

Relationship between Brand Perception, Brand Identification, Brand Emotion and Brand Loyalty for Sports Event Sponsor Company

Jung-Hee Jung¹ and Ill-Gwang Kim^{2*}

¹Department of Sport Management, Dankook University, Korea; Jjhee4288@hanmail.net

²Department of Leisure Sport, Seowon University, Korea; whyhow1023@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between brand perception, brand identification, brand emotion and brand loyalty for sports event sponsor company. Study subjects were ARENA, a sponsor company for 30th ARENA National Masters Swimming Competition and 246 male and female adult swimmers over 20 years old. Collected survey data were analyzed using convenience sampling method. Regarding data analysis, Cronbach's α analysis, convergent validity and discriminant validity analysis were conducted for frequency analysis and reliability analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.0 and Amos 18.0, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was conducted to test Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), model goodness of fit and individual hypotheses. Study results are as follows. First, only brand position among the brand perception factors significantly affected brand identification, and brand identification positively affected brand emotion. Furthermore, study results showed brand emotion affected both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, but affected behavioral loyalty more strongly.

Keywords: Brand Emotion, Brand Identification, Brand Loyalty, Brand Perception

1. Introduction

Company's participation in sports event has an objective to improve their company communication effects. In other words, companies are utilizing sports sponsorship as a marketing tool because it is more effective to use sports than to use other promotion media, and the effects are maximized when utilizing by combining the sports sponsorship with other promotion media¹.

When the companies are using sport event, they have advantages to block advertisement avoiding attitude of media recipients and it plays a role to form a number of large size target groups with identical purpose by binding the audiences together who visit the arena as well as TV audiences². Consumers concentrate or participate especially in their interested sports events and recognize the companies or brands which are sponsoring the sports events as well. In this regard, Cornwell TB³ appointed that long-term sponsoring affects the memory and perception of the consumers, and 'the state that number

of advertisements are mixed and placed (clutter)' in the arena negatively affects the memory and perception of the customers.

From the view points of brand management, actual effects can be measured that brand knowledge affects consumers' responses about each different source in marketing program. Studies about brand knowledge were empirically deducted in consumer behaviors or advertisements⁴. In other words, brand knowledge is considered the tendency of consumer's response who encounters the brand or advertisement. Therefore, brand knowledge can be an important concept to identify the brand perception level about company's sport sponsorship. And, it is very important how the consumer recognizes the product or service quality. Reason is that consumers' perceived product quality directly affects their purchase decision or brand loyalty and brings high price and profit.

From the marketing perspectives on the other hand, perceived aspects that the brand is just expensive or has state-of-the-art functions or has scarcity are not

* Author for correspondence

sufficient, but the consumer should feel the values which are higher than those aspects. Brand position⁵, a value which is additionally or differentially added in the product or service of the brand acts as an intrinsic clue to the consumers at product evaluation, and consequently affects consumer's evaluation and purchase decision for product or service.

Purchase of specific brand by the consumer can be considered to buy symbolic values of the product. Reason why the consumers put more emphasis on the symbolic meaning when consuming and using the product is that the consumers not only use it as a communication way with social members through symbolism, but also their self-concept can be utilized to be formed, maintained and expanded. Brand identification is the sense of unity or the degree to identify the consumers themselves with the specific brand which reflects their self-image⁶, and it acts as a friend who joins when the consumers express or improve themselves in their life or as an expression which symbolizes the aspiring group⁷.

Therefore, consumers like the brand better when they experience strong identification about the specific brand, and as this emotion continues, they perceive the brand as a special thing⁸; and furthermore, the possibility is increasing that this strong emotion develops to brand loyalty.

Brand is a symbol representing a company and is a core differentiation source influencing the competitive advantage. The purpose of this study resulting from this importance is to identify whether the brand identification is formed by sports sponsor company's brand perception factors and subsequently connects to positive brand emotion and finally spreads as the brand loyalty. When deeply looking at the performing procedures through company's sports sponsorship, these results could suggest efficient marketing strategies in sports sponsorship at working level brand management along with in-depth discussion about sports event sponsor company's brand perception.

2. Theoretical Background for the Research Hypotheses

2.1 Relationship between Brand Perception and Brand Identification

Brand perception factors were composed of personal factors like perceived quality and knowledge and social factors like brand status and symbolism. These brand

perception factors are highly related with self-concept. In other words, consumers prefer the products corresponding with their image and express their personality or characteristics through the products corresponding with their self-image⁹. When the consumers highly perceive the quality level of the brand, they have increasing trust and friendliness for the brand and consequently, the formation of identification is increasing.

