



THE IMPACT OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMERS' REPURCHASE INTENTION-ANALYSIS ON THE SMART PHONE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of brand's country of origin image and brand image on consumers' repurchase intention. The brand's country of origin image and brand image have become an important factor influencing consumers' evaluation and purchase intention in the international market. However, the existing researches seldom systematically integrate the five variables of country of origin image, brand image, brand perception, brand loyalty and consumers' repurchase intention into a model for overall research. The smart phone brand of USA, Japan, Korea, Chinese mainland and Taiwan is taken as the investigated subject, and the conceptual model is proposed and the research questionnaire is designed. Through questionnaire survey, data are collected on the image of the country of origin, brand image, brand perception, brand loyalty and repurchase intention from Taiwan college students. SPSS26.0 software was used to analyze the reliability and validity of the data, and the relationship between the variables was analyzed. The research confirms that the image of the country of origin has a significant positive impact on brand image, brand image has a significant positive impact on brand perception, brand perception has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty, and brand loyalty has a significant positive impact on repurchase intention. This study systematically analyzes the impact of country of origin image and brand image on consumers' repurchase intention, which has a strong guiding and management significance for the government and enterprises to enhance their comprehensive competitiveness and influence in the international market.

Keywords: Country of origin image, Brand image, Brand perception, Brand loyalty, Repurchase intention, Smart phone, College student consumers.

Introduction

With the gradual deepening and advancement of economic integration, the challenges faced by enterprises or

governments are not only limited to the domestic, but more competition comes from the confrontation on the international stage. For consumers, the high development of technology makes

products or services become diversified (Gabrielli & Baghi, 2020). At the same time, it becomes very difficult to comprehensively and objectively obtain and understand the technical indicators of the quality for products or services (Rambocas & Ramsuhag, 2018). It is more based on a series of external clues to subjectively evaluate the quality of products or services (Rambocas & Ramsuhag, 2018). Especially in the face of a wide range of foreign goods, the brand's country of origin image has become one of the important clues that consumers usually choose (Jiménez & San-Martin, 2016). Consumers will evaluate the superiority of the quality for their products depended on their own overall awareness of the region (Jiménez & San-Martin, 2016). They will also form an overall perception of the country's products based on their previous experience, judge the quality of new products, and then affect their purchase or repurchase intention (Rambocas & Ramsuhag, 2018). Therefore, under the background of economic globalization, the image of brand country of origin is becoming a prominent factor influences consumers' product perception and repurchase intention in the international market, and an important source of product competition for the country and its enterprises in the international market.

Throughout the researches on the origin effect of brands in many industries, researchers always focus on watches, laptops, clothing, shoes and hats, etc. However, there is little research on the smart phone industry, and there is a research gap (Nai, Cheah & Phau, 2018). Smart phone is a kind of mobile phone with independent operating system (Melumad & Meyer,

2020). In today's smart phone market, there are many manufacturers and brands in fierce competition with each other (Melumad & Meyer, 2020). But basically, the market is dominated by Apple, Samsung, Sony and other brands, and iPhone is the most important one. All of these brands come from developed countries. Smart phone is different from ordinary consumer goods. As a kind of durable product with high technology content, consumers have higher requirements on it (Melumad & Meyer, 2020). In the process of purchase, they will be more inclined to subscribe to its brand country of origin (Melumad & Meyer, 2020). At present, with the development of social economy and the improvement of people's living standards, smart phones have gradually become a necessity in people's daily life (Melumad & Pham, 2020). With the increasing holding rate of smart phones, the demand of smart phone is growing. Therefore, smart phone is taken as a research commodity in this study.

Research Questions

The existing researches generally focused on the pairwise relationship among the country of origin image, brand image and repurchase behavior, and had reached similar conclusions (Nai, Cheah & Phau, 2018). However, there are few studies on the five factors including brand loyalty, brand image, consumers' repurchase intention, brand perception and the country of origin image (Nai, Cheah & Phau, 2018). Based on the model of consumer reaction process, this paper constructs a conceptual model among the above five factors, comprehensively studies the multi-level effects among the five factors, clarifies the interaction mecha-

nism between brand loyalty and brand image, repurchase intention, brand perception and the brand's country of origin image. And this investigation attempts to explore the impression of smart phone brand image on College students' repurchase intention, and provide some valuable management inspiration and marketing suggestions for smart phone enterprises to enhance their marketing competitiveness.

To sum up, this study takes the smart phone as the research object, and study the following contents: If the country of origin of the smartphone's brand affects the smartphone's brand image, affect consumers' brand perception and loyalty to the smart phone, and then affect consumers' willingness to buy or repurchase the smart phone?

