 0.70. Therefore, the condition for convergent validity has been established (Kim *et al.*, 2013, Hair Jr *et al.*, 2017, Xu, 2013). Similarly, the average variance extracted (AVE) to determine the extent upon which the construct congregate to explain the variance of its items from the latent variables was also good as it exceeded the threshold of 0.50. Usually, the AVE must be equal or exceed the threshold of 0.50 according to (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and this study satisfied such condition as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity with Factor Loadings

Latent Variables	Indicators	Factor Loading	rho_A	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Entrepreneurship Role Perceptions	RP5	0.756				
	RP6	0.788				
	RP7	0.807	0.774	0.766	0.851	0.603
	RP8	0.712				
Entrepreneurs' Personal Values	EPV4	0.742				
	EPV5	0.703				
	EPV6	0.796				
	EPV7	0.776	0.816	0.814	0.871	0.574
	EPV9	0.769				
Entrepreneurs Personal Attitudes	AT7	0.739				
	AT8	0.809				
	AT9	0.810	0.779	0.775	0.856	0.598
	AT10	0.730				
Enterprise Brand Image Formation	FBI1	0.831				
	FBI2	0.764				
	FBI3	0.816	0.806	0.803	0.871	0.628
	FBI6	0.758				
Brand Ambidexterity	AD4	0.747				
	AD6	0.775				
	AD7	0.764	0.791	0.782	0.859	0.603
	AD8	0.819				

NB: EPV-Entrepreneurs' Personal Value; AT-Entrepreneurs' Personal Attitudes; RP – Entrepreneurs' Role Perception; FBI - Brand Image Formation, AD - Brand Ambidexterity.

Discriminant Validity

The study used Fornell and Larcker's (1981) test to determine discriminant validity by comparing the AVE square root with construct correlations. Table 2 shows the AVE square roots are higher than inter-item correlations, establishing one condition of discriminant validity (D'Arcy et al., 2009). Additionally, the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) criterion was used, with all HTMT values below 0.90, confirming discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 2 details the values.

Table 2: Fornell-Larcker and HTMT Criterion ratio

Constructs	AD	AT	EPV	FBI	RP
AD	0.777	-	-	-	-
AT	0.607	0.773	-	-	-
EPV	0.61	0.581	0.758	-	-
FBI	0.693	0.703	0.639	0.793	-
RP	0.579	0.689	0.689	0.67	0.767

Notes: Square roots of average variance extracted (AVEs) bolded on diagonal

Heterotrait Monotrait (Henseler et al, 2015)					
Constructs	AD	AT	EPV	FBI	RP
AD	-	-	-	-	-
AT	0.774	-	-	-	-
EPV	0.761	0.729	-	-	-
FBI	0.858	0.883	0.775	-	-
RP	0.745	0.895	0.87	0.837	-

NB: RP: Entrepreneurship role perceptions; EPV; Entrepreneurs' personal values;
 AT: Entrepreneurs personal attitudes; FBI: Brand image formation;
 AD: Brand ambidexterity.

Structural model and path analysis

After confirming the validity and reliability of the measurement model, we examined the direct effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable within the structural model. Figure 3 presents the path coefficients.

Brand ambidexterity significantly impacts enterprise brand image formation ($\beta=0.316$, $t=6.291$, $p=0.000$). Entrepreneurs' personal values also show a significant effect ($\beta=0.150$, $t=2.657$, $p=0.006$). Additionally, entrepreneurs' role perception ($\beta=0.176$, $t=2.570$, $p=0.014$) and personal attitude ($\beta=0.303$, $t=5.071$, $p=0.000$) positively influence enterprise brand image formation. All four variables demonstrate positive and significant effects on the brand image formation of small apparel fashion enterprises, as illustrated in Figure 3.

