

Determining the Amount of Loyalty in Professional Athletes to the Sporting Brands

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Abstract

Despite of different factors influence on customer's loyalty to sporting brands in which are changing every day, we know very few about professional athletes. The aim of this study is to determine professional athlete's loyalty to the sporting brands. Correlational study was carried out in the field. Statistical society includes 572 athletes at the league's top single and group courses that were selected by random sampling. The Sports brand loyalty assessment questionnaire has been used. The results have been analyzed by multivariate analysis, Shannon entropy and the single-sample t-test for independent groups ($\alpha \geq 0.05$). also, all verified factors are influential on athlete's loyalty to sporting brands and propaganda, style of life, propaganda's volume are very important for participated. Finding's analysis showed propaganda, brand name, style of life have the most weight in professional athlete's loyalty to the cloth and sporting brand. Also, the amount of variables influentially like propaganda, propaganda's volume and style of life in men are more than women and have has meaningful difference. Brand loyalty in which be created from propaganda's variables, is the most important indicator in buying selection and could be under influence of propaganda and other and people's style of life. In comparing influential factors on professional athlete's loyalty by emphasis on gender variable, result showed gender factor is influential on loyalty and sporting cloth brand's popularity.

Keywords: Loyalty, Sporting Brand, Professional Athlete

Introduction

Today, people connect with sports apparel since it donates easier and varied life to youth. In addition, consumers wear sports apparel at playing sports, they wear that at home, school, work or leisure time, too. The sport clothing industry always put appropriate design and sports design together (Miller & Washington 2013).

Sports lovers like to be attractive and stylish at exercise, so they mix their favorite sports activities and their favorite clothing together. Teenager and young customers concentrate on branded clothing and they buy most of the clothes in the sports apparel market. They spend a lot of money on their clothes, sports effect and updating, so the sports apparel industry has always its fans from this group. Many famous sports apparel companies have focused on youth (Broadbent et al., 2010). On the other hand, finding competitive proper place in the mind of the consumer as the consumer is loyal to the company is important in the current market conditions. The brand equity of the company is effective factor in achieving a place in the minds of customers (Angelis and Rigopoulou, 2009).

A long time ago, the brand has been considered only as part of the physical product. More definitions of brand had interpretation as a word, name or trademark of it (Bornmark et al., 2005).

Today's brand is much more than these things. The customer's perception effect on relationship and features of brand. That is totally subjective (Wood, 2004). This relationship ensures long-term survival of the business and customer relationships (Oliver, 1999). In fact, customer's perception of the brand based on their decision to buy the brand, whether it be true or false (Brasini and Tassinari, 2004). Meanwhile, brand loyalty designed as an important concept for understanding customer behavior (Day, 1969; Erenberg and Goodhardt, 1970; Lau et al, 2006; Wood, 2004). Brand loyalty defined as a Repurchase and continuous goods or services in the future. It represented a deep commitment. However, marketing tried to change customer behavior, brand loyalty caused the customer bought one brand (Oliver, 1999). Indeed loyalty measured by commitment of repurchasing goods or services (Ryan et al, 1999). Although there are various brands in the market, loyal customers purchase only their preferred brands. This can provide enormous profits for sports apparel manufacturing companies with prestigious brands. Hence we can say one of marketing important efforts is recognizing effective factor of loyalty and lovely. Different combinations of these factors should evaluate in target markets because we can order sales policies by them. Brands can indicate a certain level of quality. They can encourage satisfied customers to buy more. It is the customer loyalty that prevents other competitors to become market. Brand loyalty defined as a Repurchase and continuous goods or services in the future. It represented a deep commitment. However, marketing tried to change customer behavior, brand loyalty caused the customer bought one brand (Oliver, 1999). Indeed loyalty measured by commitment of repurchasing goods or services (Ryan et al, 1999). Although there are various brands in the market, loyal customers purchase only their preferred brands. They prefer to purchase their lovely brands even up to 21 to 25 percent higher than their purchasing price. It has so many benefits for manufacturing brand. Now companies have been change to realize this goal and they follow to make contact with the customers by changing their theories about purchasing. Actually several differences between the infrastructure and the scale of participation and loyalty, particularly in the areas of brand loyalty was found.