In this regard, Shin JK¹⁰ mentioned consumers have the desires to strengthen their self-image through high quality brand, and perceived quality of luxury brands acts as an important factor in brand identification. An GH¹¹ asserted in their study targeting brand communities that the members with high brand knowledge have relatively stronger influence of brand identification on brand loyalty than the members with low brand knowledge.

On the other hand, brand position means the dedication to high quality and customers, and the customers who had or experienced the brands with high brand position have increasing pride according to the possession of the brand and have the senses of emotional affection and commitment. Like this, brand identification occurs when the consumers are related with high position brand and this is to increase the self-concept of consumers themselves¹². This means the consumers are constructing the identification about the brand depending on the brand symbolism which could reflect their self-concept.

Dittmar H¹³ mentioned symbolic function of the product is the symbol of shared social identity and social identity is greatly affected by the symbolism regarding the possession of specific product. This means that high sense of unity is formed by the products or brands with high symbolism. Therefore in this study, following hypotheses are set based on the preceding studies which were suggested at the above.

- H1: Perceived quality will positively affect the brand identification.
- H2: Brand knowledge will positively affect the brand identification.
- H3: Brand position will positively affect the brand identification.
- H4: Brand symbolism will positively affect the brand identification.

2.2 Relationship between Brand Identification, Brand Emotion and Brand Loyalty

Consumers perceive specific brand and evaluate whether

the brand corresponds with their image and at this moment, brand identification is formed. Consumers can experience positive emotions like pleasure or happiness in consumption process because they can be satisfied with the desire for ego-expression by using the brand with highly corresponding self-image¹⁴. In other words, brand image can cause positive emotions about the brand when it agrees with self-image of the consumer and this brand emotion improves the brand loyalty¹⁵. Close relationship between brand and consumer is determined by the degree of positive emotion which is caused by the brand¹⁶. Consumers' emotions form the relationship between various brand associations and positively affect the brand attitude, conviction and behavior, and the consumers who have experienced positive emotions when using the specific brand have increasing brand loyalty about the brand¹⁷. Additionally,¹⁸ mentioned when consumers feel happiness, pleasure and affection about the brand, they have stronger attitudinal commitment and purchasing loyalty, and¹⁹ mentioned the consumers who are more emotionally committed in the brand have stronger motives about brand purchasing and supporting behaviors, and this could cause more active activities for brand continuance like securing new loyal customers by spreading the oral transmission. Based on the preceding studies like this, following hypotheses were established.

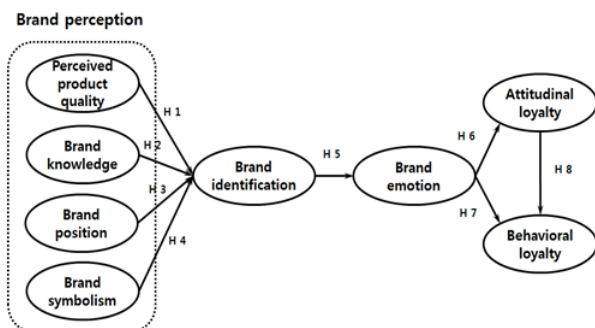


Figure 1. Research model.

H5: Brand identification will positively affect brand emotion.

H6: Brand emotion will positively affect attitudinal loyalty.

H7: Brand emotion will positively affect behavioral loyalty.

Based on these hypotheses, study models are established like (Figure 1).

Research model.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Subject and Sampling Method

Study subject is 'ARENA' which is a sponsoring company for '30th ARENA National Masters Swimming Competition' and investigation subjects are targeting 270 male and female adult swimmers over 20 years old among the competition participants. Regarding study method, direct survey questionnaires were distributed at competition place, Seoul Olympic Swimming Pool after explaining study objective and purpose and getting approvals from Seoul Swimming Federation and Korea Swimming Federation officials which were holding and supervising the competition. Sampling was conducted by simple sampling method and questionnaires were written by self-administration method. Investigation period was from 2014 Aug 9th to 10th (2 days) and 246 survey data were used for final analysis except 24 unfaithfully written data. Detailed characteristics of investigation subjects are like (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of subjects

Variable	Sub-variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	107	43.5
	Female	139	56.5
Age	20s	81	32.9
	30s	61	24.8
	40s	64	26.0
	50s	34	13.8
	60s more	6	2.4
Job	Workers	96	39.0
	Graduate(under)	45	18.3
	Homemaker	40	16.3
	Self-employed	34	13.8
	Etc	27	11.0
	Unemployed	4	1.6
Swimming carrier	1 year less	27	11.0
	1 to 3 years less	68	27.6
	3 to 5 years less	42	17.1
	5 to 7 years less	22	8.9
	7 to 9 years less	17	6.9
	9 years more	70	28.5