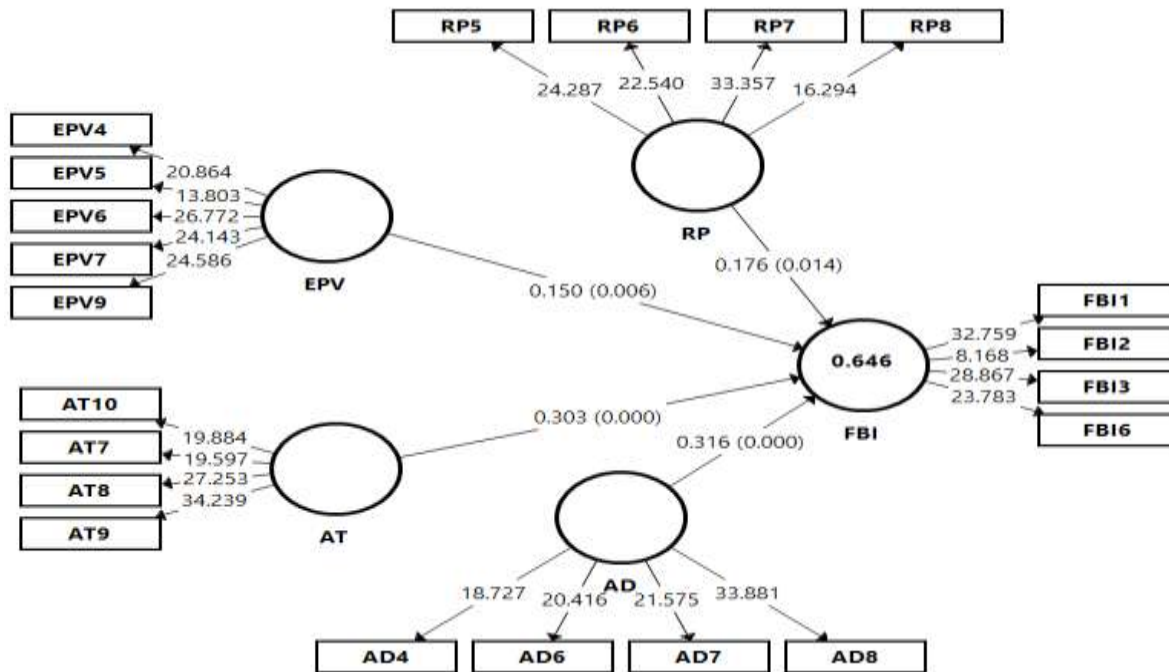


Figure 3: Structural Model

NB: RP: Entrepreneurship role perceptions; EPV; Entrepreneurs' personal values;
 AT: Entrepreneurs personal attitudes; FBI: Brand image formation; AD: Brand ambidexterity

Table 3 shows the hypotheses results. All variables directly influence business brand image formation. Brand ambidexterity hypotheses (H5, H6, H7) were tested, with only H6 confirmed.

Table 3: Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	P-Values	Outcome
H1	RP -> FBI	0.175	0.014	Supported
H2	EPV -> FBI	0.150	0.006	Supported
H3	AT -> FBI	0.303	0.000	Supported
H4	AD -> FBI	0.316	0.000	Supported
Moderating Effects				
H5	Mod1=AD* AT -> FBI	-0.074	0.285	Not Supported
H6	Mod2=AD* EPV -> FBI	0.102	0.010	Supported
H7	Mod3=AD* RP -> FBI	0.045	0.558	Not Supported

Notes: p-value is significant at 0.05.

NB: RP: Entrepreneurship role perceptions; EPV; Entrepreneurs' personal values;
 AT: Entrepreneurs personal attitudes; FBI: Brand image formation; AD: Brand ambidexterity

Analysing the Role of Brand Ambidexterity as a Moderator

Hair et al. (2014) established that the influence of an exogenous variable on an endogenous one depends on another variable's values. Testing the moderating relationship depends on whether one specific model relationship or all scores are tested (Hair et al., 2022). This study hypothesized (H5 H6, H7) that brand ambidexterity would moderate the relationship between independent variables (entrepreneurs' personal values and attitudes) and the dependent variable (brand image formation).

Results showed brand ambidexterity significantly moderates the relationship between personal values and brand image formation ($\beta=0.150$; $t=3.125$; $p=0.006$). However, it weakened the relationship between attitudes and brand image formation ($\beta=-0.074$; $t=1.071$; $p=0.285$). Before introducing the moderator, all relationships were positive and significant. The variation in the relationship between attitudes and brand image formation is due to brand ambidexterity. The moderator improved the relationship between personal values and brand image formation ($\beta=0.102$; $p=0.010$). Figure 4 depicts these relationships.

