

SPORTS SHOES PURCHASE INTENTION AMONG MALAYSIAN VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS VS. NON- VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to advance the understanding of volleyball players' purchase intention toward sport shoes by investigating the relationship between the independent variables (endorsement, advertising, pricing and electronic word-of-mouth) and purchase intention. Descriptive research and causal research will be used as the research design, thus questionnaire and experimentation will be used to obtain data. Primary data in this study is attained by distributing the questionnaire to the Malaysian volleyball players throughout several volleyball tournament venues in Malaysia. The experiment will be conducted by comparing two groups of respondents, including volleyball players and non-volleyball players. This study is limited to several independent variables such as endorsement, advertising, pricing and electronic word-of-mouth. This study is significant for marketers for solving the challenges faced in the sport industry. It also helps to identify consumers' purchase preferences for sport shoes. The marketer would understand more about their targeted customers' intentions to purchase, thus the sport industry related with sport marketing in Malaysia might gain more profit.

Keywords: Purchase Intention, Endorsement, Advertising, Pricing, E-WOM, Electronic Word-of-Mouth

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1 Introduction

As a national athlete involved in volleyball sport, who has participated in many international volleyball tournaments including Sea Games 2011 in Palembang, Indonesia, the researcher believes that good quality volleyball shoes would help to increase not only the quality of games but athletes' performance during games. Moreover, it may also help to prevent injuries from occurring. Indirectly, sport shoes would also increase the level of confidence of an athlete's performance. With these experiences, the researcher, full of curiosity, has developed an idea to conduct this research to study the purchase intention toward sport shoes among volleyball players.

Referring to Mr. Soh Kah Lim, one of the national volleyball players in Malaysia, the Mizuno is the leading volleyball sport shoes brand in Malaysia. The researcher found that the volleyball players are encouraged to wear Mizuno volleyball shoes on advice from Mr. Franco Liu, the president of Johor Volleyball Association. Thus, the researcher, with the statements from the interview, is encouraged to study the volleyball players' purchase intention toward sport shoes.

Although a lot of research has proven that there are some variables affecting the consumer purchase intention, it is difficult to obtain the purchase intention toward sport shoes for a volleyball player. Many studies have looked closely at the importance of the kind of shoes for athletes and active individuals, but the independent variables that influence purchase intention for the athlete are essential elements for companies to consider.

Many businesses believe that a promotional tool delivered by a celebrity provides a higher degree of appeal, attention, recall and possibly purchase compared to those without celebrities [1]. A celebrity endorser could lead to higher believability, a more favorable evaluation of the product advantage and a significantly higher intention to purchase [2].

According to [3], advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor. The overall advertising objective is to help build a customer relationship by communicating customer value. It is also a specific communication task to be accomplished with a specific target audience in a specific time. The advertising narrows audiences' views of reality, affecting values, taste and culture [4]. Even though there has been some research done about customer purchase intention influenced by advertising, this may or may not apply in the researcher's study.

The price of sport shoes is one of the independent variables in this study. Referring to [3], price is the amount charged for a product or service. Although there are several pricing strategies being applied by every company, the companies usually change their pricing strategies as the product passes through its life cycle. Researchers in [5] demonstrated that price is the most significant factor which directly impacts the purchase decision-making process. Due to the great impact of price, the researcher will investigate the influence of price on Malaysian volleyball players' purchase intention when they are choosing their sport shoes.

Many studies suggest that the source of the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) message plays an important role in consumer decision making. The e-WOM is a useful and influential source for the consumers when they need information about the sport product. The consumers were able to obtain product-related reviews and information [6]. Thus, it is important to examine how e-WOM messages influence the consumers' intentions to purchase, as the popularity of e-WOM messages are increasing and are found to be a useful source for consumers' pre-purchasing activities.

However, there are a lot of variables that may influence the athletes' purchase intentions, but only endorsement, advertising, pricing and e-WOM will be further investigated in this study.