3.2 Operational Definition and Measurement about Construct

Questionnaires used in this study were amended and used according to the purpose of this study using the questionnaires which were tested in preceding studies with reliability and validity. Brand perception was composed of perceived quality, brand knowledge, brand

position and brand symbolism. Perceived quality was defined as consumers' evaluation about overall excellence or superiority of 'ARENA' and prepared of 3 questionnaires which were used by²⁰ based on²¹'s measurement categories. Brand knowledge was defined as technical/evaluative information which was saved in consumers' memories related with 'ARENA'. In order to measure this, 4 questionnaires were prepared by amending the questionnaires used by^{22,23} based on subjective knowledge measurement methods of²⁴. Brand position was defined as the degree of perceived position or reputation about 'ARENA'. In order to measure this, the categories used by^{25,26} were amended according to the study situations and 4 questionnaires were prepared. Brand symbolism was defined as the degree of the meaning of 'ARENA' for the consumers and questionnaires used by²⁷ Bhat & Reddy (1998) were amended for the study and finally, 4 questionnaires were prepared.

Brand identification was defined as the degree of sense of unity with 'ARENA' and questionnaires used by^{12,27} were amended for the study and finally, 4 questionnaires were prepared.

Brand emotion was defined as the positive emotional reaction which could be produced by 'ARENA' and 3 questionnaires were prepared based on measurement questionnaires of¹⁷.

Brand loyalty was classified into attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. Behavioral loyalty was defined as the emotional commitment in 'ARENA' and behavioral loyalty was defined as behavioral commitment in 'ARENA'. In order to measure these loyalty, questionnaires which were used in the researches of^{17,28,29} were amended for the purpose of this study and 3 questionnaires were prepared respectively.

All answers about the questionnaires in each category were measured using 5-step Likert scale and in order to identify the characteristics of study subjects, gender, age, occupation and award winning career were included.

3.3 Data Analysis

For the data analysis for this study, SPSSWIN Ver. 21.0 and AMOS 18.0 were used. Frequency analysis was conducted to identify the nature of study subjects, and Cronbach's α test was conducted for reliability analysis, and correlation analysis was conducted to test discriminant validity. In addition, structural equation model analysis was conducted to test confirmatory factor analysis, model goodness of fit and individual hypothesis.

4. Results

4.1 Validity and Reliability of Measurement

Reliability review results using Cronbach's α values in this study showed the values of .820~.906 which exceeded standard criterion, .7 and showed internal consistency³⁰. In addition, in order to review discriminant validity and intensive validity of the scales about composing factors used in this study, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. As a results, one each questionnaire was removed in the category of brand knowledge, brand position, brand symbolism and brand identification. And, as factor loading in each research unit was identified to be highly significant, intensive validity was proven.

Goodness of fit analysis results about the entire model showed $\chi^2=384.300$, $df=222$, $p=.000$, GFI=.888, CFI=.963, TLI=.954, RMR=.046, RMSEA=.055. As all values showed satisfactory levels of recommended values (GFI, CFI, TLI higher than .8~.9, RMR, RMSEA lower than .05~.08), it can be judged that suggested relationship model in this study corresponds with the satisfactory levels with the analysis data which were acquired in the reality.

Calculation results of construct reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) using standard factor loading which was acquired from confirmatory factor analysis showed 832~.939 of concept reliability exceeding .7 and .623~.839 of AVE exceeding .5. The representativeness about relevant study units was generally identified in the categories used in this study.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis results showed that discriminant validity between each research unit was secured as the correlation coefficients were from .267~.782 and didn't include 1 in 95% confidence interval³¹. And, multicollinearity problem between each concept was not identified as the correlation coefficient didn't exceed .8.³². For precise test of discriminant validity,³³ suggested the discriminant validity if the AVE value in each research unit is bigger than correlation coefficient square value. Results showed that the range of AVE values was identified to be from .623 to .839, and the range of correlation coefficient square value was to be from .267 to .782(.071²~.612²), and it is judged that there is no problem in discriminant validity.

4.3 Testing of Hypothesis

Regarding the structural equation model analysis results

Table 2. Testing of hypothesis

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	S.E.	t	p
H 1	Perceived product quality → Brand identification	.080	.054	1.440	.150
H 2	Brand knowledge → Brand identification	.049	.059	.766	.444
H 3	Brand position → Brand identification	.718	.215	2.922	.003
H 4	Brand symbolism → Brand identification	.097	.186	.428	.668
H 5	Brand identification → Brand emotion	.916	.081	12.455	.000
H 6	Brand emotion → Attitudinal loyalty	.605	.056	8.389	.000
H 7	Brand emotion → Behavioral loyalty	.715	.083	9.646	.000

Model fit: $\chi^2=394.836$, $df=234$, $p=.000$, GFI=.884, CFI=.964, TLI=.957, RMR=.051, RMSEA=.053

for hypothesis testing, model goodness of fit showed that most levels exceeded recommended values ($\chi^2=394.836$, $df=234$, $p=.000$, GFI=.884, CFI=.964, TLI=.957, RMR=.051, RMSEA=.053). Therefore, established research hypotheses and models are judged to have no general problem as empirical data. Hypothesis testing results are as follows (Table 2).

