



The relationships between the credibility of badminton brand spokespersons, brand image, and attitudes towards consumer purchase intention

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the different background variables relating to the spokespersons credibility on subjects. The subjects of this study were the participants of the badminton regional tournament of the National Collegiate Sports Competition in 2016 and a convenience sampling methodology was used to conduct a questionnaire survey. Of the 440 copies of survey papers, 420 copies (including 221 males, 199 females) were effective questionnaires, and the effective rate was thus 93%. The survey papers were obtained by means of descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, single factor variance analysis and regression analysis. The results were as follows: the terms “attractive”, “reliability” and “professional” relating to the credibility of the badminton brand spokesperson showed a positive influence on the sport’s brand image and brand attitude. Secondly, the brand image which included the terms “functional”, “symbolic” and “experiential” showed a positive influence on brand attitude. Thirdly, the brand attitude terms “cognitive”, “emotion” and “behaviour” showed a positive effect on purchase intentions. According to the study’s results some useful practical strategies and suggestions are proposed.

Keywords- Brand image, brand attitude, spokesperson’s credibility, badminton, Taiwan.



Introduction

According to the Ministry of Education Sports Department (MOE) of Taiwan, (2014) it was found that there is a very high population of people who are engaged in badminton, and badminton is also one of the Olympic projects. Badminton as a sport, originated in Asia, and was similar to the Shuttlecock game. In the 19th century, a game with an attack strategy using a wooden bat with a plush fleece was born, it was called Pune. In 1860, a British retired officer who returned from India introduced this game to the Britain. After the introduction to Britain, the Gloucestershire Badminton Villa set the first rules of the game, and this became the first mode of badminton as a sport. Today, badminton is loved by many people and many countries continue to organize badminton tournaments. Badminton player numbers have increased and there are also now greater skilled players. Especially in recent years, Taiwanese badminton players have had outstanding achievements in their sports performances. Their success has also led to the growing badminton movement in Taiwan, and national badminton-related events are gradually being created and there is now increasing consumer knowledge of the badminton brand.

Exercise can effectively promote health and this is now part of the world's attention focus on the issue of identity. Taiwan thus started implementing the policy of "multiplying the population" in 2002 by focusing on the development of diversified sports. It strengthened people's physical fitness, enhanced the competitiveness of sports, and nurtured sports talents to stand on the international stage (Li, 2011). It also enables the Taiwanese people to realize the necessity of increasing their participation in population and health policies in order to enhance the quality of their country and also investing a large amount of national resources. Its significance and value lie in the results of the international sports competition. Therefore, the promotion of sports and personnel training has become a trend in today's society, and this is both in the government departments or corporations which are the basis for the promotion of sports motivation.

One of Badminton brands – Yonex, have been sponsoring many national teams. YONEX is the most famous and highest market badminton sport brand. Today, YONEX has become a well-known symbol on a badminton court. Due to the very fierce competition among the sports companies, in order to create sports brand image and high visibility, and also vigorously promote the development of the badminton market, Yonex have invited well-known athletes for their product endorsements so as to meet the needs of different consumers. The spokesperson of a brand transmits messages which are an important role of the message dissemination through the medium of media communications, thus arousing consumers' attention and generating a good impression on the recommended products. If the goods are under the premise of a strong brand image, they tend to have a significantly higher impact on the purchase intention of consumers. The brand image can be advertised by friends and relatives, recommending the practical needs of the brand. Therefore, this study hopes to understand the bonus effect of using a special spokesperson in sport products, thus hopefully increasing the brand image (Kotler, 2000).

No matter the type of media, whether a commercial or advertisement, we know that product cognition of a suitable spokesperson conveys the conviction that goods are credible, and then this influences the consumers. When a spokesperson endorses a sport product, the consumer will consider it as a better fit for themselves if they align with the persona of the spokesperson. This will likely then enhance the product quality and increase the possibility of consumers' purchasing in product when the spokesperson has endorsed the related sport products as the desired fit-for-purpose sports products will be considered to be much better than any another (Till & Busler, 2000). Because the image is the result of personal perception, the integration of different sources of information to convey the brand image to the faithful is critical (Lee & Tseng, 2011). As media increases, various sports brands have more opportunities to promote their products through the media; as for athletes, they have a better chance of earning money (Ruhley, Runyun



& Lear, 2010). The study proposes that attractiveness, reliability and the professionalism of the spokesperson's credibility are vital aspects as stated by Ohanian (1991). 'Attractive' refers to whether consumers will increase their attentiveness for a product due to the use of brand ambassadors; 'reliability' refers to the honest personality of brand speakers, and the intention to persuade consumers; and 'professional' refers to the extent to which brand ambassadors have the ability to demonstrate product expertise. Fink, Cunningham, and Kensicki (2004) stated that it is important to show professionalism in terms of athletic performance, and not only in terms of mere appearance.