In fact, volleyball players should have more intention to purchase than non-volleyball players, but it has not been proven by any previous research. Among various consumer groups, due to their buying power and consumption behaviour, there must be differences between different groups of consumers.

1.1 Research Objectives

Outlined below are the research objectives of this research. This study has three main objectives:

1. To examine the relationships between the endorsement, advertising, price and electronic word of mouth and the volleyball players' intentions to purchase sport shoes.
2. To identify the most significant factor that influences the volleyball players' purchase intentions toward sport shoes.
3. To determine the difference between volleyball players' and non-volleyball players' purchase intentions toward sport shoes.

1.2 Research Hypotheses and Framework

The research hypothesis is the specific focus in this study. Based on previous studies, the hypotheses and research framework have been formulated. Fig.1 illustrates the hypothesized relationship in the research framework.

- H1: There is a relationship between endorsement and purchase intention toward sport shoes among volleyball players.
- H2: There is a relationship between advertising and purchase intention toward sport shoes among volleyball players.
- H3: There is a relationship between price and purchase intention toward sport shoes among volleyball players.
- H4: There is a relationship between electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention toward sport shoes among volleyball players.
- H5: There is a difference between volleyball players and non-volleyball players in purchase intention toward sport shoes, when the independent variables are concerned.

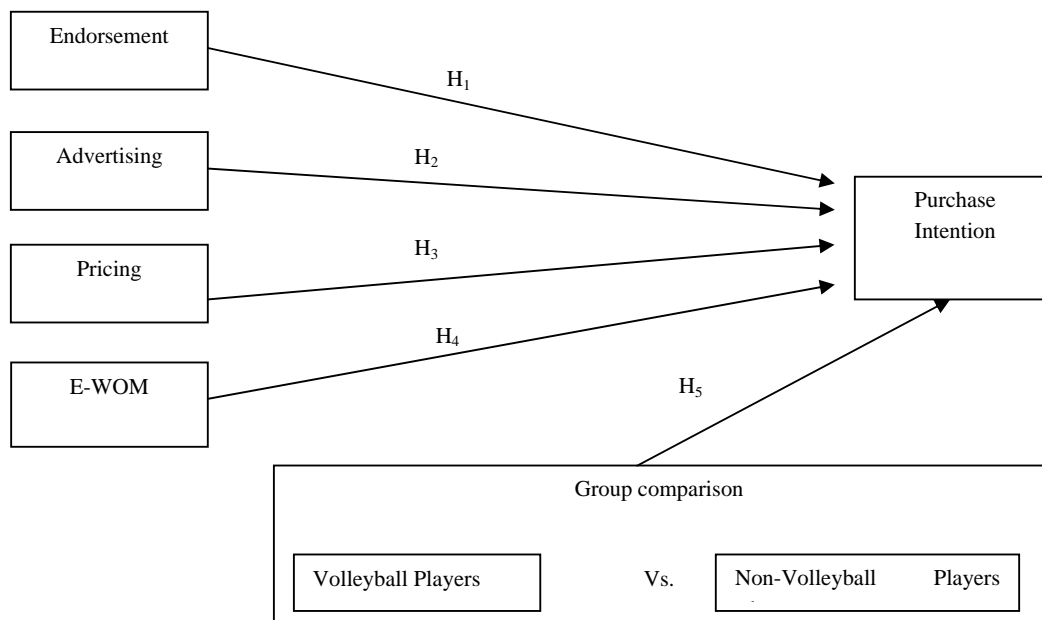


Figure1. Proposed Hypotheses and Conceptual Framework

2 Literature review

2.1 Endorsement

Endorser strategy is one of the most popular marketing practices for many businesses. A successful endorser can increase consumers' purchase intentions and preferences toward brands directly or indirectly. Therefore, using an endorser is not only a common and convenient way to reach consumers, but also a basic and effective arrangement of sport marketing [7]. Famous athlete endorsements are even relatively specific and effective among various endorsers [8]. According to [9], sport celebrities could be persuasive through both processes, depending on which product they are endorsing and to what extent they can be regarded as having expertise in that product category. For example, athletes endorsing sports equipment or sporting gear could be seen to be expert endorsers and would influence individuals through an internalisation process [10]. Numerous researchers have previously identified how effectively the endorsement message influences the audience [11]. The study does not consider the impact of celebrity athletes on different types of product and brand purchases. It might be that sport celebrities have a greater influence on purchase intentions and behaviours of young people for sports-related products than other products [12]. Based on the arguments above, this research will investigate the relationship between endorsement and sport shoes' purchase intention of volleyball and non-volleyball players.

2.2 Advertising

