

Research Article

A Study of the Brand Image and Purchase Intention on Fitness Clubs - Fitness Coach's Personal Brand as the Mediator

Chih-Wei Lin¹, De-Yen Liu², Su-Shiang Lee³, Yun-Wen Fang⁴, Yu-Sheng Lin^{5*}

¹Associated Professor, Chaoyang University of Technology, College of Management, Department of Leisure Services Management.

² Lecturer, St. Mary's Junior College of Medicine, Nursing and Management, Department of Hospitality Management.

³Professor, Chaoyang University of Technology, College of Management, Department of Leisure Services Management.

⁴Student, Chaoyang University of Technology, College of Management, Department of Leisure Services Management.

⁵Lecturer, Chaoyang University of Technology, General Education Center, lin3117@cyut.edu.tw
(Corresponding Author)

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the relevance between the fitness club brand image and the willingness of members to purchase, and verify that whether the fitness coach's personal brand has an intermediary effect between the two. The members of the fitness clubs were selected as the research objects, a total of 363 questionnaires were distributed on the Internet by purposive sampling. The data were analyzed through the descriptive statistics, the confirmatory factor analysis and the structural equation model. The results of this study found that there is a significant positive impact between the fitness club brand image, the fitness coach's personal brand and the willingness of member to purchase; In addition, the fitness coach's personal brand plays a full intermediary role in the fitness club brand image and the willingness of member's to purchase. Conclusion: The main factor for the fitness club members to purchase courses in the future is impact by the fitness coach. Besides that, the good brand image can help to shape the coach's distinctive and professional knowledge to enhance the willingness of members continue to purchase courses.

Keywords: health club, brand Image, fitness coach, purchase intention.

1. Introduction

In recent years, public awareness of leisure and health gradually improved, more and more attention has been paid to sports, leisure and quality of life, and the proportion of regular sports population has increased. According to a survey conducted by the Taiwan Trends Institute in 2018, the total expenditure on sports consumption in Taiwan was 126.22 billion NTD. The expenditure on "participatory sports" was about 28.76 billion NTD, the "sports course fee" and "admission fee, membership fee, venue" was about 19.05 billion NTD, accounting for about 66% of sports consumption expenditures, and the expenditure of the stadiums for sports and fitness centers or fitness clubs are climbing year by year. It can be seen that the rise and enthusiasm of the fitness movement has attract the public willing to invest money in learning sports courses. Sports venue operators (gym, clubs, sports venues) should create the advantages of their own brands, enhance consumers' sense of identity with the brand, and then continue to invest and participate, which is an issue that the industry needs to pay attention to.

Brand is a kind of identification mark, a spiritual symbol, a value concept, and is the core embodiment of excellent quality. Brand is the commitment of sellers to provide consistency and specific product characteristics, benefits and services to consumers (Kotler, 1999). Richardson, Dick, and Jain (1994) believed that the brand image is generally regarded as an important basis for consumers to evaluate the product. The higher the evaluation of the product, the better the recognition of the product's cognitive quality, which in turn affects the behavioral intention of subsequent purchase. Brand image is a consumer's association, cognition and belief in the brand through memories (Kotler et al., 2016). A good brand image can create more value for companies in long-term and it is a very important part of marketing (Wang et al., 2019). Therefore, the brand image is an important link in the marketing market. The feelings and evaluations obtained by the members of the fitness club through the inner part of the consumption process are the reference basis for the consumers' desire to purchase the brand products or the actual purchase behavior.

Everyone represents their own brand, by building a personal brand is the survival rule of work. In addition to professional skills and have a distinctive style of work, in order to form others irreplaceable value. Arruda (2003) think that, to turn an individual into a brand is not only an impression, but more importantly, it is necessary to understand the characteristics, advantages, skills, values and enthusiasm of the individual, and let these characteristics differentiate the individual from others. Philbrick and Cleveland (2015) pointed out that the personal brand shaping is based on the process of upgrading and transforming its own professional ability, and it can also be regarded as the way to success. According to the "2018 Fitness Coach Career Development Research Report", more than 50% of the members who join the fitness club are because of the coaches. The members hope that the coaches' professional knowledge, technical guidance and

companionship can effectively and quickly helping improve themselves (General Administration of Sport of China, 2018). The fitness coach not only represents his own personal brand and also playing a mentor for fitness guidance training for members, the communication and trust between the two parties is very important (Lin et.al., 2019). According to the viewpoints above, the establishment of personal brands needs to have distinctive characteristics to highlight self-worth. With the recognition and affirmation of consumers, the higher the purchasing tendency, the more comfortable and reliable the brand image is. Therefore, how to create a personal value and make gym members willing to continue to purchase courses is an issue that we should explore in depth.