In summary, professional athletes can influence people all over the world under the vigorous promotion of media in various countries. As the people's consumption patterns and concepts have been constantly changing, spokespersons who endorse a sport product to the public are being paid attention more widely. The goods under the premise of a strong brand image, and the spokesperson type approach have a significantly higher impact on the purchase intention of consumers. Formerly, the credibility of the spokesman will pass the positive belief that consumers make good to their brand image, and the brand image will be better. When the brand image is higher, the brand attitude will likely also be improved. When consumers feel a badminton brand has a high image and attitude, this serves to enhance the consumers purchase intentions. Therefore, this study explores the influence of brand image, brand attitude and the credibility of the spokesperson on consumer purchase intentions. Finally, according to the study result, practical strategies and suggestions will be proposed.

Literature Review

Badminton

The origins of the game of badminton go back about 2,000 years to the game of battledore and shuttlecock which was played in ancient Greece, China, and also in India. Badminton took its name from a home called Badminton House in Gloucestershire, England, which was the ancestral home of the Duke of Beaufort, where the sport was played. Gloucestershire is now the base for the International Badminton Federation.

The IBF was designed in 1934 with nine member countries: Canada, Denmark, France, Netherlands, England, New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and the United States joined four years later. The World Cup invitational event was underway in 1981 and was organized by the International Management Group (IMG). "For the recent Thomas and Uber Cups in Hong Kong, the sale of commercial and television rights was a multimillion dollar contract. And it's not just in Asia. In Europe also, there's a growing number of companies bidding for rights. Television companies worldwide are already buying exclusive rights to the 1997 World Championships to be held in Glasgow, Scotland. A turning point in badminton's growth was the \$20 million tripartite contract in 1994 for sponsorship of the World Grand Prix Finals. Under the terms of the deal between the IBF, IMG, and STAR TV, STAR injects the monies into the promotion and development of badminton. In return, STAR gains total exclusivity for the exploitation of the commercial and television rights to the WGP Finals. "The deal was good for both main parties," said David Shaw, IBF's executive director, who was brought into the organization with a brief to grow the sport. "We needed a strong partner in television, and the broadcaster had identified badminton as a vehicle which would attract audiences across Asia to its prime sports channel." (Athnet, n.d.)



Badminton is a well-liked sport in the USA and the Atlanta Olympics started to raise the sport's profile in the U.S. In December 1995, the IBF introduced a new notion tournament in California, the Hong Ta Shan Cup, a men's invitation tournament with some of the best players around and big prize money. There are also plans to add a women's event and to increase the prize money. The Hong Ta Shan Group has gone on to sponsor the U.S. Open, increasing the prize money to \$200,000. This will make the event the most treasured World Grand Prix event in the series and gives it six-star status. Badminton's entrance as an Olympic Games sport has noticeably increased curiosity in the sport internationally.

Best equipment brand

YONEX was founded in 1946 in Japan by Minoru Yoneyama, and immediately started leading the Badminton equipment first in the field position in the world. In 1957, Yoneyama constructed badminton racquets for other brands. By 1961, the first Yoneyama-branded racquet was presented, and the company began to make aluminum badminton racquets in 1969. In order to monopolize badminton brand market and meet the needs of different users, Yonex business development a large number of different models of goods and players exclusive products. In 1992 Yonex announced the new widebody badminton racket, the "Isometric 500", which a racquet that was much less "tear drop"-shaped than preceding models. Yonex is clearly the dominant corporate player in badminton today and also provides clothing for many national badminton associations around the world (Yonex group, n.d.).

Brand Image

The American Marketing Association (AMA) define a brand as a specific product or service. It can be a combination of name, word, design, symbol or a combination of marks, the purpose is to distinguish the difference between own goods and those of competitors (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). About the brand concept, many scholars also put forward different explanations. Hung (2014) thought of a brand as not just a concept of a product, but rather it also includes internal needs. If you can express brand personality, use the symbol to convey the brand concept, or to express the brand and consumer relationships, and this is to allow consumers to easily identify and agree with the brand. Gardner and Levy (1963) think of a brand image as a set of perceptions, feelings and attitudes that consumers hold about brands. The brand image is through the long-term use of consumers or in advance to understand the intention of the brand, then the goods have the initial trust of consumers, and will improve consumers' impression of the product quality. This will result in the purchase or the intention to purchase desired behaviors.