Literature Review

Country of origin image

The notion of country of origin (COO) alludes to the place where the merchandise is manufactured, produced, processed or transportation (Jiménez & San-Martin, 2016). Chan et al. (2018) explored these notions in depth, and further mentioned that the country of origin is only "the details about where the merchandises are made."

Previous studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between country of origin and product quality (Lo, S.C., 2012). Some countries are more powerful than others in producing specific types of products. So, in terms of the production of these goods, they are more competitive than other countries. Therefore, the consumer attitude towards these products is very

high. In addition, the country of origin of the product helps to reduce the perceived risk of the product and to ensure the positioning of the product in the global market. The purchase determination of a merchandise and its competitive advantage is influenced by the position of production. Most customers prefer products that they are comfortable purchasing and they take the particular place of production into their mind (Huang, K.P., Lo, S.C., Tung, J. & Wang, K.Y., 2017).

Brand image

In a broad sense, brand image refers to a series of psychological associations and feelings of consumers (Chan et al., 2018). A good brand image can have four advantages. They are: enhancing the brand equity, enhancing the brand competitiveness, building the brand loyalty and having more cooperation opportunities. Enhance brand equity to make customers feel value for money. Enhancing brand competitiveness let consumers pay attention to your advantages in the process of comparison. Building brand loyalty lets customers be willing to buy goods again and there are more opportunities for cooperation between different companies (Chan et al., 2018).

Brand image have a role in enterprise management. On one hand, brand image can effectively promote consumers to have interest and ideas on the brand, so as to attract consumers to understand the products or services of the brand. On the other hand, through the continuous brand marketing and extension of enterprises, let consumers' senses produce a brand image consciousness. In this way, a significant difference between the brand and other

brands is formed through the visual experience. Consumers may see a brand image feature and have associated it with the brand (Keller, 2001).

Effect of Country of origin image on Brand image

Consumers' judgment is dependent on brand image and country of origin image (Kim & Choi, 2015). From the different studies that have been carried out, for some products, the brand image is linked with the country of origin image. A positive brand image has a higher competitive advantage, thus improving the brand positioning in the market (Chen & Mathur, 2014). Therefore, in most developing countries, consumers prefer to buy products from developed countries with high brand image (Costa & Carneiro, 2016; Chen & Mathur, 2014).

The image of a country is not only created by typical products, but also by its industrialization, economic maturity, as well as culture and tradition (Andéhn et al., 2016). The country from which the brand comes from influences the product positioning and brand image (Nisco & Mainolfi, 2016). The country of origin helps to reduce the perceived risk of the product and to ensure the strategic marketing positioning.

Based on the above literature, we draw the following hypotheses:

H1: Country of origin image has a positive effect on brand image.

Brand perception

Some scholars described brand perception as consumers' subjective

feeling of product quality and judgment of product benefit. Generally speaking, consumers' subjective judgment forms brand perception (Zeithaml, 1988; Dodds & Monroe, 1991). Other scholars state that brand perception is considered to be a multidimensional structure including brand experience, emotion and trust, which play an important role in repurchasing by physical sales or online sales (Keller, 2003; Christodoulides, 2006).

The brand with good emotion impels consumers' learning and acquisition of more brand knowledge, so as to develop consumers' perception of the brand. The empirical results show that brand influence can improve the level of brand perception (Lin & Lee, 2012). There seems to be a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and brand perception. In addition, the unanimous between customer self-perception and brand perception will increase customer preference and loyalty of brand. (Rashid & Akhtar, 2019).

Effect of Brand image on Brand Perception

In the highly competitive market, a popular brand image has been proved to gain powerful advantage in competition, which helps to build the consumers' attraction. The long-term success of well-known brands such as Google, Disney, Apple and Nike benefits from consumers' perception and appreciation of them. The companies above are the leaders of their market segments and have powerful brand perception. Strong brand image leads to strong brand perception, an important indicator to measure the relationship between consumers and brands (Park & Eisingerich, 2016).

Brand trust comes from good brand image, which has a positive impact on brand perception and purchase intention, and then brings brand competitive advantage (Delgado & Luis, 2005). The brand wins the good perception of consumers because of its good image, and finally establishes a good reputation and respect (Roberts, 2005; Kapferer, 2012).

Based on these ideas, following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Brand image has a positive effect on brand perception.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty usually refers to the consumers' preference for a certain product or service. Brand loyalty is the goodwill of a brand or the preference of a specific product from customers' view. In recent years, studies have also documented the relationship between consumers and brands is a powerful mechanism to establish brand loyalty.

Many scholars proposed 5 main aspects to push on brand loyalty: attachment of brand, love of brand, connection of brand, identity of brand and trust of brand. (Park et al., 2010). These 5 types of brand aspects have a positive impact on customer brand loyalty, they can be regarded as the driving factors of brand loyalty.