Various studies showed the factors such as branded (Alipour and Scan Khotbeserra, 2012; Amini and Amini, 2012; Angelis and Rigopoulou, 2009; Keller et al, 1998; Lau et al, 2006; Wong and Sidek, 2008; Zho and Jiang, 2008) and product quality (Hoch and Ha, 1986; Bornmark et al, 2005; Wong and Sidek, 2008; Lau et al, 2006) and shape (Chen and Quester, 2006) and the store (Dahlgren, 2011; Lau et al, 2006; Wong and Sidek, 2008) and advertising (Hoch and Ha, 1986; Lau et al, 2006; Wong and Sidek, 2008, Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Keller et al, 1998; Zho and Jiang, 2008) and service quality (Chen and Quester, 2006; Cadogan and Foster, 2000; Wong and Sidek, 2008; Lau et al, 2006) and unaffected by others (Blomer v Kasper, 1995; Bornmark et al, 2005; Wulf et al, 2001) can increase customer loyalty and acquisition. However, previous research has evaluated topics such as the difference between real and unreal popularity (Lau et al, 2006), loyalty factor of real Customer and replacement customer (Sivadas and Baker-Prewit, 2000), the relationship between quality, service, and the popularity of consumer satisfaction and loyalty to the store (Chen & Quester, 2006; Safavi, 2010; Alipour & Scan Khotbeserra, 2012) patterns to buy (Ryan et al, 1999) or features based on consumer buying behavior, Image of Jupiter and buy a few brands (Erenberg and Goodhardt, 1970). Now there are some questions. Does the loyalty create value on minds of brand customers as specific factor or other factors such as quality, price, and appearance is important too? And how much these factors effect on national team athletes to sports brands loyalty?

Given the globalization of the sport and its industry faces, entry of international sports brands to our country is in tandem with other countries. Athletes and fans favorites to the brand and getting more information provide to understanding customers (especially athletes) to sports marketing. Both of them help sports marketing to get good decisions.

Today's, the brand's popularity in the West has been recognized as an asset. Customers are willing to pay any price for their favorites brands. Although some vendors are in the sports apparel market, few numbers are strong sellers who have created stiff competition in the apparel market. Famous brands want to stabilize their brand identity, maintaining brand loyalty and popularity and development of new product lines of sports by spend time and money. It help them to get a greater share of the market. In customer loyalty, marketing researches attracted their attention to change brands, since they believed customer retention is the easiest and most reliable methods (Cadogan and Foster, 2000). They try to collect more information about brand loyalty factor and popularity because these help marketers to understand customer behavior and get good decisions.

Study of Loyalty allows sports marketing to identify involving factors of customer behavior. However, the survey has a strong background in marketing, comprehensive information on the sports apparel brand and the factors affecting its loyalty among professional athletes and ordinary people is not available. On the other hand, annual, number of sports products with well-known brands of sports apparel enters the market; there has been stiff competition between the manufacturing companies like Nike, Adidas, puma and Rebook companies (Kharazmi et al, 2015). Over the years, these companies have realized today's customers are aware of any item that they have. In conclusion they do not buy it simply. Today's, many Marketers believe that they lack their customer not their production. Now, according to information, major changes are emerging in companies of

sports brand as it leads them to customer orientation against central product. Now, attention to Customer is the key factor for competition (Heidarzadeh and Zarbi, 2009).

Angelis & Rigopoulou (2009) looked at the effect of name brands on its success in the market. The results showed brand name which was selected by the board is the most important reason of brand's recognizing. contribution of brand's name is the most important factor in the success of brands.

Karbasi-var and Yardel (2012) concluded in a study about Evaluation of brand equity and its influencing factors of consumer opinion that they can use the Aker's brand equity model .this model includes four dimensions that called (awareness, perceived quality, brand Associations and brand loyalty). The results of the analysis of the data showed loyalty factor and associations effects on brand equity directly.