The “willingness to purchase” can be considered as the possibility of the consumer purchases in certain product, it is depending on whether the perception of the benefits value can meet the individual needs, and then rise up the follow-up purchase intention (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000; Kwon & Schumann, 2001). When the consumers are highly recognized impression of the product or brand, the relative purchase intention will also be positively improved, and the follow-up behavior is intended to be subject to individual subjective perception (Tsai & Chen, 2018). Therefore, when the fitness club members believe that the overall equipment and environment of the club and the professional competence of the coaches are in line with individual needs, the chances of re-consuming or purchasing coaching courses will increase.

Based on the above, in terms of business management, the brand image represents the sum of the competitiveness and influence of a company. For consumers, the brand image is to evaluate a certain thing or product, and it will affect the reference basis of the consumers' purchasing behavior. In recent years, there are some research has also confirmed the relationship between the brand and purchase intention (Sallam, & Algammash, 2016), the image of the relevant brand spokesperson will also influence the willingness of consumers' to purchase (Lan & Chu, 2018; Ahmad, Idris, Mason & Chow, 2019; Lin et al., 2019). In the past research, individuals were less to be regarded as a tangible brand. In the club, there are a team of fitness coaches. Therefore, whether the fitness coach's personal brand plays an intermediary role between the brand image and the willingness of consumer to purchase is the reason why this study tries to exploring.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Subjects

The participants in this study are the members of the Taichung City Fitness Club. Snowball sampling is adopted from online with surveying time from May 10, 2019 to June 10, 2019. Among a total of 363 questionnaires issued, 348 questionnaires are valid, which result in 96% effective recovery rate.

2.2 Research Tool

In addition to the basic personal data, Likert Five-Point Scale was use in this questionnaire developed by this study. The scale of “brand image” mainly refers to the measurement of the concept proposed by Park, Jaworski & MacInnis (1986) and Keller (1993), three factors were extracted, including “functionality”,

“symbolic” and “experimental”. The scale of “Personal Branding” are refers to the measurement of the concept proposed by McNally & Speak (2002), Huang and Wang (2014), and Lin et.al. (2019), six factors were extracted, including “Self-Professional”, “Curse Guidance Ability”, “The Principle of doing things”, “The attitude towards the students”, “Personal Traits” and “Self-Promotion”. The “Purchase Intention” are refer to the measurement of the concept proposed by Heskett et al. (1994).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Subject Data Analysis

The study subject features are as follows: male (52.0%); 20-29 years old (62.6%); average monthly income below 24,000 NTD (27.3%); participation in sports and fitness for more than one year less than two years (31.9%); coaching for less than half a year (67.2%).

3.2 Analysis of Reliability and Validity

According to the CFA, the overall scale of the fitness club member was in convergence validity, all facet factor load is above .50. The brand image factor load is between .54 ~ .86, the personal branding factor load is between .69 ~ .91, and the purchase intention factor load is between .80 ~ .92. In addition, the reliability measurement of the overall scale, the project reliability is between .297 ~ .850; the composite reliability is .786 ~ .929; the average variation extracted (AVE) of each facet is between .479 ~ .813. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), the composition reliability (CR) must be above 0.7 and according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the standard value of AVE must be greater than 0.5. After the analysis, the values obtained are above the standard, it can be judged that the overall scale of the member of fitness club in this study has good reliability and validity. In terms of the overall model, RMSEA=.03, GFI=.95, NFI=.82, IFI=.98, TLI/NNFI=.98, CFI=.98, NFI=.95, CN=264, $\chi^2/df=1.31$. The overall behavioral pattern of this study is generally well-adapted, indicating that this model can be accepted, so the relationship and influence between the various facets can be further discussed.

