

Examining Antecedents of Brand Loyalty on Sportswear: An Empirical Investigation of University Students in Hong Kong

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Abstract

To extend the current understanding of brand loyalty in the sportswear industry, this article discusses six factors that influence brand loyalty of university students towards the Hong Kong sportswear market. Conclusions were drawn based on responses collected through online questionnaires. A total of 205 college students participated in the study. The final results showed that only product quality and brand name affect Hong Kong university students' brand loyalty towards sportswear. However, based on the whole study, other factors (i.e., service quality, store environment, style and promotions) also play a vital role in sportswear marketing. This research provided insight for sportswear marketers in creating proper marketing strategies for the sportswear industry.

Keywords: brand loyalty, sportswear, university student

1. Introduction

In recent years, the number of people who choose to wear sportswear in their daily life has increased (Global Industry Analysts, Inc., 2015). This phenomenon is particularly reflected in young generations, who believe that wearing such clothes represents a relaxed lifestyle (Wong & Sidek, 2008). Moreover, with the development of various sportswear brands (e.g., Nike, Adidas, Asics, and Under Armour), people have more choices in brands. People wear the sportswear of some brands because it demonstrates fashionable taste and is a good way to get along with others (Bouchet, Hillairet, & Bodet, 2013). The tendency of people to purchase a variety of sportswear has boosted the sales of the entire industry.

According to a report by Catalyst Corporate Finance (2014), for the global sportswear sector, sales of the global sportswear market have increased dramatically. Sales of the sportswear market rose by 6.9% between 2012 and 2013, greatly exceeding the growth rate in sales of global apparel (5.1%). In 2013, sales of sportswear accounted for 15.3% of the whole clothing market. Similarly, a report by the China Sporting Goods Federation (2015) showed that in China, the sportswear industry increased its value to 241.8 billion RMB in 2014. Compared with the data in 2013, this amounts to 16% growth. Especially in Hong Kong, people think highly of exercise. According to an article from InterNations (no date), sports play an important role in Hong Kong residents' daily life. An abundance of people considers owning professional sportswear as crucial (HKTDC Research, 2016). Certified by Euromonitor International (2016), the value of sportswear in Hong Kong has increased dramatically by 12% and reached HK\$11.1 billion. Furthermore, as a tourist city, retailing is one of the main sources of earning in Hong Kong (Planning Department, 2009). As is well known, Fa Yuen Street is called "Sportswear Street" or "Sneaker Street" for the dozens of sports footwear outlets located there. It attracts people from all over the world, especially visitors from Mainland China, because of the low price and diversity of goods. The increasing sales of sportswear in Hong Kong depend not only on the visitors but also on the local people. In summary, sportswear has a large market in Hong Kong.

Based on Catalyst Corporate Finance's (2014) analysis, we can see clearly that Nike has the largest market share in the world (total revenue in 2013 was US\$26,286 million), followed by Adidas (US\$19,465 million), V.F Corporation (US\$11,163 million), PUMA (US\$4,185 million), Amer Sports (US\$2,942 million) and Under Armour (US\$2,332 million). It is obvious that different brands constitute different percentages of the overall sportswear market. Based on research by Sportswear Brands Strategies in 2013, the reason these companies take up the majority of the market is that they do everything they can to attract new customers and also focus on cultivating old consumers into loyal customers.

Additionally, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) argued that the market shares of a brand can be roughly constituted by 1) people (maybe loyal) who repeatedly buy products from this brand, 2) people who buy products only from this brand, and 3) people who have purchased this brand for the first time. Thus, blindly focusing on attracting new customers cannot effectively increase sales. To expand their market shares, companies have to turn existing consumers into loyal customers. Aaker (1991), who has contributed considerably to the academic research on marketing, stated that the most important aspect in marketing has changed from acquiring new consumers to keep existing customers. Reichheld and Schefter (2000) also indicated that obtaining new customers is more difficult and costly compared with retaining old customers. Based on Reichheld's (1993) research, if a company reduced the migration of consumers by near 5%, the profits of that company would rise almost 60%. Therefore, if a company wants to increase the sales of its brand, it needs to understand why consumers buy such products repeatedly.