The perceived quality Factor effects on brand equity indirectly by loyalty factor. The brand awareness factor effects on brand equity indirectly by loyalty and association factors. Although, annual, number of sports products with well-known brands in the sports apparel market is imported, there is stiff competition among the big manufacturing companies. Study of effective Factors on fans loyalty in various segments such as athletes will provide useful information for the companies and their representatives. This research allows companies and agencies to adopt policies, marketing and sales of branded sports apparel to their target market, to highlight the significant components of our customers and increase the amount of sales and profits. This is undeniable importance of international trade in economic conditions and the dynamics of manufacturing companies in today's survival. According to the passage, the researcher wants to study the basic elements of professional athlete's loyalty to Sports brands.

Now, athletes introduce as the main buyer of sport brands.in conclusion, researching on professional athletes loyalty to apparel in Iranian premier league and sport brands and Determining the underlying causes of certain sports brand loyalty due to their gender is necessary. Lack of information and its important role at orientation of sports manufacturing companies cause implementation of study is great importance and necessity. The importance of data to Sports marketers, retailers, agencies and producers of sports apparel brand, and even, domestic manufacturers who try to improving their sales is great importance and necessity, too.

Materials and Methods

This research evaluated professional athlete's viewpoint to influencing factors of sports brands loyalty. The research was kind of solidarity research and it was a usage research of purpose.it has been done in field. Iranians professional athletes were population of research. According to census of Sports-Medicine Federation, they were about 22000. In this study, the population size was 22000. According to Morgan's table, sample size was 378. It assigned randomly, but to more ensuring, questionnaires sample number of 572 was distributed. In order to collect data, demographic questionnaire and the revised questionnaire assessing of loyalty of Kharazmi sport apparel brand was used. Demographic questionnaire consisted of 15 questions in order to determine the sex, age, marital status and profession, economic status, priorities of sports apparel brand, sports career, scientific information of Sport and history of professional sports. Assessment questionnaire sports apparel brand loyalty used to collect data about (with 11 subscales) brand, product quality, Product price, appearance, environment, shopping, advertising, quality of service, influence of others, social class, style Life of volume of advertising (and 41 questions) by Kharazmi et al (2015). Questionnaires were provided to teachers and professional experts to determine the face and content validity. Reliability were obtained by Cronbach's alpha coefficients ($\alpha=0.92$). Responses were graded by a five point Likert continuum completely disagree with the statements (1 point) to strongly agree (5 points). Researchers after participating in the Premier League in various fields and distribute the questionnaire asked respondents to read the questionnaire carefully and choose options that are most consistent with their viewpoint. Research evaluated by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and SPSS₂₂ statistical software. Statistical data analyzed by Shannon entropy of multivariate analysis and one-sample t test for independent groups ($\alpha<0.05$).

Results

Participants' demographic characteristics such as gender, marital status, Academic, Document Type, the economic situation and The first priority for sport brand is in the form of Table 1. Age, exercise history, and the history of professional sports Subjects on average, showed in Table 2.

Table 1: Frequency of the demographic characteristics of participants

gender	marital status	Type of course	Academic	Document Type	The economic situation	The first priority for sport brand											
Men	women	single	married	Individual	group	diploma	associate	bachelor	Master & over	Physical education	else	weak	average	good	Adidas	Nike	Puma
57.34	42.66	63.12	36.88	41.96	58.04	24.5	13.6	42.3	19.6	68.84	31.16	12.1	16.4	71.5	52.7	39.1	8.2

Table 2: Description of age and experience and a history of championship sports participants

Features	Statistical Indicators				
	N	Mean	SD	MAX	MIN
Age	572	24.32	6.6	53	14
Sports History	572	6.83	5.1	21	1
History of professional sports	572	4.8	3.6	21	1

The results showed that subjects were with a mean age (24.32±6.6), history of sport (6.83±5.1), and history of professional sports (4.8±3.6).