Hypothesis 1, 'Perceived quality will positively affect brand identification' was rejected with path coefficient=.080, t value=1.440. Hypothesis 2, 'Brand knowledge will positively affect brand identification' was rejected with path coefficient=.049, t value=.766. Hypothesis 3, 'Brand position will positively affect brand identification' was adopted with path coefficient=.718, t value=2.922, which showed significant effects at $p<.003$. Hypothesis 4, 'Brand symbolism will positively affect brand identification' was rejected with path coefficient=.097, t value=.428. Hypothesis 5, 'Brand identification will positively affect brand emotion' was adopted with path coefficient=.916, t value=12.455, which showed significant effects at $p<.001$. Hypothesis 6, 'Brand emotion will positively affect attitudinal loyalty' was adopted with path coefficient=.605, t value=8.389, which showed significant effects at $p<.001$. Hypothesis 7, 'Brand emotion will positively affect behavioral loyalty' was adopted with path coefficient=.715, t value=9.646, which showed significant effects at $p<.001$.

5. Discussion

Objective of this study was to identify the relationship between brand identification, brand emotion and brand loyalty according to the brand perception about sport event sponsor company. Based on the statistically significant results after hypothesis testing, the following are to be discussed.

First, only the brand position factor was identified to positively affect brand identification among the composing factors about brand perception. These results are interpreted when consumers use, purchase or perceive the brand with high reputation or fame, they make effort to reflect their image psychologically and socially through the brand. It can be understood that consumers show the tendency to express their values by taking advantage of social position of the brand⁸. Report that consumers who purchase luxury brand affect brand identification type each differently according to their consumption values which are hedonic, qualitative, conspicuous and social values. Like this, brand identification occurs as consumers connect with high position brand. This can be regarded as a behavior to raise their self-concept¹².

Second, brand identification was identified to positively affect brand emotion. These study results mean as the consumers feel more about the sense of unity by reflecting their self-image in the specific brand, the brand can form more friendly and positive emotions to the consumers. In other words, consumers can experience the emotions to satisfy their desires like happiness and positive emotions in the process of purchase, use and consumption¹⁴. When sponsoring the sports event, company's medium and long-term sponsoring for specific events with tradition and fame is regarded as a strategy to target the specific consumer rather than the sponsoring for various events because social brand identification more affects brand emotion than personal brand identification¹⁰.

Third, brand emotion was identified to positively affect attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. If consumers feel positive emotional reaction from the brand, this means those emotional reactions could be developed to behavioral commitment like continuous use or more purchase of the brand as well as the emotional commitment like friendliness toward the brand close relationship between the brand and consumer is

determined by the degree of positive emotion caused by the brand¹⁶, and when the consumer feels strong hedonic emotion about the brand, attitudinal and behavioral commitment toward the brand is strengthened and furthermore, long-term loyalty relationship is formed¹⁰.

6. Conclusion

Objective of this study was to identify the effects of consumers' brand perception about the sports event sponsor company on the effects of brand identification, brand emotion and brand loyalty. Conclusions based on study results are as follows.

First, when consumers are greatly aware of high fame and friendly reputation about the brand, they showed the strong tendency to identify themselves with the brand. Consumers who use the brand by sponsoring the sports event with clear determination of win and lose and ranking have the strong conviction that their purchase and use decision was right when the sponsor brand agrees with the brand used by the winner and the consumers. Therefore, sports event sponsor company needs a strategic approach to build up the brand position by sponsoring their company brand to the players who have currently excellent athletic performance or future potential.

In addition, brand identification was identified to greatly form the positive emotion toward the brand. Consumers form friendly emotions which are similar with emotional sympathy toward the brand by socially expressing and harmonizing their self-image toward the brand. Therefore, sport event sponsor company needs to pay more attention to the promotion activities toward the company brand for the consumers who are doing specific sports activities, rather than pay attention to the efforts to get positive emotions about the brand itself.

Finally, as the consumers have more good feelings like happiness from the brand purchase or use, their attitudinal and behavioral commitment toward the brand are strong. In addition, this brand emotion was identified to increase the behavioral loyalty more rather than attitudinal loyalty. This implies sports event sponsor brand not only builds up the psychological loyalty like consumer's purchasing intention or purchasing attitudes, but also more strengthens the behavioral factors which can be externally expressed. Therefore, the company needs budget planning and approach to support the sports event which can be connected with the company's brand attributes.

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