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Customer Purchase Intention Based on the Characteristics of Brand Ambassador: A Case Study of Biti's Hunter in Vietnam

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of brand ambassadors on customers' purchasing intention in Vietnam. In this study, a total of 310 subjects participated in the online survey through Google Forms. The results show that purchase intention is significantly influenced by trustworthiness of the brand ambassador. There is also a positive influence on purchase intention by attractiveness, familiarity, and value alignment of the brand ambassador. Conversely, the brand ambassador's scandals negatively affected customers' purchasing intention. Moreover, gender difference has a significant effect on, whereas occupation has no significant effect on purchase intention. The findings offer a valuable recommendation for brand managers to choose brand ambassadors and enhance their advertising and marketing strategies.

Keywords: brand ambassador, purchase intention, online survey, case study

1. Introduction

In the highly commercialized society, people are exposed to a massive amount of advertisement from various commercial activities. Consumers are becoming increasingly brand conscious since they are faced with an increasing number of advertisements from competing companies. According to the online advertising statistics, average individual is exposed to about 5,000 ads per day, contributing to an annual total of 5.3 trillion display advertisements presented online. This explosion of advertisements can be attributed to the internet, as social media and other online websites typically have a heavy ad presence (Zippia Team, 2022). However, previous research indicated that only about 150 of these images impact consumers' subconscious, with approximately 30 ones influencing their consciousness (Giang & Duong, 2018). How to create distinct marketing strategies to attract and build trust with consumers is challenging for businesses to enhance their competitive edge. Positive brand image and reputation affect companies facing competitiveness. It is important for companies to innovate their brand strategy for increasing product sales and marketability as well as enhancing their competitiveness. Celebrity endorsement is a potent advertising strategy where a well-known individual is featured in a campaign or an advertisement to promote a product, service, or brand (Esangbedo, 2011). Nelson and Deborah (2017) found that the use of celebrity endorsement in the eyes of consumers is the most compelling way of attracting their attention compared to a non-celebrity featured advertisement. It has been established as one of the most popular tools of advertising in recent time, and has become a trend and perceived as a winning formula for

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product marketing and brand building (Mukherjee, 2009). Brand ambassadors are the single best use of celebrity endorsement that have become widely popular and an essential part of a business's brand building strategy to define its market position and further create market share and revenue growth.

Brand ambassadors, also referred to as brand representatives, constitute a widely used marketing approach that aims at captivating and engaging customers (Hafilah et al., 2019). These individuals symbolize the aspirations and wants that consumers readily embrace. Businesses strategically select these well-known figures to leverage their established image as a representation of the brand. Brand ambassadors are entrusted with pivotal roles, ranging from participating in product launch press conferences to featuring prominently in the brand's advertising campaigns. They also extend their influence by actively sharing brand-related content on their personal social media accounts. This multifaceted engagement helps companies establish a deeper connection with their target consumers and fosters a positive brand perception (Saldanha at el., 2020). In Vietnam, many cases of brands have enlisted celebrities as brand ambassadors, of whom Son Tung M-TP is a prominent example that represents the sneaker brand of Biti's Hunter, Vietnam. He is a famous artist and singer in Vietnam known by his unique combination of music and performance art. Son Tung M-TP is also a successful brand ambassador for endorsing various products and well-known brands in Vietnam.

There are a number of studies conducted in the literature to investigate the impact of brand representatives on consumer purchase intention. For example, Osei-Frimpong et al. (2019) investigated the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer purchase intention from an emerging market perspective. They found that brand representative traits such as familiarity, attractiveness, and trustworthiness influence customer perceptions of brand quality, boost brand loyalty, and crucially affect purchase intention. Kusi et al. (2018) assessed the influence of advertising on the purchase intention of university students under moderating the celebrity advertising risk. They highlighted the importance of considering both the advertising role of celebrities and the associated risks, as well as the distinct impact of celebrity personality traits, understanding and predicting consumer purchasing intention in response to celebrity-endorsed products. Besides, Ahmed et al. (2015) conducted a study to analyze brand ambassadors and their impact on customer buying behavior and their perceptions of the company's products or brand. They found that engaging celebrities as brand ambassadors not only shapes customer attitudes but also propels them toward actual purchase decisions, and suggested that consumers tend to show a greater inclination to invest in a product or service endorsed by a celebrity. Ha and Lam (2016) examined how brand ambassadors affect customer attitudes towards brands, along with the consequential influence of customer attitudes on purchase intention in Vietnam. By using the 7 factors: trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, familiarity, expertise, liking, and the congruence of celebrity match-up with the brand or product, they found how the alignment, reliability, and proficiency of brand ambassadors play a crucial role in influencing customer perceptions of brands, providing insights into the intertwined dynamics of brand perception and consumer behavior. This study aims to provide insights and facilitate choices for Vietnamese businesses to select effective brand-building strategies as well as develop their