Table 3: Results of the statistical data fidelity of professional athletes

Factor	Brand name	Product quality	price	Appearance	Store Environment	advertisement	Quality of Service	Unaffected by others	Social Class	Lifestyle	Size promotions
Statistics											
N	572	572	572	572	572	572	572	572	572	572	572
MEAN	3.47	4.11	3.71	4.02	3.45	3.52	3.73	3.58	3.52	3.41	3.57
SD	0.69	0.56	0.81	0.58	0.89	0.74	0.68	0.65	0.87	0.94	0.91
SD Error	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.04

Table 4: Results of one-sample t to check the loyalty of elite athletes in relation to sport brands

Factor	Brand name	Product quality	price	Appearance	Store Environment	advertisement	Quality of Service	Unaffected by others	Social Class	Lifestyle	Size promotions
Statistics											
t	14.32	40.66	18.03	36.28	10.50	14.93	22.51	18.66	12.42	9.12	12.78
Df	425	424	422	425	433	435	433	433	435	435	435
Sig	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Md	0.48	1.11	0.71	1.02	0.45	0.52	0.73	0.59	0.52	0.41	0.57

The loyalty of subjects to the sports brands compared by one-sample t-tests. Given the significance level equal to 0.001 and it was less than 0.05 and because the average of all was over 3. Therefore, the statistical null hypothesis could be rejected with a 5% error level. So all assessed factors of professional athletes loyalty impacted on sports brands by 95% confidence level (table 3 & 4).

Table 5: Effect of gender on the results of 11-fold

factor	gender	average	f	sig	t	df	Sig(2- tailed)
Brand name	Men	3.51	1.37	0.242	1.31	424	0.190
	women	3.42			1.31	388.17	0.184
Product quality	Men	4.12	0.41	0.520	-0.55	423	0.576
	women	4.09			-0.55	370.70	0.578
price	Men	3.66	0.01	0.922	-1.49	421	0.135
	women	3.78			-1.48	358.96	0.138
Appearance	Men	3.03	3.55	0.60	0.27	424	0.785
	women	4.01			0.28	402.04	0.779
Store Environment	Men	3.49	0.10	0.745	1.33	432	0.183
	women	3.38			1.34	382.82	0.180
advertisement	Men	3.58	2.54	0.111	2.08	434	0.033
	women	3.43			2.11	394.96	0.035
Quality of Service	Men	3.69	0.22	0.633	-1.58	432	0.115
	women	3.79			-1.59	381.75	0.111
Unaffected by others	Men	3.59	2.41	0.121	0.15	432	0.879
	women	3.58			0.15	395.00	0.877
Social Class	Men	3.57	0.07	0.779	1.69	434	0.091
	women	3.43			1.68	370.15	0.092
Lifestyle	Men	3.5	1.88	0.171	2.50	434	0.013
	women	3.27			2.46	350.78	0.014
Size promotions	Men	3.64	0.30	0.579	1.97	434	0.049
	women	3.46			1.96	374.09	0.050

The effectiveness of advertising variables, lifestyle and amount of advertising on the loyalty of the men were more than women, and there were significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$). Various factors such as Advertising, lifestyle and amount of advertising were most important to Participants (table 5).

The dimensions of the phenomenon have several components. Each of these dimensions and weight of the different contributions Phenomena are responsible for the shaping and building access. The study and analysis of any phenomenon should be identified based on weight and each of these elements Share. To make a rational decision and comprehensive in order to identify the contribution of each of the dimensions and Components is necessary to use the scientific method. One of the approaches in the field of decision is entropy method. Shannon entropy method used to prioritizing each dimension. The results obtained showed in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: weighting of indicators by Shannon entropy

Index	Shannon entropy EJ	The degree of deviation DJ	Normalized weight WJ	Index	Shannon entropy EJ	The degree of deviation DJ	Normalized weight WJ
X ₁	0.0934	0.0226	0.0315	X ₇	0.914	0.0859	0.10117
X ₂	0.0947	0.0289	0.0342	X ₈	0.0897	0.0244	0.02889
X ₃	0.0912	0.0296	0.03505	X ₉	0.0883	0.0686	0.081231
X ₄	0.0925	0.0355	0.0420	X ₁₀	0.0871	0.086	0.101835
X ₅	0.0927	0.0453	0.0536	X ₁₁	0.0941	0.0659	0.07803
X ₆	0.0954	0.0186	0.022	-	-	-	-

X₁=Size promotions, X₂=lifestyle, X₃=social class, X₄=Unaffected by others, X₅=quality of services, X₆=advertisement, X₇=Store Environment, X₈=Product Style, X₉=price, X₁₀=Product quality, X₁₁=brand name.

