A Study on Self-Image Congruence and Perceived Quality with Respect to Symbolic Purchase in Sport at Bangalore City

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Abstract - The purpose of this paper is to discuss the notion of symbolic purchase and to investigate the significance of self-image congruence between the consumer's self-concept and brand-user (i.e. team follower) image within the context of team-licensed merchandise consumption. In sport business, licensed-merchandise (i.e. team apparel) has become an increasingly important revenue source and it strengthens identity of fan and brand loyalty. Therefore, the present study proposed a model that incorporates self-image congruence, perceived quality, brand image and purchase intention of sport team-licensed merchandise.
The results indicated that the 48 percent of combined self-image congruence and perceived quality have impact on the purchase intention of sport team-licensed merchandise. The findings also indicated that brand image has also positive brand image on the same.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, symbolic purchase, self-image congruence, perceived quality, brand image.

I. INTRODUCTION

The consumer behaviour literature supports the proposition that individuals' self-images dictate specific purchase behaviour patterns.Customers buy products and brands they believe to possess symbolic images similar and/or complementary to their self-image, that is, to achieve image congruence. Customers always seek a product which can offer functional, symbolic, emotional, epistemic and situational benefits to them leading to satisfaction of their needs and wants. In today's world of competitive market there could be a variety of factors influencing the selection and purchase of any product or a brand. The concept of brand image acts as an important cue to explain the phenomenon of brand preference and customer satisfaction. Brand image is somewhere the output of the perceptions, which a consumer generates in his/her mind regarding the specific attributes related to the product. In the consumer behavior literature, the notion of symbolic purchase (Levy, 1959)has long been documented how symbolic meaning (i.e. images) of the product motivates purchase decisions. In particular, self-congruity theory postulates thatself-expressive motivation often triggers consumers to purchase goods and services. Thus the greater the match between the brand-user image with the consumer's self-image, the more likely that consumers will make favorable brand evaluations or preferences. Much of the consumer behavior research in self-image congruence has predicted various consumer behaviors, including product/brand preference, brand/service attitude, consumer satisfaction, and loyalty. However, little attention has been paid to applying the self-congruity theory in the spectator sport consumption domain. Furthermore, there has been a call for studies to apply self-congruity to the spectator sport consumption setting.
Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the significance of self-image congruence between the consumer's self-concept and brand-user (i.e. team follower)image within the context of team-licensed merchandise consumption. It has also been consistently evidenced that consumers' subjective evaluation on the product quality has a direct impact on purchase decision. Therefore, the present study proposed a model that incorporates self-image congruence, perceived quality, brand image and purchase intention of sport team-licensed merchandise.
The primary focus of this study was to investigate the role of self-congruity and perceived quality in spectator sport consumption setting, it would be interesting to further examine the relationships between self-image congruence and some other theoretically relevant constructs. The study advances the self-congruity literature by establishing the link between self-image congruence and team-licensed merchandise consumption behaviors.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

Self-congruity Theory:

Self-congruity theory refers to the perceived degree of affinity between individual's self-concept and a brand's perceptions. Self-congruity theory posits that self-expressive motivation often triggers consumers to purchase goods and services and thus the greater the match between the brand-user image with the consumer's self-image, the more likely that consumers will make favourable brand evaluations or preferences. It reflects in what aspects the ego perception of the individual has congruence with a situation. Research has generally suggested that ideal self-congruity (congruity between a brand and an individual's ideal self-concept) has a greater influence than actual self-congruity (congruity between a brand and an individual's actual self-concept) on consumer behavior. The notion that people engage in behaviour in such a way that maintains or enhances their self-concept that is based on the Rogers' (1951) self-theory. Self-theory postulates that individual's behavior will be directed toward the protection and enhancement of his /her self-concept. Grounded in the self-theory, marketing researchers have investigated a similar phenomenon in consumer behavior referred to as self-image congruity. The self-concept has been employed as a way of explaining product symbolism based on the notion that consumers are attracted to products that have a symbolic image most similar to their own self-concept. Levy (1959) contended that consumers are not functionally oriented and their behavior is significantly influenced by the symbols of products/brands as perceived in the marketplace. The symbolic meaning, associated with brands (i.e. teams, sponsors), is often expressed through the consumption and use of brands.