Advertising is a strategy used by managers to design positive brand perception about their products through extrinsic cues that signal quality [13]. The strong store brand built through advertising will also allow selling it at a higher price, signalling high value. Higher advertising costs will be compensated by a growth in total store sales along with improved gross margin. [14] proved that consumers are predisposed to advertising in general, which impacts their impressions of select ads and ultimately influences their attitude toward a brand. This attitude, in turn, has a strongly mediating influence on intent to buy the product advertised. Furthermore, a study which examined the effects of advertising in a sports facility approached the issue differently by using a controlled event, slides of a volleyball game, and tested different types of promotional activities which advertisers often use [15]. The promotional options in this study included a non-directed message (a logo), a directed or detailed message, a directed message plus a coupon, and a directed message and a sample. Their findings indicated that the purchase intentions of the respondents increased as they went through the promotional activities in the study. With the reviews above, this research will investigate the relationship between advertising and purchase intention of volleyball and non-volleyball players toward sport shoes.

2.3 Pricing

Price has been identified as a key external factor in determining market share, competition, profit, product quality and the product marketing strategy [5]. However, the prices are perceived individually by every consumer through their perceptive process. Researchers in [5] further demonstrated that price is the most significant factor which directly impacts the purchase decision-making process. More, price discounts decrease the consumer's perception of the price paid in the short term and increases the intention to buy [16]. According to [17], perceived price was found to negatively influence purchase intention in China in the study of comparing consumer behaviours for sports shoes in China and Korea. Due to the great impact of price, the researcher will investigate the influence of price on Malaysian volleyball players' purchase intentions when choosing sport shoes. Based on the arguments above, this

research will investigate the relationship between pricing and the purchase intentions of volleyball and non-volleyball players toward sport shoes.

2.4 Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

According to [18], WOM communication initially referred to the idea of person-to-person conversation between consumers about a product, but the worldwide spread of the internet has brought up a less personal but more ubiquitous form of WOM communication, which is so-called online WOM communication. Furthermore, e-WOM messages can effectively reduce the risk and uncertainty recognized by consumers when purchasing products or services, so that their purchase intention and decision making can be further influenced [18]. The e-WOM messages help consumers to obtain information about product or service quality [19]. Therefore, a WOM message will be a very important reference for consumers to establish their purchasing decision making process. According to [20], e-WOM has a strong direct effect on purchase intention. The finding that online WOM communication can cause purchase intention is particularly important for automobile manufacturers. [20] also suggested that through mobile internet, customers can read online recommendations for the product they are interested in directly at the point of purchase, which might have strong effects on their purchase decisions. Researchers in [21] also suggested that the quality of e-WOM messages is a factor that influences the purchase intention of consumers. This was supported by [22] that found the quality of the message significantly influences the purchase intentions of sport consumers. In addition, it was argued in [23] that consumer-generated review messages are more influential compared to messages posted by marketers or sellers. Based on the arguments above, this research will investigate the relationship between e-WOM and the purchase intention of volleyball and non-volleyball players toward sport shoes.

