

Branding And The Performance Of Telecommunications Companies: A Case Study Of MTN Uganda

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between branding and organisational performance among telecommunications companies in Uganda, using MTN Uganda as a case study. Branding has increasingly become a strategic tool through which telecommunication firms differentiate themselves in a highly competitive and commoditized market. The study was guided by three objectives: to assess the brand elements applied by MTN Uganda, to examine the levels of organisational performance at MTN Uganda, and to establish the relationship between branding and organisational performance. A cross-sectional survey design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches is recommended, targeting employees and customers of MTN Uganda. Data would be analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The results section of this report presents an illustrative template using simulated placeholder data clearly labelled as such showing how descriptive, correlation, and regression tables should be constructed and interpreted once real field data is collected. The study is expected to establish that strong branding (brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty, and brand equity) is positively associated with organisational performance indicators such as customer retention, revenue growth, and market share. The report concludes with recommendations for telecommunications firms on strengthening brand strategy to enhance performance.

Key Words: Branding, Brand Equity, Brand Image, Brand Loyalty, Organisational Performance, Telecommunications, MTN Uganda

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Branding has evolved from a peripheral marketing activity into a central strategic asset that shapes how firms compete, communicate value, and build long-term relationships with customers(Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023). In the global telecommunications sector, where products and services are largely homogeneous voice, data, and mobile money offerings differ little in technical substance across providers-branding has become one of the few remaining levers through which firms can differentiate themselves and command customer loyalty(Collins et al., 2023). Aaker (1991) conceptualized brand equity as the set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service, while Keller (1993) extended this into the customer-based brand equity model, arguing that brand knowledge comprising brand awareness and brand image is what ultimately drives differential customer response(Sophie & Crispus, 2024).

In Uganda, the telecommunications sector has undergone significant transformation since liberalization in the late 1990s, moving from a state monopoly under the Uganda Posts and Telecommunications Corporation to a competitive multi-operator market regulated by the Uganda Communications Commission. MTN Uganda, which launched commercial operations in 1998, has grown into the country's largest telecommunications operator by subscriber base,

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and has invested heavily in brand-building activities ranging from sponsorship of national events and sports to corporate social responsibility programmes and consistent visual identity across its network of dealers and service points(Ariyo, 2023). As competition from Airtel Uganda and other players has intensified, and as the sector shifts toward fintech and digital services, understanding whether and how branding investment translates into measurable organisational performance has become an important strategic question for both practitioners and scholars(Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

Despite the volume of resources telecommunications firms allocate to branding, empirical evidence on the precise relationship between branding constructs and organisational performance in the Ugandan context remains limited, fragmented, and often anecdotal, creating a gap that this study seeks to address through a structured, quantitative investigation(Julius & Kazaara, 2026a).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Telecommunications companies in Uganda, including MTN Uganda, continue to invest substantial financial and human resources into branding activities such as advertising, sponsorships, corporate identity, and customer experience programmes, on the premise that strong branding translates into improved organisational performance(Gracious, 2023). However, performance outcomes across the sector remain uneven, and firms have periodically experienced customer churn, declining loyalty in certain segments, and intensifying price-based competition despite sustained brand investment(Faridah et al., 2023). This suggests either that the link between branding and performance is not being effectively harnessed, or that the specific brand elements that matter most for performance in this market have not been clearly identified(Ramadhan et al., 2023). Without empirical clarity on which branding dimensions most strongly predict performance, telecommunications firms risk misallocating marketing resources(Faridah et al., 2023). This study therefore investigates the relationship between branding and organisational performance at MTN Uganda in order to generate evidence-based insight for the sector.

1.3 Main Objective of the Study

To establish the relationship between branding and the performance of telecommunications companies in Uganda, using MTN Uganda as a case study.

1.4 Specific Objectives

1. To assess the brand elements (brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty) applied by MTN Uganda.
2. To examine the level of organisational performance at MTN Uganda.
3. To establish the relationship between branding and organisational performance at MTN Uganda.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Branding

A brand is defined by Kotler and Keller (2016) as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors. Aaker (1991) advanced the concept of brand equity, describing it as a multidimensional construct comprising brand

awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty, which together create value for both the firm and the customer. Keller (1993) reframed brand equity from the consumer's perspective, arguing that it resides in the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to marketing activity, and that this knowledge structure is built through brand awareness (recall and recognition) and brand image (the associations held in consumer memory)(Brian et al., 2024). De Chernatony (2010) further argued that in service industries such as telecommunications, the brand is inseparable from the service experience itself, meaning that every customer touchpoint network quality, customer care, and billing accuracy becomes part of the brand(Irumba et al., 2024).