Based on Levy's proposition, the symbolic-purchase phenomenon has long served to enlighten consumer behavior researchers about the precise role of consumer's self-concepts on consumption behavior. While the term self-concept has long been considered from various perspectives, consumer behavior domain defines it as one's beliefs in the images that an individual has about one's self (Sirgy, 1982, 1986). Sirgy (1982) argued that the images encountered with product cues (e.g. names, logos) activate relevant self-image beliefs. The self-image beliefs evoked by product cues affect the perceived value or meaning of a product image.

In the context of sport consumption, very few researchers (Brooks, 1998; Kang, 2002) have applied the notion of self-congruity. Brooks (1998) suggested the applicability of using self-congruity theory in the study of sport consumers, While Kang (2002) first empirically examined the theory in the participant sport consumption on text. Kang developed a decision-making process model that integrates self-participant image congruency (i.e. actual and ideal), attitude, and intentions towards a given participant sports consumption setting.

Team-licensed Merchandise:

Merchandising is any practice that contributes to the sale of products to a retail consumer. One area that sport franchises or intercollegiate athletic program can maximize the benefits of a team merchandise contract is through licensing (Hinckley, 2004). Licensing is a contractual method of developing and exploiting intellectual property through transferring rights of use to third parties without transfer of ownership.

Trademark and copyright owners are motivated to license for a variety of reasons:

- Licensing generates a revenue stream from royalty remunerated by licensees.
- From the consumer's perspective, purchasing and using team-licensed merchandise can strengthen the relationship between fans and the team.
- Licensing can provide sport properties an opportunity to build their brand.

Kwon and Armstrong (2006) argued that sport consumers typically are motivated to purchase team-licensed products for their symbolic meaning rather than their functional attributes. This assertion provides rationale for the consideration of self-congruity theory, which has been well documented in the consumer behavior literature to explain symbolic purchase phenomena.

Symbolic Purchase:

Symbolic purchase is a kind of purchase behavior in which the individual prefers to afford a good or a service not because of the qualities and specifications of the product or the service but just because of sharing the feeling of owning the same thing or having the same experience with other buyers.

Symbolic purchase includes two concepts: The first concept is that symbolic purchase includes self-image congruity which is the perception in what extend the self-image of the individual correspond to a specific situation. And the situation might be a product, an event or even a person. The second concept is the perceived quality that symbolic purchase includes and it depicts in what extend the individual appraises a product or service.

Self-image Congruence:

Self-image congruence refers to the cognitive match between consumers' self-concept (e.g., actual self, ideal self, social self and ideal social self) and a product or brand image, store image, destination image or user image of a given product or brand or service. Individuals form an identity for themselves in a society. This occurs only when they are in contact with other people.The process of socialization encourages the individual to set relationships with others and also share the same beliefs and attitudes. These beliefs and attitudes shape the personality and the individual feels a congruity between his/her self-image and the situation. Hence, this

conformance enhances the birth of the self-image. Self-image congruence refers to the match between consumers self-concept and the image of users of a given brand of consumer goods, services, store, organization or a destination.

Perceived Quality:
Perceived quality is the subjective evaluation of a product whether it is worthy to purchase by an individual. This concept is derived from the protracted researches of Parasuraman and Zeithaml on service quality (Narang, 2010). Some researchers view quality as a form of overall evaluation of a product, suggesting that quality is relatively a global value judgment. In conceptualizing perceived quality, Zeithaml defined perceived quality as "the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority", suggesting that perceived quality can be subjective and differs from objective or actual quality. However, it has been well established that it is not an objective quality but the customer's perception of quality that lead to preference and consequently satisfaction, loyalty, sales, and profitability.