3.3 Discriminant Validity

This study mainly uses the confidence interval method to test the discriminant validity of the overall behavior pattern. Firstly, the correlation analysis was carried out with Pearson's Correlation. The results showed that there were significant correlations among the variables with the fitness club. The coefficient values ranged from .446 ~ .739, indicating that there was a positive correlation between the variables. According to Torkzadeh, Koufteros, and Pflughoeft (2003), when the confidence interval test is used, the interval does not include 1, indicating that there is no correlation between the facets and the discriminant validity. In this study, the Bootstrap was used for repeated estimation (2000 times), the confidence level was below 95%, and it was measured by the analytical error correction method and the percentile method. The

upper bound of the confidence interval in this study was between .57 ~ .83; the lower bound is between .32 ~ .64, which shows that there is no complete correlation between the behavioral model facets, so each variable has different validity.

3.4 Behavior Pattern of Fitness Club Member

In the normality test of this study found that, the sample data were consistent in analysis of variance, but the c.r. of Multivariate kurtosis was 53.15, which did not meet the multivariate normal distribution. According to the thumb rule of Kline (2005), the sample data meets the multivariate test with a critical ratio of less than 10 (c.r.<10), which may cause an underestimation of the standard error (S.E) and an expansion of the chi-square value (χ^2). Therefore, Kline's Bootstep method can solve the problem of non-multiple normal distribution of sample data. The resampling method is mainly to infer that the repeated sampling is continuously performed in the same set of samples, and does not require any theoretical assumptions. Therefore, this study uses the Bootstrap of Amos 21 to perform the adaptation test of the model to correct the chi-square value which may be excessively expanded under non-multiple normal conditions. Boizestrapm proposed by Bollen and Stine (1992) was used in this study.

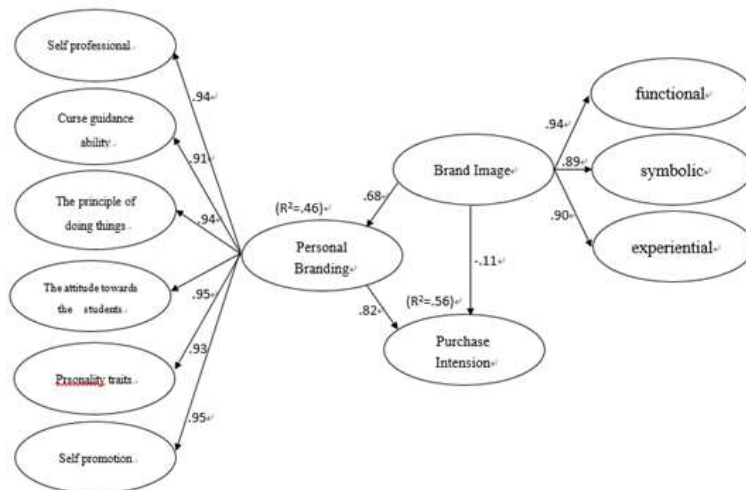


Figure 1 Behavior Pattern of Fitness Club Member

Through the figure 1, the fitness club brand image has a positive impact on the fitness coach's personal branding, path coefficient was .68 and the explanatory power was 46%. It indicating that members agree with the space planning from the fitness club, believe it can easily meet the individual needs, and think that the equipment is diversified and easy to use. The member believed that participate in fitness club to engage in physical activities can enhance the taste of life. Social responsibility can help to increase public awareness of the company, it will help to build up a company's good reputation and image (Almeida & Coelho, 2019). The brand image as same as a signboard of the company, and the coach is the brand spokesperson and represents as the company's image. Their service attitude and professional course guidance ability can be regarded as a guarantee of product quality. If there is no good perception and reputation, then the recognition of the brand will relatively low, and the probability of customers willing to consume will also be reduced.