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brand in the domestic market. It explores the relationship between customer purchase intention and the characteristics of the brand ambassador Son Tung M-TP for the Biti's Hunter in Vietnam.

2. Literature Review

This study focuses on investigating how and which factors a brand ambassador impacts customer purchase intention. There are 5 factors identified as the brand representative traits for the survey, namely trustworthiness, attractiveness, familiarity, value alignment, and scandal, and the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The trustworthiness of the brand ambassador has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 2: The attractiveness of the brand ambassador has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 3: The familiarity of the brand ambassador has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 4: The value alignment between the brand ambassador and the brand/product has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 5: Scandal of the brand ambassador has a negative effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 6: Gender difference has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 7: Occupation has a significant effect on purchase intention.

3. Research Method

The questionnaire comprises 23 questions asked in Vietnamese corresponding to the 6 observed variables (trustworthiness, attractiveness, familiarity, value alignment, scandal, and purchase intention) using a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) as listed in Table 1. During the period from November 1 to December 5, 2023, a total of 348 responses were collected using an online survey built on Google Forms. After deducting invalid 38 invalid responses, 310 valid questionnaires were identified for the following data analysis including 182 males (58.71%) and 128females (41.29%).

Table 1. List of the question items and their corresponding Cronbach's Alpha values

Statement	Statement
1-1. The brand ambassador is a trustworthy celebrity endorsement. (Cronbach's α=0.962)	3-6. The brand ambassador is someone you often see in the media. (Cronbach's α=0.952)
1-2. The brand ambassador is a honest celebrity endorsement. (Cronbach's α=0.915)	Familiarity: Cronbach's α=0.985
1-3. The brand ambassador is a famous individual who is candid when making statements about the brand/product in advertisements. (Cronbach's α=0.960)	4-1. You often see the brand ambassador in a brand's advertisements. (Cronbach's α=0.967)

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1-4. I trust what the brand ambassador says in the advertisements. (Cronbach's α=0.937)	4-2. You believe that the image of the brand ambassador is suitable for that brand. (Cronbach's α=0.948)
1-5. I trust the brand and products that the brand ambassador represents. (Cronbach's α=0.955)	4-3. You think that the brand is a perfect fit for the brand ambassador as its representative. (Cronbach's α=0.963)
Trustworthiness: Cronbach's α=0.981	4-4. You believe that the brand ambassador is using this brand's products. (Cronbach's α=0.964)
2-1. The brand ambassador has an attractive appearance. (Cronbach's α=0.959)	Value alignment: Cronbach's α=0.985
2-2. The brand ambassador is an attractive person. (Cronbach's α=0.940)	5-1. Celebrities involved in scandals are not worthy of faith. (Cronbach's α=0.934)
2-3. The brand ambassador has a sophisticated appearance. (Cronbach's α=0.952)	5-2. Celebrities involved in the scandal are not worth following. (Cronbach's α=0.925)
2-4. The brand ambassador is elegant. (Cronbach's α=0.961)	5-3. Celebrities involved in the scandal are not trustworthy. (Cronbach's α=0.819)
2-5. The brand ambassador is charismatic. (Cronbach's α=0.951)	Scandal: Cronbach's α=0.945
Attractiveness: Cronbach's α=0.983	6-1. Brands represented by the celebrity endorsement easily capture my attention. (Cronbach's α=0.967)
3-1. The brand ambassador is a familiar celebrity. (Cronbach's α=0.952)	6-2. Brands represented by the celebrity endorsement are more likely to come to mind whenever I have the intention to make a purchase. (Cronbach's α=0.950)
3-2. The brand ambassador is someone you have heard of before. (Cronbach's α=0.962)	6-3. I would consider buying a product endorsed by my favorite celebrity. (Cronbach's α=0.950)
3-3. The brand ambassador is someone you often see on TV. (Cronbach's α=0.945)	6-4. I purchase a brand because I like the celebrity endorsing that brand. (Cronbach's α=0.955)
3-4. The brand ambassador is someone you often see in advertisements. (Cronbach's α=0.937)	Purchase intention: Cronbach's α=0.983
3-5. The brand ambassador is someone you often see on the Internet. (Cronbach's α=0.951)	