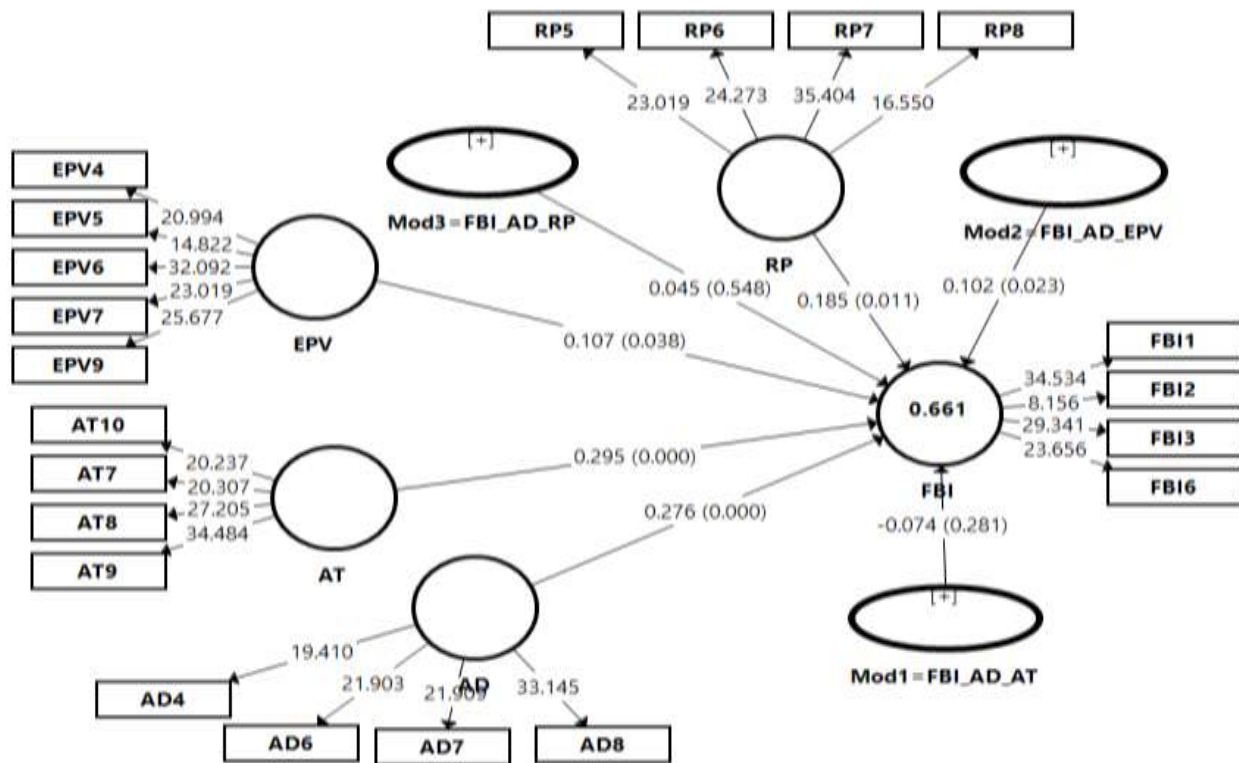


Figure 4: Moderating effect

NB: RP: Entrepreneurship role perceptions; EPV; Entrepreneurs' personal values;
 AT: Entrepreneurs personal attitudes; FBI: Brand image formation; AD: Brand ambidexterity

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the relationship between entrepreneurs' personal values, attitudes, role perceptions, and brand image formation in small apparel fashion enterprises, with brand ambidexterity as a moderator. The findings indicate a significant relationship between entrepreneurs' personal values and brand image formation (see Table 4, Hypothesis 1). Personal values significantly influence apparel fashion consumers' image formation, similar to findings in other contexts (Mindaugas & Gintare, 2019; Akranglyte et al., 2019). For instance, brand image formation in professional sports clubs is predicted by athletes' physical lifestyle attributes. Understanding entrepreneurs' personal values is advantageous as they are deeply rooted and provide the underlying cause of behaviour (Hemingway, 2005). Values play a crucial role in decision-making for apparel fashion entrepreneurs. When entrepreneurs' values align with those of their customers, a positive brand impression is formed.

Conversely, actions contrary to core values can harm brand image. A favourable brand image derived from personal values can offer a competitive advantage (Akranglyte et al., 2019). Although Gaile et al. (2020) found no specific personal value drivers for success, this study highlights the importance of personal values in shaping brand image perceptions.

The study also examined the effects of entrepreneurs' personal attitudes. Findings reveal that attitudes significantly impact customers' perceptions of the brand image. The way entrepreneurs treat customers, consider their needs, perform their work, maintain business practices, ensure product quality, follow rules, innovate, and respond to feedback all contribute to brand image formation. This aligns with Tran et al. (2015), who found attitudes significantly influence public perceptions of a firm's image. Wijaya (2013) supports this, noting that entrepreneurs' control over the brand environment and their interactions with consumers can enhance image formation.

Contrarily, Yu et al. (2018) found that information severity negatively impacts brand image formation more than attitudes. Attitude is traditionally seen as a personality component that enhances enterprise success and reinforces cognitive and emotional elements leading to conduct formation (Haji-Othman et al., 2017). Bone et al. (2003) also highlights the role of attitude in family business success, establishing a direct relationship between enterprise success and brand image. Attitudes, therefore, determines an entrepreneur's potential to succeed, their relationships, and their passion for their firm's activities. Entrepreneurs' attitudes control the quality of results, and enhance favourable customer brand impressions (Rohn, 2000; Omar et al., 2011; Gummesson, 1998).