In Hong Kong, the number of college students who participate in sports is increasing rapidly, and this special consumer group is huge for the sportswear market. According to the figures in the Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics (2014), there were 91,553 full-time students studying at the eight universities in Hong Kong. Compared with 1999, this figure has grown by 30.7%. Their ages are centralized, and they have a strong thirst for new things, especially famous brands and fashion clothes. Once a sportswear product becomes popular, the amount of students who pursue this product will increase dramatically in a short time. With the rise in Hong Kong's personal consumption, the level of consumption of college students has also increased gradually. Most important, they have plenty of time to participate in school communities and sports activities after class. Thus, they have more opportunities to get in touch with sports and to buy sportswear. College students living in Hong Kong contribute largely to the sportswear market. For this reason, managers should keep their eyes on them.

Although plenty of studies discuss brand loyalty, only a few mention this concept in the sportswear market, especially in the Hong Kong sportswear market. Additionally, university students play an important role in the consumer market; they have strong demand in the sportswear market. Their consumer behavior has a strong impact on social consumer behavior, especially young consumer behavior. It is necessary to understand why Hong Kong college students choose particular sportswear brands and why they are hardly affected by other brands. Thus, the main purpose of this research is to investigate factors that influence university students' brand loyalty in the Hong Kong sportswear market and provide some references for companies that want to raise their sales in the sportswear industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Brand Loyalty in Marketing Literature

What a "loyal" customer is has been a heated topic among marketers and consumer theorists over the past 50 years. Although the initial concept applied to brands and later stores, the notion of consumer loyalty has been extended to involve numerous subjects. In 1923, Copeland first proposed the term "brand insistence" to explain brand loyalty. After that, Bhattacharya (1997) noted the reason that consumers had brand loyalty toward a product. He believed it was mainly because of their previous usage experience. In addition, people also found that the phenomenon of customers repurchasing some products or services of the same brand was the direct result of something underlying the customer's behavior. Accordingly, Tucker (1964) put forward that the original intention of brand loyalty is a choice behavior whereby consumers have a preference toward a product. Lipstein (1968) explained brand loyalty as the proportion of people who bought a specific brand and repurchased it when they needed the product. What is more, Sheth and Park (1974) supported Tucker's point and explained brand loyalty as a tendency of emotion, evaluation and behavioral reaction toward a particular brand.

In 1970, combined with the conceptual definitions proposed by other researchers, Jacoby and Olson explained brand loyalty (BL) with six necessary conditions: 1) the biased (i.e., non-random); 2) behavioral response (i.e., purchase); 3) expressed over time; 4) by some decision-making unit; 5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands; and 6) a function of psychological processes (p.80). Indeed, loyal consumers often have biased purchasing behavior towards a specific product or service; they do not buy the things they need randomly. They will compare the brand they have chosen against other alternatives from time to time. And the behavior is likely to be relative to the actual purchase and tested between one, two or even more brands. Moreover, Jacoby and Olson (1970) also stated that from a managerial view, it was vital for managers to find the pattern of purchases, and marketing managers must have the ability to alternate the presence of repeat purchase behavior (RPB). If a brand wants to be successful, the managers will have to predict the pattern of a consumer's future purchase behavior, rather than their next purchase behavior. Based on Oliver's (1999) research, brand loyalty can be divided into four parts: cognitive loyalty, effective loyalty, conation loyalty and action loyalty. In addition, he defined brand loyalty as a deep-rooted promise to re-purchase or support a favored product/service continually, thereby leading people to buy the same brand or same brand-set repeatedly. However, the influence of the situation and other things may affect consumers to switch their behavior. In

Day's (1969) opinion, brand loyalty had two indicators: action and affection.