The better the brand image, the better the perception of the overall quality (Julie, Anthony & Dena, 2006). According the point of view of consumers, Grewal and Krishnan (1998) believe that a good brand image will enhance the customer's preference for the purchase of products. When enhancing consumer awareness of the product, the consumer's brand image in the buyers heart will have a higher status, and consumers in the same quality of service will give a higher rating and then stimulate consumer further buying behavior. Brand image exists in the consumer's memory, the association of the brand will thus reflect the cognition and identity of the brand, and then the consumer brand perceptual concepts help consumers identify the differences between the product brands (Da Silva & Syed Alwi, 2007).

Brand attitude

Attitude refers to a person's way of learning held by things (Kotler,2000). A person's preference for a brand depends on consumer support for the brand behavior. When consumers lack the ability to evaluate a brand's products, they may use external hints to indirectly infer the brand's quality. The past theories have mentioned that attitude is a consumer's overall assessment of a



product or brand, but also plays an important role in consumer behavior. Attitude is composed of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors (Daft & Noe, 2001). In the past, there have been many studies showing that brand attitudes are based on the quality of a brand. When the brand's attitude is poor, it is less likely a consumer will use or buy the brand (Neal, 2000). The brand in the evaluation of the brand attributes is due to the purchase decision-makers on a brand attitude. The importance of brand attitude is that scholars use the brand attitude to predict the consumer's willingness to buy and the purchase behavior. Nkomo, Mototo and Chuchu (2017) believe that brand attitudes are the key to improving consumer perceptions of brands. The study of Sengupta and Fitzsimons (2000) shows that consumers' have a tendency to prefer or hate a particular brand according to their mindset, and the brand's product rankings in their view. The brand attitude is the message of the recipient's perception of the product brand.

Spokesperson credibility

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) defined a spokesperson as reflecting the opinions of individuals, beliefs, style, experience and any other advertising message. It transmits the important role of the message through the way of media communication, arousing consumers' attention and generating a good impression on the recommended products. The presence of the spokesperson is based on the consumer's trust in the spokesperson and hopefully the trust can be successfully transferred to the product (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000). In the sales of goods, people do not just look at the price or quality of the goods to attract the consumers to buy. Instead, through the sports spokespersons they are able to market the goods to make the products unique and affect the purchasing behavior of consumers. Spokespersons not only enhance their own value but they also enhance the corporate reputation profile (Carter & Rovell, 2003). A credible spokesman is more trusted by the consumers and the general public will also hold a positive attitude towards the message that they are expressing. The products they speak of have a highly evaluated status. Based on the above scholars' arguments, enterprises can use their own reputations to help enterprises to extend their brand and help them to form a positive evaluation of the product.

Purchase intention

Purchase intention comes after some transactions of the consumers on the overall evaluation of the product. When the price of a product is judged by the subjective consciousness of consumers this will result in a different cognitive price, and this price will affect the consumer's purchase intention (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991). If the consumer's attitude towards the brand of goods is good, their purchase intention will increase (Roy & Cornwell, 2003). Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) said that the purchase intention is used to measure the possibility of consumers buying any form of goods or services, it is thus reflecting a stronger purchase intention, and this will be seen as a positive consumer buying behavior.

According to the theory of behaviour, purchase Intention and the actual behavior has been proved to have a highly relevant point of view (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Purchase intention is the possibility of buying products after the consumers overall evaluation of the product. Davidow (2003) asserted that purchase intention refers to the possibility that consumers will continue to use a product as often as before. Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) stated that consumers are willing to buy a product or service possibilities, the higher purchase intention means the greater the chance of purchase. The study of Lardinoit and Derbaix (2001) indicated that purchase intention is the degree of willingness of consumers to buy or spend on branded goods. When consumers express their wishes, they usually produce two kinds of purchase levels, the first time is when they are willing to buy, and then make the purchase decision; the second is when they were willing to buy but did not make the purchase decision.



Relationship between Brand Image and Spokesman 's Credibility to Purchase Intention

Wen (2007) pointed out the spokesman for consumer purchasing will have a significant impact, but if the goods are under the premise of a strong brand image, the spokesperson type has a significantly higher impact on the purchase intention of consumers. In addition, the brand image can also be advertised by friends and relatives, recommending the practical needs of the brand so that the credibility of the spokesman can achieve good results.