Table 7: The effect weight on professional athlete’s loyalty to sports brands

Component	Weight	Rating
brand name	0.094	3
Product quality	0.087	11
price	0.088	10
Product Style	0.089	9
Store Environment	0.091	7
advertisement	0.095	1
the quality of services	0.092	5
Unaffected by others	0.092	6
social class	0.091	8
Lifestyle	0.094	2
Size promotions	0.093	4

Analysis of the data showed that the ads, lifestyle, brand name had the highest weight (points) in the Professional athletes loyalty to sports brands.

Discussion and conclusion

The main goal of this research was studying the level of pro athlete’s loyalty to the brand of sports. The result of studying of the general guesses showed us that there were meaningful differences between men and women at the potential of loyalty and popularity of sport cloth brand. According to the result ads, lifestyle and amount of ads had the most importance for the athlete. This result is showing us that the people who attempt to buy the cloth of special brand want sale service like season auction, product guarantee, giving gift to people and also the quality of sport cloth. Therefore it seems that the consumers of special brand start buying this cloth with different causes that can be because of different information or experiment. About this subject Hoch & Ha (1986) said that “the previous information of costumers will affect the way of buying that can be because of ads, others advice or previous experiment of using. Anyway the quality of service and product has more importance for the costumers and that makes the idea of changing brand for the costumers. Also Kharazmi et al (2015) reported that the most reason of loyalty was the environment of store and getting effected from others.

The results of guesses generally showed us that all of the reasons effect the loyalty of pro athletes but descending ads, lifestyle and name of the brand are at the top level, comparing to the others. These results does not match the foreign research like Hoch & Ha ,that is based on the importance of the brand name, realization of quality and value of product at the loyalty and popularity of costumers, Keler et al (1998) that think the name of brand is absolutely showing the value of product. Wong & Sidek (2008) effect of loyalty reasons to the business name comparing to the sports brand is the most important if introducing of that brand. Angelis & Rigopoulou (2009), Wang & Sidek (2008) influences brand loyalty towards sports brands, Angelis & Rigopoulou (2009) name that is selected by the board for the brands, which represent the most known brands and brand share among other factors most important factor in the success of the brand is known.

Anyway the final result of research told us that lifestyle and name of brand correctly could show the level of loyalty of pro athletes. About the ads it confirms the result of Kharazmi et al (2015) research. This result suggests that name of brand which is both identity and container of the product makes a good point for the loyalty. it means that special brands that have high quality, offers different beautiful styles to the costumers.

Generally the result of this research showed that costumers for buying a brand have different reasons. These reasons might be logical, emotional, personal or mixing of them. These reasons make the costumers by buying one or some brand, promote their buying usage. Therefore by passing time, loyalty to a brand would be firmed. According to the result one of these reasons is trusty name and the vision that it make for itself. That attracts the costumers to buying that brand and affects the repetition of that. Also loyalty to a brand which made by different model of ads is the most important character of choices in buying that can be effected by ads, effecting from others and lifestyle. It can be showed that the character of sex is affecting loyalty and popularity of sport clothes by comparing the loyalty of pro athlete according to sex. With considering the importance of effect of sex, companies would be advised to have blending of ads, lifestyle and name of the brand in their mind for their marketing. Because creating the loyalty to a brand needs the investment in marketing program, especially for the current and capable costumers. Also for affecting the athlete every brand would be advice to product cloth according to their sport field until the loyalty to the brand producer of that sport field cloth increases. With

considering the importance of brand name and ads at the reasons of athlete's loyalty it must be pay special attention to the level of ads by media and other ads and should be firmed. To the business man in the field of sport cloth would be advised to in their next buying beside ads pay attention to their quality of service and the quality of product and improve these two for their success and keeping their current costumers. This would be possible with effecting schematization. This schematization should be simple and practical. There should not be any condition or haze off course this schematization should be supported by preparing product and suitable service because otherwise it faces fail. And schematization of creating loyalty at costumers should be performance at the suitable condition and if competitors do the same way companies not only fail also it would increase the cost for them. According to the characters that effect the keeping and creating loyalty and because loyalty is inner meaning that make the belief of people and it cause for us to see the samples but the point is that this observation can't confirm of existing or unexacting of loyalty and should be taking care of in other researches.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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