The study also measured entrepreneurs' role perception as a predictor of brand image formation. It established a significant link between apparel fashion entrepreneurs' role

perceptions and brand image formation. Understanding and performing tasks competently excites customers and contributes to brand image and enterprise success (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Actions in given situations influence how the business is perceived. Karadakil *et al.* (2015) affirmed that handling brand situations well among employees, customers, and the public directly links to customer impression formation. This study, hence, contributes to brand image formation literature by linking entrepreneurs' personality aspects (values, attitudes, role perception) to brand image formation in small apparel fashion enterprises. Consumers seek brand uniqueness; thus, entrepreneurs' attitudes, competencies, values, and business practices must reflect a favourable brand impression.

Implications of Brand Ambidexterity on Brand Image Formation

The study revealed a strong moderating effect of brand ambidexterity between entrepreneurs' personal values and brand image formation (Hypothesis 5). Few apparel fashion brands achieve ambidexterity (Iyer *et al.*, 2020), and this highlights the need to leverage entrepreneurs' personal values for brand image formation. With rising competition from online shops and digitalisations, firms that utilize top management's personal values can better survive. The study suggests that brand ambidexterity enhances the relationship between personal values and brand image formation. Enterprises should exploit and explore opportunities amidst challenges to solidify customer impressions. Flexibility and adaptability are crucial in this direction, for long-term success, as ambidextrous brands can integrate exploratory and exploitative strategies to enhance brand image formation.

Practical Contributions

The study's findings have significant implications for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and marketers. For entrepreneurs, understanding the impact of personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions on brand image formation is crucial. Entrepreneurs should align their personal attributes with brand strategies to enhance brand image and leverage brand ambidexterity to balance innovation and consistency. This alignment can lead to a competitive advantage and long-term success in the apparel fashion industry. Policymakers can use these insights to support entrepreneurship development programs that emphasize the importance of personal attributes and brand management skills. By fostering an environment that encourages the development of ambidextrous capabilities, policymakers can help entrepreneurs navigate market dynamics and enhance brand performance.

For aspiring entrepreneurs, the study highlights the importance of cultivating personal values and attitudes that resonate with their brand. Understanding the role of brand ambidexterity can help them develop strategies that balance exploration and exploitation, ensuring sustainable growth and a strong brand image. Marketers and practitioners can apply these findings to develop more effective branding strategies. By focusing on the personal attributes of entrepreneurs and the concept of brand ambidexterity, practitioners can create campaigns that resonate with consumers and strengthen brand loyalty. Overall, the study emphasizes the critical role of personal attributes and brand ambidexterity in shaping brand image, providing valuable insights for various stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Theoretical Contribution

This study addresses the literature gap concerning the moderating roles of brand ambidexterity on entrepreneurs' personal attributes and brand image formation through the lens of Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. The RBV theory posits that a firm's internal resources, which are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable, are essential for achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. In this context, personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions are considered strategic resources that significantly impact brand image when effectively managed.

By examining how brand ambidexterity moderates these relationships, this study provides an in-depth understanding of how internal resources interact with brand ambidexterity to influence brand image formation. This allows entrepreneurs to adapt their strategies effectively and leverage personal values and attitudes to enhance brand image in competitive markets.

This research offers practical insights for entrepreneurs and emphasizes the alignment of personal values and attitudes with brand strategies. The strategic integration of entrepreneurs' personal attributes into brand positioning enhances personal branding efforts, and aligns with evolving market dynamics, which can contribute to sustained competitive advantage. This approach leverages unique internal resources, such as personal values, attitudes, and role perceptions, to create a differentiated brand image that resonates with target audiences. Effectively managing these internal attributes can help entrepreneurs adapt to market dynamic more adeptly and achieve long-term brand success.

The study enriches entrepreneurship theory by introducing into existing models and frameworks, the interaction between entrepreneurs' personal attributes and brand ambidexterity. This reiterates the need for context-specific approaches in entrepreneurial

research, particularly in the apparel fashion industry, and provides a strategic framework for future research and practical application.

Limitations and Further Research

The convenient sampling approach may limit generalizability (Hanzel, 2011), as the sample includes entrepreneurs from only five regions in Ghana. Nonetheless, the study contributes to understanding brand image formation in low-profile apparel fashion enterprises in Ghana.

Future research should examine each of the independent variable in greater depth, adopting a multi-dimensional approach to assess their influence separately. Unexplored areas include the impact of apparel fashion enterprises' green ambidextrous behaviour and communication strategies on brand image formation. Researchers in emerging markets should explore these areas, considering their ecological impact.

Also, the rise of online apparel fashion shops and digital transactions presents another research avenue. The relationship between entrepreneurs' personal attitudes, values, role perceptions, and online brand image formation remains underexplored. Future studies could investigate the effect of brand ambidexterity on online brand success and performance. Additionally, isolating exploration and exploitation constructs to measure their impact on brand image formation could provide valuable insights. Scholars should explore the influence of entrepreneurs' values, attitudes, and role perceptions on online services, websites, and overall online presence.

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