Effect of Brand perception on Brand Loyalty

Many studies show that when consumers perceive a brand consistent with the image of their own, they show higher loyalty to products, brand loyalty and brand relationship quality

(Phua & Kim, 2018). Macdonald and Sharp (2000) believed that brands with high popularity and good image can improve brand loyalty (Lord & Putrevu, 2009; Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

When a large number of brand images are reflected in customers' memory, brand perception is formed. When brand perception is gradually accumulated, brand loyalty will be achieved. A positive brand perception may help businesses increase their brand loyalty and encourage customers repurchasing (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016). In addition, another finding is that brand loyalty mediates the connection between brand perception and repurchase intention. (Lee et al., 2011).

Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Brand perception has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention is defined as "consumers plan to purchase the same merchandise or service from the same supplier in the future." (Bojei, J. & Hoo, W., 2012). It is the likelihood the user will purchase again in the future and is one of the most important indicators to measure enterprise performance.

Empirical research shows that individual consumers' repurchase intention has a significant impact on the future actual purchasing at both the individual level and the overall level (McNeil, 1974). Repurchase intention is usually a function of customer satisfaction: highly satisfaction forms a positive attitude towards the product,

and eventually form a strong loyalty, while dissatisfaction results in either complaining the experience of consumption or ending the relationship of exchange (Hirschman, 1970).

Effect Of Brand Loyalty On Repurchase Intention

Brand loyalty has a significant impact on consumers' repurchase intention, which is the issue that enterprises pay attention to (Ibrahim & Al-jarah, 2018). Those consumers who have a positive attitude towards a certain brand not only support the brand in word-of-mouth, but also have strong purchase intention or future repurchase intention (See-To & E. W., 2014). Brand loyalty refers to the conscious or unconscious repurchase or repurchase intention of a specific product (Machado, 2019; Yoshida & Gordon, 2018). Usually, when a product is well known by customers and has a good brand image in the mind, customers will be more loyal and they will buy the same product (Jalilvand & Reza, 2011).

Some evidence show that brand loyalty will affect repurchase intention in different situations. Brand awareness plays an important role in consumer decision-making by bringing three kinds of rewards, namely learning advantage, considering advantage and choosing advantage (Keller, 2003).

Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Brand loyalty has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

Methodology

In this study, the quantitative techniques were applied using deductive method and cross-sectional design was applied. The survey was conducted from March 16 to April 12, 2021, taking Taiwan college students as the research object. We collected 307 responses with 295 valid and 12 invalid. Four main steps were conducted for survey questionnaire development: literature analysis, focus group interview, translation of the preliminary questionnaire and a pilot study. The pilot study in this research involved 30 Taiwanese college students who were invited to complete a questionnaire survey. The results of the pilot study show that the items of the questionnaire are understandable, and it is sufficient to confirm the apparent validity of the questionnaire items, and the total time required to complete the survey. SPSS 26 and AMOS 24 were used for statistical analysis. The analysis was done through EFA, CFA, reliability and correlation technique and SEM analysis applied to measure the effects (hypothesis).

The items constructed in the model use a metric scale. The survey used a balanced (bipolar) Likert scale with five response categories ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree, or (1) much worse to (5) much better. Country of origin image was measured with seven items (Yasin et al., 2007; Schmidt & Iyer, 2015). Brand image was measured with eight items (Schmidt & Iyer, 2015). Brand perception was measured with eight items (Zboja & Voorhees, 2006; Boo, Busser & Baloglu, 2009). Brand loyalty was measured with seven items (De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Boo et al., 2009). Repurchase intention was measured with five items (Chen-Yu et

al., 2016; Wen, C. & Xu, C., 2011). Four control variables were considered including respondents' ZIP, Gender, Profession, Educational Degree.

Data Analysis and Results

Among the 295 respondents, 124 (42.03%) are male, 171 (57.97%) are female. There are 270 (91.53%) students come from Taiwan, 2 (0.68%) students come from Hong Kong or Macao, 5 (1.69%) students are from mainland China, and 18 (6.1%) students are from other regions. In terms of educational degree, there are 265 (89.83%) college students and 30 (10.17%) master students. In terms of profession, 258 (87.46%) students come from the Department of Business Administration, 7 (2.37%) students are from Finance Department, 2 (0.68%) students come from the Accounting Department, 9 (3.05%) students are from the Department of Statistics, and 19 (6.44%) students are from other majors.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