In marketing apparel, brand loyalty means consumers repurchase a specific brand's products or services. If the product or service is reliable and the quality meets customers' needs, customers are likely to buy it again (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Based on this view, Bruwer and Buller (2013) used the level of involvement to test the relationship between customers and brand loyalty. Salari and Motiee (2015) investigated brand loyalty using four factors. They believed that brand hearsay, brand evidence and brand satisfaction can influence brand attitude, thereby affecting brand loyalty. According to research by Malinowska-Olszowy (2005), consumers choose to repurchase some products or services of the same brand mainly because they believe the brand has correct product characteristics, figures, a good quality, and a suitable price. For this reason, marketers or marketing managers should gain more knowledge about brand loyalty (Lau, Chang, Moon, & Liu, 2006). To raise the sale of the brand, it is very important for managers to establish and retain brand loyalty in both theory and practice.

In a study of Knox and Denison (2000), consumers who were loyal spent more money on their favorite brand even if it exceeded their budget, whereas other consumers who did not have loyalty to the brand did not do so. Mattila (2001) argued that loyalty can raise consumers' "forgiveness", should a mistake in service happen, and the resistance to extra costs also decreases. Based on Aaker's (1996) study, brand loyalty is an important aspect of brand equity, and a company can use it as a competition force, react against the competitor's innovation and malign price competition. Wilkie (1994) regarded brand loyalty as the combination of the approving manner and buying behavior toward a specific brand. This explanation shows that customers are loyal when their attitude and behavior are approbatory at the same time. King, Sparks and Wang (2013) also stated that brand loyalty's conception can be divided into three aspects: behavioral, attitudinal and composite. What behavioral loyalty offers is a realistic view of the performance of a particular brand compared with its competitors (O'Malley, 1998). According to Dick and Basu (1994), using behavior as a measurement to test whether a customer was loyal to a brand is not sufficient. Odin, Odin, and Valette-Florence (2001) added that behavioral measures have to be judged because they cannot differentiate true loyalty and fake loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty can describe customers' biases, promises, or buying purposes toward a specific brand. Moreover, attitudinal loyalty combines temperamental agreement with and attitude toward a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Bianchi et al. (2014) claimed that consumers' brand loyalty will be intensified when they have a positive emotion toward the brand. If brands make customers 'happy', 'joyful', or 'affectionate', consumers will likely spend their money on this brand, and their attitudinal loyalty will also be strengthened (Matzler, Bidmon & Grabner-Kräuter, 2006). According to these theories, Nam, Ekinci, and Whyatt (2011) focus especially on attitudinal loyalty, and finds that customer satisfaction is a mediating variable between brand equity and brand loyalty.

Additionally, according to Schoenbachler and Aurand (2004), many studies have mentioned brand loyalty based on the view of the marketer and paid particular attention to the worth of consumer loyalty to their company and the way of managing loyalty. However, only a few studies have been conducted based on the customers' view, questioning why and how customers become loyal and continue to be loyal to brands. In addition, according to research by Chen and Gursoy (2001), customers might be loyal before they visit a tourist destination. Based on this theory, we can conclude that consumers can be loyal to a particular brand even when they do not buy the product from this brand. The main purpose of this paper is to show the customer's opinions to managers, and the concept of attitudinal loyalty is based on consumers' view. Using attitudinal loyalty as a measurement can easily uncover the psychological factor of brand loyalty (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002; Mellens, Dekimpe & Steenkamp, 1995). Thus, the definition of attitudinal loyalty was adopting in this study to define brand loyalty as customers' intention to buy or willingness to recommend this brand to their friends or relatives. In summary, this research utilizes attitudinal loyalty and limits brand loyalty as the motivation of customers to shop or the willingness to suggest a sportswear brand.

2.2 University Students

Williams (2010) stated that university students are one of the most important group from marketers' view. The ages are between 18 and 30 years old, contributing to a large part of the 18-30 demographic, the golden consumer group that entrepreneurs covet. Based on a report by Brand Republic in 2013, students not only spend more than 3.7 hours per day online but also have consumption power of over £13 billion. Students have more opportunities to get in touch with the online promotion of sportswear products, and the student market is a lucrative market. Because college students are not permanent, are skeptical and do not have enough money, it is not easy for marketers to penetrate this market (Williams, 2010). According to the research by Olenski (2015), college students have not shaped unbreakable brand loyalties. If a specific brand does not make an effort to keep them, this group of people can shift their favorite brand to another one easily when they graduate, begin to work, have their own families or retire.