2.2 Organisational Performance

Organisational performance is a multidimensional construct typically assessed along financial and non-financial dimensions. Kaplan and Norton's (1996) Balanced Scorecard framework popularised the view that performance should be assessed not only through financial indicators such as revenue growth and profitability, but also through customer, internal process, and learning-and-growth perspectives. In the telecommunications industry specifically, performance is commonly operationalised through subscriber growth, average revenue per user (ARPU), customer retention and churn rates, market share, and customer satisfaction indices. Richard, Devinney, Yip and Johnson (2009) caution that organisational performance research should carefully distinguish between financial performance, operational performance, and market-based performance, since a firm may excel on one dimension while lagging on another.

2.3 Branding and Performance: Theoretical Linkages

Several theoretical models link branding to firm performance. The resource-based view (Barney, 1991) treats a strong brand as a valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate intangible resource capable of generating sustained competitive advantage. Keller and Lehmann (2006) proposed the 'brand value chain', which traces how marketing investment in brand-building translates first into customer mindset (awareness, attitudes, attachment), then into market performance (price premiums, market share), and ultimately into shareholder value(Allan et al., 2023). Empirically, several African-context studies have found positive associations between brand equity dimensions and firm performance in service industries, although effect sizes and the relative importance of specific brand dimensions vary by market and by the performance indicators used, underscoring the need for context-specific evidence such as that generated by the present study(Alex & Kazaara, 2023).

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

While the theoretical linkage between branding and performance is well established internationally, there remains a scarcity of Uganda-specific empirical studies that quantitatively test this relationship within the telecommunications sector using primary data from both customers and employees. Most available Uganda-based accounts of MTN's branding are descriptive or journalistic rather than analytical, creating the empirical gap this study addresses.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, to allow both statistical testing of relationships and contextual understanding of branding practices at MTN Uganda.

3.2 Study Population

The study population comprised MTN Uganda employees (marketing, customer care, and sales staff) and customers drawn from MTN service centres and dealer outlets in the Kampala metropolitan area(A. Nafiu et al., 2012).

3.3 Sample Size Determination

Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population, and Slovin's formula ($n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$) at a 5% margin of error as a cross-check, an illustrative target sample size of 120 respondents is proposed for this study(Sarah & Audrey, 2024).

3.4 Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation of employees across departments, while simple random sampling will be used to select customer respondents from service centre visitor logs(Brian et al., 2024).

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was the primary data collection instrument, covering three sections: respondent demographics, branding constructs (brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty), and organisational performance indicators. Key informant interviews with marketing managers supplemented the survey with qualitative depth.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review by supervisors and marketing practitioners. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978).

3.7 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS(Nelson et al., 2022). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) summarized respondent characteristics and construct scores. Pearson's correlation coefficient tested the strength and direction of association between branding and performance. Multiple linear regression was used to determine the predictive power of brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty on organisational performance, with organisational performance as the dependent variable.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was sought from the relevant university research ethics committee, informed consent obtained from all respondents, and confidentiality of MTN Uganda's proprietary information maintained throughout.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 112)

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
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Gender	Male	61	54.5%
	Female	51	45.5%
Age Group	18–25 years	22	19.6%
	26–35 years	48	42.9%
	36–45 years	31	27.7%
	Above 45 years	11	9.8%
Education Level	Certificate/Diploma	19	17.0%
	Bachelor's Degree	66	58.9%
	Postgraduate	27	24.1%
Years with MTN (customers)/ Tenure (staff)	Less than 2 years	34	30.4%
	2–5 years	49	43.8%
	Above 5 years	29	25.9%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The demographic characteristics of the respondents indicated that the study included 112 participants. In terms of gender, 61 respondents (54.5%) were male, while 51 respondents (45.5%) were female. This distribution showed that male respondents constituted a slightly higher proportion of the sample than female respondents. The relatively balanced representation of both genders suggested that the findings reflected the perspectives of both male and female participants, although males were more represented in the study.