3 Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample

Two groups of respondents will be chosen in this study – volleyball players and non-volleyball players. Unfortunately, the researcher is unable to obtain the total number of the population. One hundred and twenty respondents will be chosen in this study. In this study, volleyball players will be defined as those athletes aged 18–25 who actively participated in volleyball tournaments held in Malaysia; they are also full of experience in volleyball sport. Non-volleyball players will be defined as those individuals aged 18–25 who are not actively involved in volleyball sport. Convenience sampling will be applied in this study as a non-probability sampling technique. This sampling method attempts to obtain a sample of convenient elements. The respondents are selected because they happen to be in the right place at the right time.

3.2 Data Collection Method

Primary data in this study is obtained by distributing the questionnaire to the Malaysian volleyball players throughout several volleyball tournament venues in Malaysia.

3.3 Procedures

Firstly, the respondents are asked to imagine purchasing sport shoes of any brand that comes to their mind. They are also required to stick to the imagined brand throughout the survey. Fig.2 illustrates the procedure of data collection.

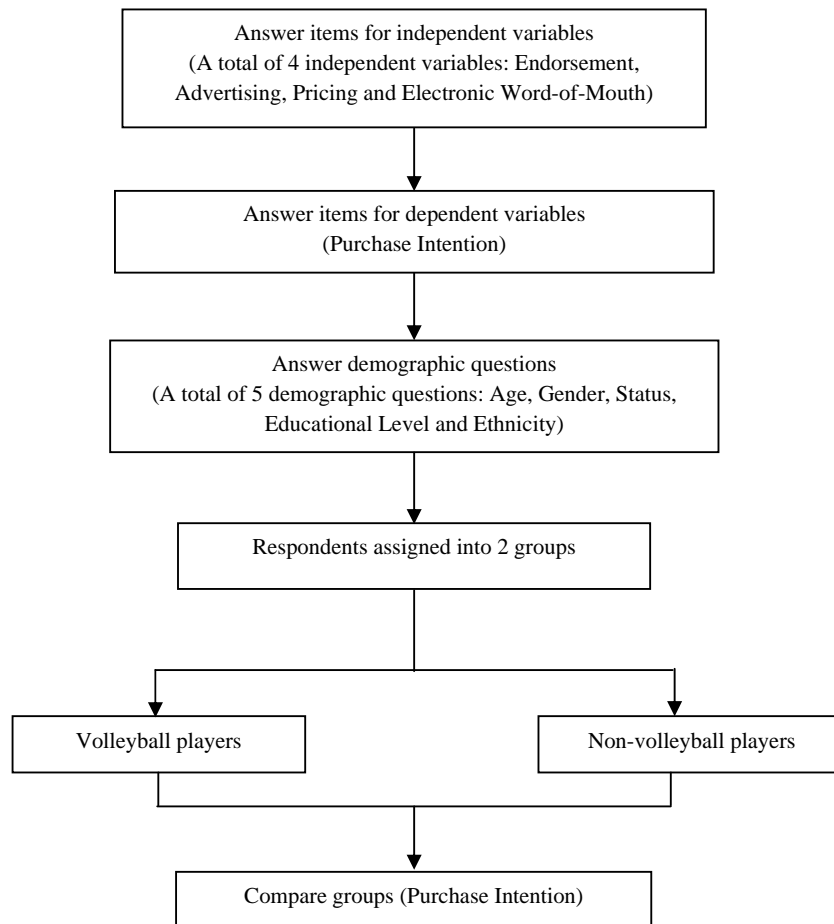


Figure 2. Procedures for Data Collection

3.4 Data analysis

In this study, data will be analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0. The descriptive analysis will be applied in analyzing the demographical data of the respondents. The descriptive analysis may also be used to describe the hypothesis in a simple way. In this study, there are several types of inferential analyses that will be applied, including correlation, multiple regression and independent t-test. The correlation and multiple regression analysis will be used to analyze the relationship between independent variables (Endorsement, Advertising, Pricing and Electronic Word-of-Mouth) and the dependent variable (Purchase Intention). Also, a t-test will be used to analyze the difference between the two groups of respondents – volleyball players and non-volleyball players. The type of t-test that will be used is two independent samples t-test.

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