4. Finding and Discussion

As shown in Table 1, all the Cronbach's Alpha values for the 23 question items are more than 0.8, indicating a high-level reliability of the internal consistency. Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient for measuring the linear correlation between two variables. The result reveals a close correspondence accentuated by the observed level of significance (Sig) marked as 0.00 < 0.05. All variables show a significant correlation except for the occupation variable, which suggests a meaningful association between variables and a lack of statistical significance

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for the occupation variable. Besides, the coefficient of determination, R^2, is 0.991, which signifies the linear interplay among the 8 factors accounting for a substantial 99.1% of the variation observed in Vietnamese customers who have purchased Biti's Hunter sneakers.

Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficient measures

	Trust.	Attract.	Familia.	Align.	Scandal	Pur.Inten.	Gender	Occupa.
Trust.	1	.987** (0.000)	.915** (0.000)	.969** (0.000)	-.977** (0.000)	.993** (0.000)	.913** (0.000)	0.100 (0.078)
Attract.	.987** (0.000)	1	.934** (0.000)	.985** (0.000)	-.967** (0.000)	.990** (0.000)	.907** (0.000)	0.097 (0.087)
Familia.	.915** (0.000)	.934** (0.000)	1	.928** (0.000)	-.903** (0.000)	.928** (0.000)	.849** (0.000)	0.101 (0.076)
Align.	.969** (0.000)	.985** (0.000)	.928** (0.000)	1	-.961** (0.000)	.977** (0.000)	.894** (0.000)	0.085 (0.135)
Scandal	-.977** (0.000)	-.967** (0.000)	-.903** (0.000)	-.961** (0.000)	1	-.978** (0.000)	-.913** (0.000)	0.103 (0.071)
Pur.Inten.	.993** (0.000)	.990** (0.000)	.928** (0.000)	.977** (0.000)	-.978** (0.000)	1	.907** (0.000)	0.097 (0.089)
Gender	.913** (0.000)	.907** (0.000)	.849** (0.000)	.894** (0.000)	-.913** (0.000)	.907** (0.000)	1	0.106 (0.062)
Occupa.	0.100 (0.078)	0.097 (0.087)	0.101 (0.076)	0.085 (0.135)	-0.103 (0.071)	0.097 (0.089)	0.106 (0.062)	1

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

Multiple linear regression (MLR) was used to predict the likely outcome based on the variables, plotting the degree of influence of each independent factor on the dependent factor. As shown in Table3, there is a significant impact of the trustworthiness of the brand ambassador on purchase intention in terms of the Biti's Hunter's customers (H1: Sig = 0.000 < 0.05 and a positive coefficient of 0.199 > 0). There is a significant impact of the brand ambassador's attractiveness on consumers' purchase intention in Vietnam (H2: Sig. = 0.015 < 0.05). However, the absolute value of the standardized coefficient Beta for the attractiveness of the brand ambassador is 0.083, indicating a relatively minor influence on purchase decisions of Biti's Hunter buyers in Vietnam. There is a substantial influence exerted by familiarity with the brand ambassador on purchase intention for the Vietnamese consumers (H3: Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05). Nevertheless, the absolute value of the standardized coefficient Beta is 0.054, representing the smallest number among the variables scrutinized. This implies that a discernible correlation exists between the perceived familiarity with the brand ambassador and the purchase decisions of Bitis Hunter consumers in Vietnam, but this influence is relatively week.