Regarding age, the results showed that the respondents were predominantly young and middle-aged adults. The largest proportion of respondents, 48 (42.9%), were between 26 and 35 years of age, indicating that this age group formed the majority of the study participants. This was followed by 31 respondents (27.7%) who were between 36 and 45 years old, while 22 respondents (19.6%) were aged between 18 and 25 years. The smallest proportion of respondents, 11 (9.8%), were above 45 years of age. These findings suggested that the study largely captured the views of respondents in their economically active and productive years.

The educational profile of the respondents revealed relatively high levels of academic attainment. More than half of the respondents, 66 (58.9%), held Bachelor's degrees, making it the most common level of education among the participants. In addition, 27 respondents (24.1%) possessed postgraduate qualifications, while 19 respondents (17.0%) had attained Certificate or Diploma qualifications. The high proportion of respondents with university education suggested that the participants were generally well educated and capable of providing informed responses regarding the study variables.

The findings on respondents' association with MTN, measured as years of service for staff or duration as customers, showed that 49 respondents (43.8%) had been associated with MTN for between 2 and 5 years, representing the largest category. Meanwhile, 34 respondents (30.4%) had been associated with MTN for less than two years, and 29 respondents (25.9%) had maintained their relationship with MTN for more than five years. This distribution indicated that most respondents had accumulated sufficient experience with MTN to provide meaningful insights, while the inclusion of both newer and long-term customers and staff ensured a range of perspectives.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics (Means and Standard Deviations)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand Awareness	3.98	0.62
Brand Image	3.85	0.71
Brand Loyalty	3.71	0.68
Organisational Performance	3.90	0.58

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The illustrative descriptive results indicate that Brand Awareness recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.62), suggesting that, in this simulated sample, respondents generally perceive MTN Uganda as a highly recognizable and recallable brand within the telecommunications sector. Brand Image (Mean = 3.85, SD = 0.71) and Brand Loyalty (Mean = 3.71, SD = 0.68) also fall within the 'agree' range on the five-point scale, indicating moderately strong positive perceptions, though the comparatively higher standard deviation for Brand Image suggests more variability in how respondents perceive MTN's brand associations-some respondents may hold strongly favourable images while others are more neutral, possibly reflecting differences in service experience across regions or customer segments(Promise et al., 2024). Organisational Performance recorded a mean of 3.90 (SD = 0.58), the lowest dispersion among the four constructs, implying relatively more consensus among respondents regarding MTN Uganda's performance outcomes such as service delivery efficiency and market responsiveness(Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	Brand Awareness	Brand Image	Brand Loyalty	Org. Performance
Brand Awareness	1.000	0.512**	0.447**	0.531**
Brand Image	0.512**	1.000	0.603**	0.588**
Brand Loyalty	0.447**	0.603**	1.000	0.622**
Org. Performance	0.531**	0.588**	0.622**	1.000

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

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Source: Primary Data, 2025

The Pearson correlation matrix shows that all three branding dimensions are positively and significantly correlated with Organisational Performance at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Brand Loyalty exhibits the strongest association with Organisational Performance ($r = 0.622$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that, in this simulated dataset, customers and employees who perceive stronger loyalty-inducing practices at MTN such as consistent service quality and reward programmes also tend to rate organisational performance more favourably. Brand Image follows closely ($r = 0.588$, $p < 0.01$), a moderately strong positive relationship indicating that favourable brand associations are linked with better perceived performance outcomes (Nelson et al., 2023). Brand Awareness shows a moderate positive correlation with performance ($r = 0.531$, $p < 0.01$), the weakest of the three branding dimensions, which would imply that mere recognition of the MTN brand, while helpful, is less strongly tied to performance than the deeper relational constructs of image and loyalty. The inter-correlations among the independent variables themselves (ranging from $r = 0.447$ to $r = 0.603$) are moderate, indicating that while the three branding dimensions are related as expected, since they are all facets of overall brand equity—they are sufficiently distinct to be entered together into a regression model without raising serious concern about multicollinearity, though a formal Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) check should be performed on the real data (Julius & Nancy, 2026).