University students are the main customers and they have great power to set trends of sportswear marketing in the future. Their consumer behavior not only mirrors young people's consumer concepts but also reflect the value

orientation of young generations (Liu, 2014). In addition, Hong Kong is an ideal city to investigate the influencing factors of brand loyalty due to it being an affluent place with plenty of advertisements. In addition, there are a large amount of shopping malls located next to schools and residential areas in Hong Kong. University students in Hong Kong can take different types of public transportation to malls and easily go shopping with their friends (Chan & Cheng, 2009).

2.3 Hypotheses

This study aims to analyze six influential antecedents of loyalty in university students towards a specific sportswear brand in the Hong Kong sportswear market. Therefore, a series of hypotheses were developed to investigate the relationship between brand loyalty and the influencing factors mentioned above.

H1: University students' perception of brand name is positively related to their brand loyalty towards a specific sportswear brand in the Hong Kong market.

H2: University students' perception of store environment is positively related to their brand loyalty towards a specific sportswear brand in the Hong Kong market.

H3: University students' perception of service quality is positively related to their brand loyalty towards a specific sportswear brand in the Hong Kong market.

H4: University students' perception of product quality is positively related to their brand loyalty towards a specific sportswear brand in the Hong Kong market.

H5: University students' perception of style is positively related to their brand loyalty towards a specific sportswear brand in the Hong Kong market.

H6: University students' perception of promotion is positively related to their brand loyalty towards a specific sportswear brand in the Hong Kong market.

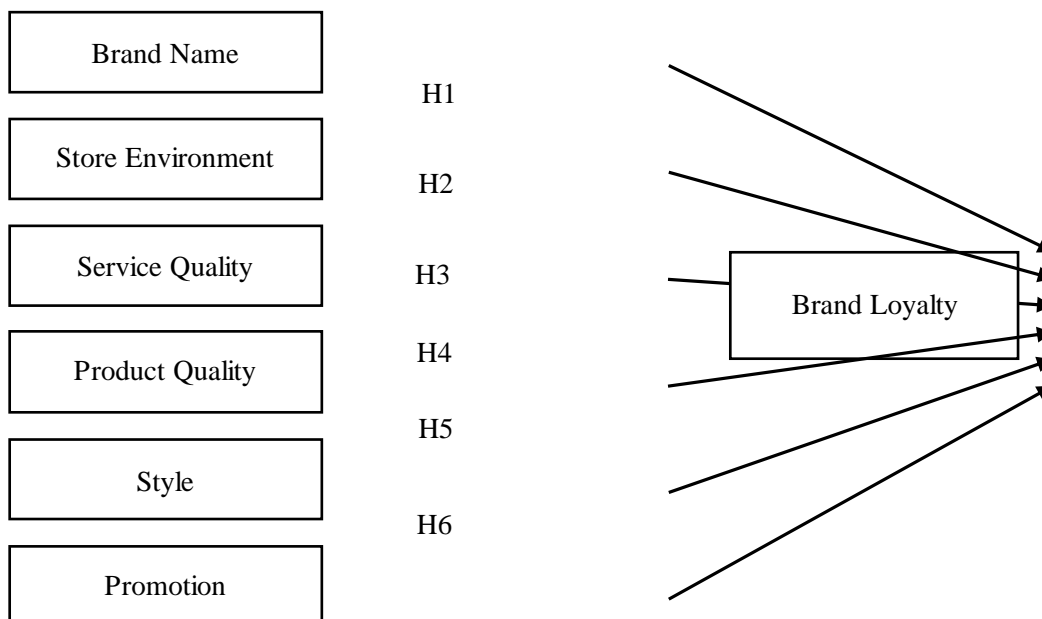


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of variables

3. Method

A soft copy of the questionnaire was uploaded to www.sojump.com and given out to university students currently studying in Hong Kong. The original questionnaire was drafted in English; for the sake of students understanding the questionnaire well, it was translated into Mandarin and a bilingual final version was used for the survey. Scales from Wong and Sidek (2008) and Nam et al. (2011) were adopted and revised for the purpose of this study. Six antecedents that might influence university students' brand loyalty, namely brand name, product quality, style, promotion, service quality and store environment were investigated. All items in the scale were phrased as a 5-point Likert scale (1= completely disagree, 2=disagree, 3=I am not sure, 4= agree, and 5= absolutely agree). This research included the following steps: 1) We examined and defined the factors that may influence brand loyalty of sportswear brand. 2) We