There is a significant impact of the value alignment of the brand ambassador on consumers' purchase intention in Vietnam (H4: Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05). The high coefficient 0.562 also indicates a positive relevance for the value alignment of the brand ambassador and the Vietnamese consumers. There is a significant impact of the brand ambassador's scandal on consumers' purchase intention (H5: Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05). The negative coefficient -0.141

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signifies a pronounced and adverse relevance for the brand ambassador's scandal and the observation highlights the crucial role of scandals influencing consumer behavior and potentially acting as a deterrent to purchase intention for the Bitis Hunter market. Gender difference has a significant effect on purchase intention, as evidenced by a statistically significant result Sig. = 0.009 < 0.05, and negative regression coefficient -0.141, whereas occupation has no significant effect on purchase intention as indicated by a non-significant result Sig. = 0.686 > 0.05. The t-test result shown in Table 4 also indicates a trend that Vietnamese men exhibit a higher tendency to purchase Bitis Hunter products as compared to women. This observed gender difference in purchasing decision-making can potentially be attributed to various factors, including distinct preferences, product perceptions, or marketing strategies that resonate differently with male and female consumers. The observed average indices across occupational segments span from 4.848 to 5.550, displaying minimal variations. This sustained uniformity in average fluctuation indices reinforces the inference that there is no noteworthy distinction in the decision-making dynamics for acquiring Biti's Hunter products among Vietnamese customers across different job groups.

Table 3. Multiple regression between variables

Index	Hypothesis	Beta coefficients	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	(Constant)	1.142			
H1	Trust.→Pur.Inten.	0.208	0.199	3.771	0.000
H2	Attract.→Pur.Inten.	0.090	0.083	2.458	0.015
H3	Familia.→Pur.Inten.	0.208	0.054	3.605	0.000
H4	Align.→Pur.Inten.	0.553	0.562	12.969	0.000
H5	Scandal→Pur.Inten.	-0.152	-0.141	-5.112	0.000
H6	Gender→Pur.Inten.	-0.154	-0.036	-2.645	0.009
H7	Occupa.→Pur.Inten.	-0.002	-0.002	-0.404	0.686

Table 4. t-test between gender/occupation and purchase intention

Gender	Number	Mean	Sig.
Male	182	6.089	0.000
Female	128	2.172	
Occupation			
Student	187	5.042	0.064
Office Staff	40	5.387	
Public Employee	33	4.848	
Labor Worker	50	5.550	
Total number	310		

5. Conclusion

Customer purchase intention denotes the probability or tendency of a consumer to purchase a product or service. Using the Biti's Hunter sneakers as a study case, this research conducted an online survey through Google Forms to examine the impact of brand ambassadors on

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customers' purchasing intention in Vietnam. The results showed that trustworthiness, attractiveness, familiarity, and value alignment of the brand ambassador have positive effects on, whereas the brand ambassador's scandal has a negative effect on customer purchase intention. Gender difference has a significant effect on, while occupation has no significant effect on purchase intention. The trustworthiness of a brand ambassador is dominant for effective brand promotion. While both the attractiveness and familiarity of a brand ambassador contribute positively to purchase intention, its influence may not be as pronounced as other factors examined. There is a significant correlation between purchase decisions and perceived value alignment of a brand ambassador, implying the value alignment of a brand ambassador having a role in shaping consumer behavior within the specific context of the Bitis Hunter Vietnam market. Scandals can erode the trustworthiness of the brand ambassador, and consumers may question his/her integrity as well as influence their purchase decisions.

Brand ambassadors continue to be effective in brand promotion, and their role has evolved in response to changes in consumer behavior, technology, and marketing trends. The limitation of the study lies in the constrained time frame and relatively small sample size, which could impact the study's external validity, limiting its applicability to broader populations or different contexts. The complexity of the brand ambassador-customer relationship encompasses various factors that can influence purchase intention. The dynamic nature of markets poses another challenge. Changes in the market environment during the research process may introduce variability in the data and impact the outcomes of the result. In summary, while this study provided insights into the brand ambassador-customer relationship, readers should interpret the findings with an awareness of the study's limitations. These limitations encompass the constraints imposed by time and sample size, the identified 7 factors/variables, and the potential impact of market changes during the research process. Researchers and practitioners should exercise caution in applying these findings to broader contexts and consider the need for further exploration of additional factors/variables and the evolving market landscape.

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