The Relationship between Spokesperson 's Credibility and Brand Image

The credibility of the spokesperson does have a positive and significant impact on the brand image. Because the image is the result of personal perception, as in the case of Lenovo and the integration of different sources of information to convey the brand image of believability (Lee & Tseng, 2011). Therefore, the credibility of the spokesman passes the positive belief level that consumers make good to their brand image, and the brand image will then equally be better.

The relationship between brand image and brand attitude.

Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991) think that Brand image represents the entire brand of all information, in order to reduce the risk of their purchase, and will rely on the brand image as a standard for the purchase of the brand, believing that the brand image is better, and consumer attitudes towards the brand are then also more positive. The study by Lu (2010), shows that there is a significant and positive correlation between the brand image and brand attitude. The brand image is most relevant to the functional image of the brand image. When the brand image is higher, the brand attitude will be improved. When consumers 'feel' the badminton brand and have a high image and attitude towards it this will enhance the consumers purchase intentions.

Relationship between credibility and purchase intention of the spokesman

Pornpitakpan (2003) stated that spokespersons' marketing is the most able means to attract consumers who are interested in a product and their credibility can enable consumers to convey the message or source of information as being trusted. The branding of goods thus affects the purchase behavior. The credibility of the spokesman is important for the willingness of consumers to buy. The spokesperson's credibility is the extent to which a spokesperson can convince consumers to buy a product. An enterprise can use the credibility of spokesmen to communicate with consumers. Many empirical studies point out that the credibility of the spokesperson is one of the key factors around the brand image or purchase intention. When consumers buy goods, the credibility of the spokesman thus has a significant influence on the consumer's willingness to purchase.

Relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention

The attitude of consumers to the brand will affect the consumer's purchase intention. Sengupta and Fitzsimons (2000) reason that brand attitude is the motivation for a consumer to enhance the brand when making a purchase. The brand attitude is also better, and consumers purchase intentions will increase. When enterprises seek sports spokespersons for their goods endorsement, they need to have a deep and comprehensive understanding of consumers demands, and the spokesperson selected for the professional sports, must ooze reliability, and have attractive features to increase the sales of goods. They also need high credibility so as to persuade consumers also increase consumers endorsements towards purchase intentions.



Research Methodology

Research subject

The subjects of this study were the badminton players in the 2016 National Sports League Badminton Championships. Questionnaires were sent to them from March 15 to March 17, 2016 in Taichung National Chung Hsing University Badminton Hall. Using a convenience sampling method, a total of 450 questionnaires were sent, 420 valid samples were returned, giving us an effective response rate of 93%.

Research tools

In this study, a seven-point Likert scale was used as a measurement method. All scales in this study were analyzed via validity analysis (Factor loading $>.30$) and reliability analysis (Cronbach's $\alpha >.60$), Brand image scale reference to Lanza (2001) and using Lin's (2008) measurement way. Factor loading was between .639~.812, and the explanation of variance was 53.51% and the Cronbach's α is .824. Brand attitude scale reference to Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, and Best (2013) measurement questions, and with reference to Wang (2012) and Chan's (2011) measurement method. Factor loading was between .554~.837, and the explanation of variance was 54.05% and the Cronbach's α was .890. Spokesperson credibility scale reference was according to Ohanian's (1991) measurement method. Factor loading was between .559~.828, explanation of variance was 56% and the Cronbach's α is .899. Purchase intention scale was referenced to Chung (2008), Lu and Cheng (2008) and Cheng, Liu and Chen (2011) methods. Factor loading was between .641~.859, and the explanation of variance was 64% and the Cronbach's α is .809. All of the scales reached a standard, indicating that the scale of this study has good reliability and validity.

Results and Discussion

Subject Data Analysis

In this study, the majority of participants were males (52.6%), the main age group being between 18-22 (65.7%) years old, spending on purchased badminton supplies in last year mostly 4801-15000 NTD (31%), on average, one badminton racquet was purchased (55.2%) per year, a pair of badminton shoes was purchased (62.9%) per year, and the majority were YONEX brands (79.8%), which includes badminton shoes (35.7%), badminton racquets (24.3%) and related outfits (19.8%). The majority of participants (86.9%) did not receive any sponsorship from well-known sports brands during their training or while in competitions.

Status analysis of respondents in brand image, brand attitude, spokesperson credibility and purchase intention

In brand image, the overall average of scale was 5.74, the highest score was "symbolic" (M=5.89) followed by "functional" (M=5.91) and finally "empirical" (M=5.30). In Spokesperson credibility, the overall scale was 5.59, the highest scores were "professional" (M=5.63), followed by "reliability" (M = 5.56) and finally "attractive" (M = 5.55). The overall average of purchase intention scale was 5.65 with the highest "willingness to buy" score (M = 5.71).