used other researchers' studies as references and set up a questionnaire that is suitable for this research. 3) We distributed the questionnaire and collected the data. 3) We used descriptive statistical analysis, an independent sample T-test, reliability tests, correlations and regressions to analyze the data. 4) We investigate which factors mentioned above can influence a sportswear's brand loyalty in the Hong Kong market among university students who study in Hong Kong. 5) We then established conclusions and considerations for further study.

4. Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for demographic variables

Variables	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	94	45.9
	Female	111	54.1
Age	Under 18	7	3.4
	19-29	177	86.3
	30-39	15	7.3
	40-49	2	1.0
	Above 49	4	2.0
Your Favourite Sportswear Brand	Nike	111	54.1
	Adidas	44	21.5
	Puma	5	2.4
	Under Armour	7	3.4
	Asics	8	3.9
	Reebok	7	3.4
	Others	23	11.2

Table 1 illustrates that the percentages of male respondents (45.9%) and female respondents (54.1%) were almost even. The ages of university students mainly belonged to the category of 19~29 years, with 86.3% of respondents. A total of 10.3% of students were older than 30 years old. According to the variable "your favorite sportswear brand", 54.1% of respondents liked to shop at Nike, followed by Adidas (21.5%). In addition, 3.9% of respondents favored Asics, and only 3.4% of respondents preferred Under Armour and Reebok. A total of 11.2% of people chose "others", which means that besides these five brands, university students in Hong Kong also like to purchase sportswear products from other brands.

Table 2. The relationship between gender, favourite sportswear brand and brand loyalty

Variables	Gender		Statistics
Brand	Male(N,%)	Female(N,%)	Chi-Square
1. Nike	59(62.8%)	52(46.8%)	7.256
2. Adidas	16(17.0%)	28(25.2%)	
3. Puma	3(3.2%)	2(1.8%)	
4. Under Armour	2(2.1%)	5(4.5%)	
5. Asics	4(4.3%)	4(3.6%)	
6. Reebok	2(2.1%)	5(4.5%)	
7. Others	8(8.5%)	15(13.5%)	
Brand Loyalty	Male	Female	t
Mean	3.92	3.83	0.91
Std. Deviation	0.72	0.7	

Table 2 shows the relationship between gender, favorite sportswear brand and brand loyalty. Based on the variable for brand, male respondents and female respondents have the same view of brand choice. We also know that Nike was the most popular brand among people, regardless of gender (62.8% among males and 46.8% among females). Adidas was the second most popular sportswear brand (17.0% among males and 25.2% among females). Because the significance of the T-test was higher than 0.05, the t value was 0.91, and the two variances are equal, the results illustrate that the brand loyalties for males and females do not exhibit any differences. Additionally, the means of brand loyalty for both males (3.92) and females (3.83) were higher than 3.0, which is the midpoint on the 5-point Likert scale. Thus, most of the respondents strongly agreed that they were loyal to their favorite brand.