Brand Image:
Brand Image is a perception of the brand in the mind of the customer. Brand image is an aggregate of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a customer holds regarding the brand.It can also be defined as a unique bundle of associations within the minds of target customers. It is formed in the minds of customers based upon the experience and interaction of the customers with the brand. It is an image or impression the customers form about a particular brand in their mind which is developed over a certain time period. A brand can be perceived differently by different customers.

Purchase intention:
Purchase intention is the attitude of the individual on whether to buy the product and it is essential to identify this intention before releasing a product to the market.Although different measurement tools are used according to the specific aims of the studies. Purchase intentions were gauged by three items on five-point Likert-type scale:

- Self-image congruence
- Perceived quality
- Brand image

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kwon, H. H.&Armstrong, K. L. (2006) investigated a proposed model of impulse buying of sport team licensed merchandise among 464 college students (231 males, 233 females) enrolled in a large mid-western university in the USA. The proposed model included measures of impulsivity, psychological attachment to sport, and financial situation. The proposed model was tested with structural equation modelling. This study illustrates how personal, psychosocial, and situational factors might interact to influence impulse buying of sport team licensed merchandise.
Frank Kressmann & M. Joseph Sirgy (2006) test a model dealing with direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty. The model posits that self-image congruence positively affects brand loyalty directly and indirectly through functional congruity, product involvement, and brand relationship quality. The model was tested using cars as the product stimulus in a survey of 600 car owners. We chose automobiles because cars are high in conspicuousness (therefore are likely to be evaluated using symbolic criteria) and are used across a variety of situations. The model was mostly supported by the data. First, the results document the paramount importance of self-congruity in predicting brand loyalty. Second, our study integrated the emerging construct of brand relationship quality into self-congruity theory. Third, in regards to the hypothesized effect of self-congruity on functional congruity, the data were supportive. Additional managerial implications are discussed.
Dae Hee Kwak & Joon-Ho Kang(2009) discuss the notion of "symbolic purchase" which has long been documented in the management and marketing literature. In particular, self-congruity theory has been examined in various domains of consumer behavior. However, little attention has been paid to the area of sport. In sport business, licensed-merchandise (i.e. team apparel) has become an increasingly important revenue source and it strengthens fan identity and brand loyalty. Therefore, based on the self-congruity theory, the aim is to investigate the effect of self-image congruence on sport team-licensed merchandise evaluation and purchase.

Reshma Farhat & Dr. Bilal Mustafa Khan(2012)suggest that the brand image is of paramount importance for customers as well as marketers. Beyond their functional utility, products have a symbolic meaning. Parts of this symbolic meaning are accounted for by concepts like brand image and product-user image. The study provides

an insight into various aspects of brand image and self-image congruency. The purpose of this article is to show that product image influences consumer preferences and satisfaction through a congruence effect.
Sameer Hosany & Drew Martin (2012) suggest that Self-image congruence helps explain and predict different facets of consumer behavior. To date, application of self-congruence theories to tourist post-travel evaluations is limited. This study tests a model that includes self image congruence, cruise ship passengers' experiences, satisfaction, and behavioral intention. Path modeling tests the hypotheses using a sample of 169 cruise ship travelers. Results indicate that self-image congruence (actual and ideal) affects passengers' experiences but indirectly influences satisfaction levels. Satisfaction positively relates to respondents' propensity to recommend. Overall, this research advances the understanding of cruise ship passengers, experiences and behaviors offering important managerial implications.

S. Fettahlıoğlu, S. Eren, & Ö. Fetttahlıoğlu, M. Bilginer (2016)investigated that the effect of self-image congruity and perceived quality on the purchase intentions of Turkish football fans. In order to do so, a questionnaire which is adapted from the former studies is applied to the supporters of the teams which involve in Spor Toto Super League. In order to analyze 316 responses, descriptive statistics, reliability, correlations, factor analysis, structural equation modelling and linear regression analysis are applied. The tests approved that a valid and reliable data set is acquired. Also the theory of the research validated in the data. Hence, the hypothesis test revealed that the data doesn't fit with the research model. Nevertheless, it is statistically proved that perceived quality has effect on purchase intentions of the randomly selected sample.