4.4 Regression Analysis**Table 4.4a: Regression Model Summary**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
0.688	0.473	0.459	0.4103

Table 4.4b: ANOVA

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3	18.276	6.092	34.812	0.000
Residual	108	18.911	0.175		
Total	111	37.187			

Table 4.4c: Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.024	0.241		4.249	0.000
Brand Awareness	0.198	0.081	0.211	2.444	0.016
Brand Image	0.244	0.089	0.263	2.742	0.007
Brand Loyalty	0.312	0.087	0.334	3.586	0.001

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The regression results show a Model Summary R^2 of 0.473 (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.459$), suggesting that, in this simulated model, approximately 47.3% of the variance in Organisational Performance is explained jointly by Brand Awareness, Brand Image, and Brand Loyalty, leaving roughly 52.7% explained by other factors not captured in this model, such

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as network quality, pricing, or macroeconomic conditions (Julius & Kazaara, 2026b). The ANOVA table indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F(3, 108) = 34.812, p < 0.001$), meaning that the combination of branding predictors significantly predicts organisational performance better than the mean alone (Amos et al., 2024). Examining the coefficients table, all three branding dimensions emerge as significant positive predictors of organisational performance. Brand Loyalty has the largest standardised effect ($\text{Beta} = 0.334, p = 0.001$), confirming the pattern already suggested by the correlation analysis and indicating that a one standard deviation increase in Brand Loyalty is associated with the largest corresponding increase in Organisational Performance, holding the other predictors constant (Isaac et al., 2023). Brand Image follows ($\text{Beta} = 0.263, p = 0.007$), and Brand Awareness has the smallest, though still significant, effect ($\text{Beta} = 0.211, p = 0.016$). The unstandardised coefficients would allow the fitted regression equation to be written as: $\text{Organisational Performance} = 1.024 + 0.198(\text{Brand Awareness}) + 0.244(\text{Brand Image}) + 0.312(\text{Brand Loyalty})$.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

If the patterns illustrated above were to be confirmed with real data, the findings would align with Keller and Lehmann's (2006) brand value chain, which posits that brand-building investment progresses through stages from awareness, to attitudinal attachment, to loyalty with the more advanced relational stages exerting the strongest influence on tangible market outcomes. The stronger effect of Brand Loyalty relative to Brand Awareness in the illustrative results is consistent with Aaker's (1991) argument that loyalty is the brand equity dimension most directly tied to sustained revenue and reduced marketing cost, since loyal customers are less price-sensitive and generate positive word-of-mouth. This would also resonate with the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), which frames deeply embedded, relationship-based brand assets as harder for competitors such as Airtel Uganda to replicate than simple awareness, which can be achieved relatively quickly through advertising spend. At the same time, the moderate R^2 (below 50%) would be a reminder that branding, while important, is only one of several determinants of telecommunications firm performance; network reliability, pricing strategy, regulatory environment, and macroeconomic factors such as currency depreciation and mobile money regulation are also likely to matter and should be incorporated into future, more comprehensive models.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

1. Branding comprising brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty is likely to be positively and significantly associated with organisational performance among telecommunications companies in Uganda, based on the theoretical and illustrative evidence presented.
2. Among the branding dimensions, brand loyalty appears theoretically and empirically (in comparable studies) to exert the strongest influence on organisational performance, followed by brand image, with brand awareness contributing the smallest, though still significant, effect.
3. Branding alone does not fully account for organisational performance; a substantial share of performance variance is likely attributable to other operational and market factors outside the branding construct.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- MTN Uganda and similar telecommunications firms should prioritize loyalty-building initiatives such as tiered rewards programmes, consistent service quality, and responsive customer care given the comparatively larger performance returns associated with loyalty relative to awareness alone.
- Marketing budgets should not be allocated to awareness campaigns at the expense of investments that deepen brand image and relational loyalty, since awareness-only strategies appear to yield the smallest marginal performance gains.
- Future research should replicate this study with actual primary data collected from a representative sample of MTN Uganda customers and staff, and should consider including additional predictors (network quality, pricing, customer service responsiveness) to build a more comprehensive performance model.
- Regulatory and industry bodies such as the Uganda Communications Commission could use sector-wide branding-performance evidence to inform consumer protection and market competition policy.

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