Multiple simultaneous regression analysis in brand image, brand attitude, spokesperson credibility and purchase intention

Regression analysis of Spokesperson credibility on brand image, the result reached significant (F=119.299, $p <.05$), R² was .459; indicate that Spokesperson credibility could explain the brand image of the amount of variation of 45.9%. The VIF values of the factors "attractive", "reliability"



and "professional" were 2.23, 1.96 and 1.84; indicate that there is no collinearity among the three factors. The standardized regression coefficient of "professional" was the largest .412 ($t=8.44^*$), followed by "attractive" was .189 ($t=3.53^*$), and "reliability" was .172 ($t=3.41^*$), indicate that spokesperson credibility had significant influence on brand image. The standardized regression equation is

Brand image=.412* professional + .189* Attractive + .172* reliability.

Regression analysis of Spokesperson credibility on brand attitude, the result reached significant ($F=119.299$, $p<.05$), R^2 was .546; indicate that Spokesperson credibility could explain the brand attitude of the amount of variation of 54.6%. The VIF values of the factor "attractive", "reliability" and "professional" were 2.23, 1.96 and 1.84; indicate that there is no collinearity among the three factors. The standardized regression coefficient of "professional" was the largest .414 ($t=9.23^*$), followed by "attractive" was .189 ($t=5.25^*$) and "reliability" was .172 ($t=3.74^*$), indicate that spokesperson credibility had significant influence on brand attitude. The standardized regression equation is

Brand attitude =.414* professional + .258* Attractive + .173* reliability.

Regression analysis of brand image on purchase intention, the result reached significant ($F=237.218$, $p <.05$), R^2 was .298; indicate that Spokesperson credibility could explain the brand attitude of the amount of variation of 29.8%. The VIF values of the factors "functional", "symbolic" and "empirical" were 1.76, 1.63 and 1.20; indicate that there is no collinearity among the three factors. The standardized regression coefficient of "functional" was the largest .369 ($t=6.80^*$), followed by "empirical" was .261 ($t=5.80^*$), indicate that purchase intention had significant influence on brand image. The standardized regression equation is

Purchase Intention=.369* functional + .261* empirical.

Regression analysis of the brand attitude on purchase intention, the result reached significant ($F=78.134$, $p <.05$), R^2 was .356; indicate that Spokesperson credibility could explain the brand attitude of the amount of variation of 35.6%. The VIF values of factors "cognition", "emotion" and "behavior" were 1.71, 2.42, 2.25; indicate that there is no collinearity among the three factors. The standardized regression coefficient of "behavior" was the largest .312($t= 5.89^*$) followed by "cognitive" was .176 ($t=3.44^*$) and "emotional" was .158 ($t = 2.59^*$), indicate that purchase intention had significant influence on brand attitude. The standardized regression equation is

Purchase intention=.312* behavior + .176* cognitive + .158* emotional.

Conclusion

In this highly competitive sports market, students are still one of the key consumer groups; but when facing consumers with high demands one should consider the spokesperson's own image and the professional and brand's usability. The causal relationship between the credibility of badminton brand spokespersons and consumers' purchase intention is when a sports brand spokesperson has made a positive impression on their brand image. They will then increase their corporate image and brand image to enhance brand awareness and enhance their awareness of the brand consumer's willingness to buy a product. Shamma and Hassan (2011) point out that brand image is a trigger to obtain greater attraction and to thus attract consumer purchase intentions. When consumers have a good impression of the badminton brand image, the psychological external needs and the actual use of the experience will be fulfilling. Through the different perceptions of the badminton brand, consumers will adopt an attitude of positive self-



behavior toward the brand at the time of purchase, thus enhancing the overall motivation, but after the attribute is learned, and ultimately this increases consumers' willingness to buy and further promote badminton via the word-of-mouth effect.

Based on the research results, this study proposed the following suggestions: 1. Relevant units for badminton contestants in the future purchase behavior, could consider on how to strengthen the spokesperson's impression of the consumer and explore a future potential rookie. 2. According to Wu and Wang (2014), brand image management is a key point in a marketing strategy, therefore, enterprises should attach importance to all types of competitions to convey the participants a variety of impressions, because of the good feelings generated, and this will promote the participation of athletes in the future and boost their willingness to share experiences. This will help enhance the confidence of a spokesperson and the promotion of badminton in general.

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