To investigate the existence of common method variance (CMV), we use the Harman's single factor test to examine the severity for this study (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). The results show that the first factor can only explain 30.238% of the total variance (less than 50%). Therefore, the single factor doesn't occupy the most of covariance. After removing some items, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) value of the scale was 0.914, which exceeded the acceptable limit of 0.8 (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity gave an Approximate Chi-Square value of

about 4256.088, with 276 degrees of freedom ($P = 0.000$). This showed that statistical data is suitable for factor analysis. Convergent validity is a sub-type of construct validity, which means that a particular construct is measuring the construct in this study. The results of factor loading based on EFA verify the convergence effectiveness. The sample size is 295, and the factor loading is between 0.434 and 0.923. Five factors extracted from EFA were named as: brand loyalty, brand image, repurchase intention, brand perception, and the country of origin image. Five factors explained 68.082% of the variance. The loadings onto each factor ranged as follows: country of origin image (0.451-0.903), brand image (0.462-0.701), brand perception (0.434-0.739), brand loyalty (0.583-0.866), repurchase intention (0.590-0.923).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is an effective information about the dimensions and validity of the scale (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982). It is a statistical method to determine the factor structure of the observed variable cluster. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) value of the scale was 0.910, which exceeded the acceptable limit of 0.8 (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity gave an Approximate Chi-Square value of about 3858.404, with 231 degrees of freedom ($P = 0.000$).

From the Rotated Matrix Component Table, we can know that there are five factors in total, and the factor load of each variable is only loaded on one factor, and the factor load is between

0.590 and 0.866, which provides reliable evidence for the discriminant validity. The five factors of the model are brand loyalty, brand image, repurchase intention, brand perception and the country of origin image. Five factors explained 69.155% of the variance. The loadings onto each factor ranged as follows: country of origin image (0.590-0.866), brand image (0.656-0.755), brand perception (0.666-0.848), brand loyalty (0.644-0.844), repurchase intention (0.679-0.858).

Reliability and Validity

To measure the reliability of the factors, we used Cronbach's α Method, which is the most commonly used method to measure reliability. In this study, the five factors Cronbach's α range from 0.741 to 0.889. Cronbach's α values for all factors exceed 0.7 (Hair Jr. et al., 2016), indicating high internal consistency. The calculation outcomes show that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of all factors are more than 0.5 (Hair Jr. et al., 2016), while the Composite Reliability (CR) values are more than 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, the convergence validity of these items was established. The five factors identified are: country of origin image, brand image, brand perception, brand loyalty, repurchase intention.

Correlations

After verifying the reliability and validity of the items, the mean value of the items related to the extracted factors was used as the variable of supplementary statistical analysis. The results show that the country of origin image is significantly correlated with the brand image ($r = 0.526, P < 0.01$).

Similarly, brand image is significantly correlated with brand perception ($r = 0.568, P < 0.01$). There is a significant correlation between brand perception and brand loyalty ($r = 0.554, P < 0.01$). In addition, brand loyalty is significantly correlated with repurchase intention ($r = 0.832, P < 0.01$). The results of correlation have strong support for testing all hypotheses in the model.

Model Fit

The results show that the hypotheses' model fits the data and the whole study well. The Chi-square /degree of freedom ratio is 3.192, which is between 1.00 and 4.00. The value indicates a reasonable fit. The Chi-square goodness of fit is considered significant ($\chi^2 = 654.446, df=205, P = 0.000$). The results show that all the SEM fitting measures are in good fit, because all the goodness-of-fit indexes are in the appropriate range: (GFI) = 0.830, (AGFI) = 0.790, (RMR) = 0.056, (CFI) = 0.880, (NFI) = 0.835, (IFI)=0.881, (RMSEA)=0.086. In general, the fitting statistics show that the model of this study is in good agreement with the data. The estimated values of parameters of SEM model for measurement, including Estimate, Standard Error, Critical Ratio and the P value indicate that all hypotheses in this study are supported.

Conclusions

From the perspective of consumers, taking smart phones as an example, this paper discussed the impact of product country of origin image and brand image on customers repurchase intention, put forward a theoretical model, empirically tested the relation-

ship between the variables and finally came to the following conclusion:

1. Country of origin image has a positive effect on brand image.
2. Brand image has a positive effect on brand perception.
3. Brand perception has a positive effect on brand loyalty.
4. Brand loyalty has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

The theoretical significance of this study mainly includes two aspects: the conceptual model of the influencing factors of brand image, country of origin image and consumers repurchase intention; The influence factors on repurchase intention. This study systematically analyzes the impact of brand image and country of origin image on consumers' repurchase intention, which has a strong guiding and management significance for the government and enterprises to elevate their comprehensive competitiveness and influence.

However, due to the limitation of time and personal ability, the research has some limitations. Future research can appropriately expand the scope of sample selection and research products, and select multiple industries for comparative research, which can improve the universal applicability of the model. At the same time, some scholars have proposed that repurchase intention is also affected by situational factors such as patriotism. Further research needs to pay attention to the mechanism of these factors and consider dynamic factors.

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