Kwong Goh, Nan Jiang,&Pei Leng Tee(2016)examine the subjective factors; brand trust, self-image congruence and usage satisfaction toward repeat purchase intention of smartphones among the Gen-Y consumers in Malaysia. A total of 182 respondents participated in this research. Most of the respondents purchased a Smartphone within the last 12 months and a large number of the respondents are active users of text messaging and Smartphone applications. Results indicate that self-image congruence is the main antecedents for repeat purchase of Smartphone's. This is the followed by usage satisfaction as the second predictor and lastly would be brand trust. This paper provides some discussion and recommendations for practitioners.

Jane Brannen, & Cynthia M. Frisby (2017)discussed about how consumer self-esteem moderates the relative importance of actual self-congruity vs. ideal self-congruity on women's brand loyalty to fitness brands. College-aged women were the primary focus for this research because this demography represents an emerging consumer group and because the literature suggests women score significantly lower than men on self-esteem scales in physical appearance, athletic self, personal self, and self-satisfaction self-esteem. A survey of 151 women of 18 - 24 ages was conducted supporting prior research findings that actual and ideal self-congruity are both positively correlated with brand loyalty.

Wanling Huang, & Ming Chen (2018) suggested that Customer citizenship behavior is a new concept in the field of customer behavior research. It is a valuable and constructive behavior of consumers who are willing to do for the brand out of their roles, which makes the enterprise competitive due to low cost or even zero cost. Therefore, it has gradually attracted widespread concern from domestic and foreign researchers and practitioners in marketing. This paper studies the antecedent variables of consumer citizenship behavior. The connection of self and brand acts as the mediator between the congruence of consumer's self-image as well as brand image and consumer citizenship behavior. Specifically speaking, neither the consumer's self-image nor brand image directly affects his/her citizenship behavior but affected by the mediate role of self-brand connection. Only when the consumer voluntarily connects himself/herself with the brand and form high-quality consumer-brand relationship, will consumers voluntarily engage in valuable and constructive behaviors for the brands. In this way, the consumer citizenship behavior forms.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research design:

- A quantitative research design.
- Primary data
- Questionnaire
- Participants of all age groups.

Sample Design:

- 100 people belonging to age group 18-60 years in Bangalore
- Convenient sampling method

Tools used for analysis:

- Percentages, Pie Charts, Averages, Regression etc

V. DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

- *Impact of Self-image Congruence on the Purchase Intention of the sport team-licensed merchandise named IPL team:*

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.632[a]	.400	.394	1.064
a. Predictors: (Constant), [Actual self-image]				

Table No. 4.24.1

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	73.880	1	73.880	65.304	.002
	Residual	110.870	98	1.131		
	Total	184.750	99			
a. Dependent Variable: [Product Quality]						
b. Predictors: (Constant), [Actual self-image]						

Table No. 4.24.2

Interpretation: It can be concluded from the above that the p-valueis less than level of significance , therefore null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is a significant impact of self-image congruence on the purchase intention of the sport team licensed merchandise named IPL team.
The value of R (coefficient of multiplication) is 0.632 which means that there is positive correlation between the two variables (Actual Self-image and Product Quality).
The value of R^2 (coefficient of determination) is .400 which means that 40 percent of self-image congruence has an impact on the purchase intention of sport team-licensed merchandise named IPL team.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the above we can conclude that both self-image congruence and perceived quality have an impact on the purchase intention of the sport team-licensed merchandise named IPL team and respondents also have positive brand image towards the same. Respondents are influenced and inspired by the IPL team as well as players. Respondents are also normally emotionally dependent as well as separating anxiety towards their respective IPL team and players. Respondents are highly satisfied with the product quality and hence consider or imagine themselves as a member of their respective IPL team while wearing the jersey and other related items of their respective IPL team.

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