4.1 Reliability Test

Table 3. Influencing factors of brand loyalty

Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	SD
Brand Loyalty	3.99	0.87	0.84		
1. I will recommend this brand to someone who seeks my advice.				3.99	0.98
2. Next time, I will stay with this brand.				4.00	0.90
3. I will switch to other brands if I experience a problem with this brand.				3.63	1.12
Product Quality	4.07	0.71	0.86		
1. The size of the sportswear fits me very well.				4.05	0.84
2. The materials used by the brand are comfortable.				4.16	0.80
3. The brand has sufficient color.				4.10	0.89
4. The brand has good functional quality.				3.98	0.85
Style	3.93	0.73	0.84		
1. The brand provides a wide variety of styles.				3.91	0.92
2. The styles of the brand are suitable for me.				4.01	0.82
3. The styles of the brand have distinctive features.				3.80	0.91
4. The styles of the brand are trendy and fashionable.				4.00	0.90
Brand Name	3.78	0.76	0.78		
1. The brand is reputable.				4.32	0.84
2. The brand name and image attract me to purchase.				3.92	0.94
3. The brand name is selected regardless of the price.				3.30	1.07
4. The brand reflects my own personality.				3.57	1.03
Service Quality	3.63	0.81	0.91		
1. The salesperson at the store is well-trained.				3.45	0.96
2. The salesperson at the store is willing to help.				3.54	0.91
3. The salesperson at the store is friendly and courteous.				3.67	0.91
4. The salesperson at the store has a neat appearance.				3.87	0.87
Store Environment	3.62	0.76	0.84		
1. The brand has a good store location.				3.82	0.89
2. The brand has sufficient outlets.				3.70	1.04
3. The interior display is attractive.				3.58	0.91
4. The color and music inside the store are attractive.				3.40	0.86
Promotion	3.73	0.83	0.88		
1. The ads of the brand are attractive.				3.83	0.96
2. The ads of the brand attract me to purchase.				3.69	0.94
3. The window displays are attractive.				3.67	0.87

* Converse items (Brand Loyalty3) coded on a Likert Scale from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree have been re-coded reversely to 1=Strongly Agree to 5=Strongly Disagree.

As mentioned above, the main construction of the questionnaires used 5-point Likert-type scales. The figures in Table 3 illustrate the Cronbach's Alphas of brand loyalty, product quality, style, brand name, service quality, environment, and promotions. All of the figures were higher than 0.7, which demonstrated that these variables were all reliable. The highest mean score belongs to 'product quality' (Mean: 4.07, Std. Deviation: 0.71). In contrast, service quality (Mean: 3.63, standard deviation: 0.81) and store environment (Mean: 3.62, standard deviation: 0.76) had the lowest scores. Most of the university students thought their favorite sportswear brand had great product quality, but the service quality and store environment of the brand were not that good.

Moreover, the highest score of the whole items was for 'the brand is reputable', with a mean of 4.32 and standard deviation of 0.84. Most of the students believed their favorite sportswear brand was famous. One of the items 'I will switch to other brands if I experience a problem with this brand' was removed from further analyses, because of its negative correlation with factors in brand loyalty. The deletion of this item increased the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of brand loyalty from 0.39 to 0.84.

4.2 Correlations

Table 4. Correlation among the factors

Factor	BL	PQ	Style	BN	SQ	SE	Promotion
BL	1	0.54**	0.49**	0.54**	0.36**	0.40**	0.35**
PQ		1	0.71**	0.55**	0.48**	0.60**	0.54**
Style			1	0.65**	0.41**	0.55**	0.59**
BN				1	0.45**	0.58**	0.58**
SQ					1	0.63**	0.49**
SE						1	0.71**
Promotion							1

* Significant at the .05 level

** Significant at the .01 level

Pearson Correlation was used to examine whether the influencing factors, i.e., that product quality (PQ), style, brand

name (BN), service quality (SQ), store environment (SE) and promotions have a relationship with brand loyalty (BL). In Table 4, the figures illustrate that all factors had a strong relationship with brand loyalty ($p < 0.01$). However, the correlation between brand loyalty and promotion ($r = 0.35$) was not significant compared with the other items (product quality: $r = 0.54$, style: $r = 0.49$, store environment: $r = 0.40$), especially compared with brand name ($r = 0.54$).

4.3 Regression Test

Table 5. Results of regression testing

Factor	R^2	β	t	p	VIF
Model	0.39				
Product Quality		0.32*	3.82	0.00	2.36
Style		0.07	0.74	0.46	2.63
Brand Name		0.36*	4.50	0.00	2.05
Service Quality		0.08	1.08	0.28	1.72
Environment		-0.01	-0.11	0.91	2.84
Promotion		-0.11	-1.29	0.20	2.34

As illustrated in Table 5, hypotheses 1 ($t = 3.82$, $p < 0.01$) and 3 ($t = 4.50$, $p < 0.01$) were strongly supported by the result. Product quality and brand name have a positive relationship with brand loyalty. However, hypotheses 2, 4, 5, and 6 were not supported by the result as no significant relationships were identified for hypothesized variables.