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The fitness coach's personal brand has a positive impact on the purchase intention of the member (.82), and its explanatory power was 56%. It means that the members are quite satisfied with the content and service attitude of the coach's, and agree the coach will help in use and operate the equipment in a simple and clear way. The enthusiasm and friendly sunshine positive image of the coach can also bring more positive energy to the members. The energy, which in turn affects in the willingness of members to continue to purchase courses. In the study of Lin et al. (2019) believe that, the image of the brand spokesperson and the practicality of the product are highly valued by consumers, the individual image and word of mouth will also affect the consumer's attachment to the brand, and it is close relationship between the willingness to purchase (Sciarrino & Roberts, 2018). According to the above results, the fitness coach's professional knowledge, guidance ability and conversation in all aspects will recognized by the members, which helps to maintain the willingness of members to continue to purchase courses.

The sports fitness club brand image has no significant influence on the purchase intention (-.11). It means that, if the brand image needs to influence the purchase intention, the fitness club need the fitness coach personal branding as the effect of mediation. The personal charm, professionalism and service attitude of the fitness coach will be the main key factor for influencing the members to purchase the course. Chien & Hung (2018) pointed out that only actual service quality can establishing a good relationship with consumers or develop more customers. Brand spokesperson professionalism, reliability and good image can enhance the recognition of products, build consumer confidence in products, and effectively increase the willingness to purchase products (Lan & Chu, 2018), that is, the fitness club coach is the person who acts as a brand spokesperson, exerting personal fitness professionalism, style characteristics, and fascinating charm to enhance the brand image of the company, enhance consumers' willingness to purchase, and create positive marketing effects. Freitas & Lacerda (2019) agree that the marketing strategy and brand image of the fitness club is an important part, but the coach's personal professional ability and service attitude are more important factors. Because the coach's personal service attitude and professional ability is the incentive of the members to purchase the fitness course. In addition, the coaches play a very important role for helping in sports-related industry management effectiveness and effectiveness. (Moura & Cunha, 2019). According to the above results, the coach can be look as a bridge between the fitness club with the members. The professional knowledge and the professional communication are the most important part the member pay attention to. The good feelings and evaluations obtained by the heart are the reference basis for influencing the members' willingness to continue purchasing the course.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Brand Image can effectively influence the coach personal branding

This study found that the fitness club brand image has a significant positive impact on the fitness coach's

personal brand. The club members think that the space planning of the fitness club is quite suitable for individual needs, the training equipment provided is quite diversified, and the staff or coach can guide and solve the problems encountered by the members, and give the member a good sense of recognition, thus leaving a beautiful impression.

4.2 Personal Branding Can Effectively Influence the Willingness of Member to Purchase

This study found that the fitness coach's personal branding has a significant positive impact on the willingness of members to purchase. It shows that the fitness coach's personal professionalism, curriculum guidance ability, principle of doing things, personality traits and self-improvement ability are highly recognized by the members, which helps to enhance the members' willingness to continue to participate in fitness activities and purchase courses.

4.3 Mediation Effect of Personal Brand of Fitness Coach

This study found that the fitness coach's personal branding will have a full intermediary effect between the fitness club brand image and the willingness of members to purchase. It means when the members of the fitness club choose to purchase the fitness instructor course, not only will base on the basic sense of brand identity and environmental design, the personal charm, professionalism or identity of the fitness coach are the factors that affect the member's continuous purchase.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Encourage Coaches to Participate in Empowerment Studies

According to the factors of personal brand of fitness coach, the influence coefficient of self-improvement and attitude towards the trainee is the highest, indicating that the member pays the most attention to whether the coach continues to improve. Therefore, the fitness club should keep participates in fitness-related study to enhance the professional knowledge and encourage the coach to continue to improve the fitness exercise. In addition to encourage the coach to continue to take the relevant licenses can effectively solve the problems faced by members at the teaching site, thereby improving the effectiveness of personal brands and helping to establish a professional image.

5.2 Formulate Relevant Incentives

This study found that the fitness coach's personal brand has a complete intermediary effect between the club brand image and the willingness of member to purchase course. It can be seen that the coach is an important asset of the club. Therefore, the fitness club can provide advice or formulate related welfare, incentives and coach training system by communicating with internal meetings, creating a good working environment and increasing the loyalty and identity of the coach to the club. Thereby reducing the turnover rate and creating a win-win benefit.

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