5. Discussion

Based on the result, it is obvious that in the Hong Kong sportswear industry, Nike and Adidas are the most popular brands among university students. As a consequence, other sportswear companies can treat these two brands as their benchmark and learn things from them. Compared with other influential variables (style, store environment, service quality, and promotion), brand name and product quality are the most important factors for the respondents. In other words, the respondents' brand loyalty has a strong relationship with the influencing factors, especially brand names, in the Hong Kong sportswear market. It is reasonable and acceptable because a feature of Hong Kong's consumption environment is that people have a passion for purchasing high-end branded products. To get along with their peers and demonstrate fashionable taste, college students in Hong Kong usually like to buy a product or service from a famous brand, especially when that brand can indicate that they are living a luxurious life. Therefore, sportswear managers should pay more attention to establishing their brand because it plays an important role in brand loyalty. Aaker (1996) also mentioned that building a competitive brand is the most crucial strategic task of enterprises because a powerful brand can raise profitability and to protect it against its rivals. To finish this goal, managers should enhance their PR skills; hold more training courses to train employees, especially those who working on the front line; spend more money on advertising (both online and offline); and sponsor sports event frequently.

Although in Hong Kong college students' view of the store environment, style, service quality and promotions did not show vital positions compared with brand names and product quality, sportswear companies cannot ignore any of them. Even more so, managers should treat these factors as crucial. They should make a straightforward business plan, underestimate surprises when they lower profits and never overestimate their ability. Additionally, to improve the service quality of retailers such as the consumer-to-employee interactions is very important in this industry. In addition, performing some external investment that is down-to-earth should ensure that the financial progress of your company is operating smoothly. In addition, an effort should be made with regard to the product's size and style, the service quality, the store environment and promotions: identify the position of the brand well, understand clearly which target population to get in touch with, set the main style of the brand, design a powerful slogan, invite suitable and famous celebrities to participate in the advertising shooting, comprehensively consider the product classification, pay more attention to the store environment and show the unique style of the brand, and focus on product development, making consumers notice the innovation and profession of the brand. In addition, the lifestyles of customers are not unchangeable. They might have different attitudes when they go through different statuses of life. Brand managers should revise their strategies constantly and never stop finding the characteristics of attitudinal loyalty toward potential customers. Only in this way can brand managers develop a strong brand and make their brand continually meet consumers' needs, interests, and expectations.

However, the regression results we obtained were extremely different from hypotheses 2, 4, 5, and 6. In others words, we can conclude that style, service quality, store environment and promotion do not influence brand loyalty from Hong Kong college students' view. Although this research supports that only product quality and brand name can influence brand loyalty, it does not mean that other factors are unnecessary or meaningless because the data we received may have a bias and may not be accurate. It is possible that the data affect the results of the hypotheses testing. Because the correlation testing showed that all of the factors have a strong relationship with brand loyalty, it supported the previous theory from Malinowska-Olszowy (2005): consumers like repurchasing some products or services of the same brand mainly because they believe the brand has the correct product characteristics and figures and is good quality. Moreover,

the study provided information about customers' brand loyalty based on consumers' view. This helps managers put themselves in the consumer's position, and the strategies they make will also be accepted easily by customers.

A lack of sufficient data was one of the limitations of this research. Thus, further studies should also take this part into consideration, utilizing more time and more data collections and trying to contact all universities in Hong Kong, including private institutions or schools. In addition, the future research should pay more attention to sportswear brands from mainland China, so that the results would be more accurate and more purposeful. The managers of mainland brands can also use this research as a reference to acquire more consumers and extend their markets into Hong Kong. Most importantly, this can help Chinese sportswear brands understand their situation and the whole market better and raise their competitive power.

Furthermore, Hong Kong is a financial center of the world. Business people have freedom to do business, the tourism industry is quite mature, and investors have more opportunity to contact other investors, especially those from other countries. Moreover, most of the employees in Hong Kong have rich experience in international marketing. The distribution network of the company can connect with the markets in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Moreover, the production of brands can rely on the productivity of mainland China. Cheap productivity not only allows brand managers to save a large amount of money but also allows them to use this money to sponsor sports teams or sports events to increase their reputation. The factors mentioned above can contribute to the overwhelming superiority of a sportswear brand. Therefore, it is a good place for investors to cooperate with each other and it is a suitable place for studying brand loyalty toward the sportswear industry. In addition, with the number of visitors coming from mainland China increasing dramatically, sportswear brands have a greater chance to get in touch with them and have a greater chance to get in touch with the large market of mainland China. In sum, Hong Kong offers a perfect platform for sportswear brands to expand their market and achieve their global ambitions. The college students of Hong Kong usually have stylish taste in sportswear products and have accepted democracy education since childhood, and the environment surrounding them is quite open-minded. Moreover, they are not afraid to express their own ideas, they understand themselves clearly and they know what they prefer and what they dislike. In short, their behavior is very typical. The styles of how they dress and their attitude of dealing with things are often emulated by other people. Therefore, their behaviors can reflect the consumer behavior of the young generation of other developed cities.

In addition, the conception of brand loyalty was restricted to attitudinal loyalty. I treated loyal consumers as showing a special emotion toward a specific brand before purchasing the product or service from that brand. However, this definition may not be suitable for impulse purchases. This type of consumer usually buys a product or service without having a plan, and impulse purchasing behavior occurs at almost every retail chain. Thus, for other marketers who want to search information from companies' views, the data might be insufficient. For this reason, a further study can define brand loyalty from both a behavioral aspect and attitudinal aspect, or even use composite loyalty to limit the conception and ensure that enterprises can gain information from different sides.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to understand which factors influence university students' brand loyalty most toward sportswear brands in the Hong Kong market. Based on the analysis, the results showed that brand name and product quality influence people's brand loyalty. Compared with product quality, brand name influences customers' brand loyalty more deeply. Thus, the majority of consumers care more about brand name than product quality. If a sportswear brand wants more loyal customers, they should mainly focus on building their brand.

Although the final result shows that only product quality and brand name affect university students' brand loyalty, store environment, promotion, service quality and style still have a strong relationship with brand loyalty.

Hence, it is not easy for entrepreneurs to keep existing customers and cultivate them into loyal consumers. To achieve this objective, brand managers should not only focus on increasing the product quality and establishing their brand name but should also pay attention to their store environment and promotions, the service quality of their employees and the style of their products. From consumers' viewpoint, this study provides some references for brand managers in making business plans and changing their existing strategies.

In summary, the sportswear industry has already attracted a vast number of consumers and this trend is continuously growing. This research will help managers of sportswear companies learn more about the sportswear market, sportswear consumers, and Hong Kong college students and their brand loyalty toward sportswear brands.

7. Limitations

However, attitudinal loyalty emphasizes the psychological aspect of customers instead of their actual purchasing action. Thus, for researchers, the results might not be a precise representation of reality (Mellens et al., 1996; Odin et al., 2001).

This research is based on the views of college students in Hong Kong. Although their thoughts and behaviors are

mainstream cultures among Hong Kong residents, they still cannot represent all sportswear customers in the Hong Kong market. In addition, the age of the majority of university students was under 25. In other words, middle- and late-aged Hong Kong residents may have different ideas about purchasing sportswear brand. The influencing factors that affect their brand loyalty will also be different.

In addition, the sportswear brands mentioned in the study were all international. This research did not take the mainland sportswear brands (e.g., Li-Ning, Anta, Xtep and 361 degree) into account. These mainland sportswear brands stayed in a special position, and for the Hong Kong market, some consumers have a special feeling about these brands. Because these brands could make consumers feel patriotic and have a sense of belonging. The feeling of patriotism and the sense of belonging can also affect Hong Kong residents' brand loyalty.

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