

## **Investigating the Factors Influence Tweens' Purchase Intention through Peer Conformity in Taiwan**

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### **Abstract**

Past research has focused mainly on discovering the relationship between brand image, brand attitude, and purchasing behavior. Such studies have found that consumers will rely on brand preference as the major purchasing reference when they have positive brand attitudes toward products. Because the majority of tweens have less knowledge of brand choice and tend to seek references from celebrities for purchasing decisions, this article seeks to understand the impact of brand image, consistency of the brand, and advertising agency efforts toward purchasing intent. Brand attitude is used as the intermediate variable. To verify the proposed research framework, a survey was conducted using a group of middle- to high school students in Taiwan. The obtained results indicated that this cluster of teenagers will have a lower consciousness risk; a stronger positive influence on brand behavior if their peers have support the brand image; and when peers exhibit positive brand behavior. As a result, this group will trust this brand more and increase their purchasing intention. Moreover, when this cluster is exposed to consistency between a celebrity endorser and the congruency of the brand, they can easily link the brand image with the celebrity endorser and subsequently improve their brand behavior.

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**Keywords:** Brand attitude, Brand image, Celebrity endorser, Purchase intention, Peer conformity

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## **1 Introduction**

In 2006, McKinsey conducted a survey of 800 Chinese teenagers aged 12 to 17 years old and discovered that this group's annual pocket money amounts to RMB 60 billion and that their families spend nearly RMB 230 billion Yuan annually on their teenaged children. Thus the consumption total of this group and their families reaches RMB 290 billion Yuan. Furthermore, the American marketing company Teenage Research Unlimited revealed that American teenagers spend an average of \$100US per week, with the annual consumption of families with teenagers averaging \$10,000US. The average annual aggregate consumption of U.S. teenagers, therefore, reaches \$1.55 billion USD, with an annual growth rate of about 6%. In his 2004 book, Lindstrom Brandchild called these teenagers "tweens." In the book, Brandchild deemed that globally, tweens spend more than \$300 billion USD annually, and that these teenagers also control the consumption decisions of their parents and household expenses. Thus, the total actually reaches \$1.88 billion USD. Based on this high consumption capacity of tweens, we can term them the "little giant of consumption," (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2004) whose purchasing behavior occupies a position in current consumer market that cannot be ignored. It is necessary, therefore, to probe the consuming behavior of tweens. As such, this study examines the buying habits of tween consumers. The findings should provide valuable insights for marketing research enterprises.

Brand concept is an external clue that helps consumers make decisions about buying a certain product amidst a wide variety of products. Brand concept is also the basis for judging a product's quality. Many scholars have studied that products' brand image has a significant influence on consumers' brand attitude (e.g., Keller, 1993, Shan et.al,2012,). The more positive the consumers' brand attitude toward a particular brand, the more positive his or her behavior and intention will be, particularly in favour of that brand (Wilkie, 1994). Scholars often use brand attitude, therefore, to predict consumers' purchase intention and purchase behavior, as direct or indirect brand attitude will influence consumers' purchase decision making. This study seeks to discover the influence of brand image of products and services on tweens' brand attitude, and whether their purchase intention will be influenced by developing a good brand attitude toward the brand.

The most significant characteristic of tweens is that they are influenced by peers; peer pressure makes tweens imitate and learn from each other. Indeed, tweens relatives and friends tend to have an impact on tweens' purchase intention based on the "peers effect." Furthermore, according to the findings of Silvera and Austad (2004), when consumers take a liking to a particular celebrity, they will take a liking to a product advertisement endorsed by that celebrity. And, when consumers have a positive attitude toward the advertisement, they will form a positive impression of the product/service brand and thus develop brand preference. Previous studies, however, have not directly pointed out the relationship between peers' conformity behavior and product/service brand image and brand attitude. This study therefore examines the relationship between tween consumers' product or service brand image and brand attitude, how purchase intention is influenced, and whether the fit between a celebrity endorser and brand will influence tweens' brand attitude and accordingly influence their purchase intention.

## 2 Literature Review and Research Hypothesis

### 2.1 The Main Effect of Brand Image on Brand Attitude

Brand image is the brand's style and is integral to brand reputation, including characters, products, concept, and consumers' feelings about the brand. In other words, brand-related feelings are reflected from brand associations within the consumers' memory (Keller, 1993, Shan et.al.,2012). Keller (1993) proposed that brand image could arouse consumers' association of brand and subsequently influence consumers' attitude toward the brand. Most scholars believe that brand image and brand attitude have a positive correlation (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). When consumers seek to reduce the purchasing risk of a brand with which they are not familiar, they tend to rely on the acquainted brand image as the standard to purchase and to infer with the brand. If the brand image, therefore, can strike a chord with tween consumers or if products with high brand image can lower tweens' perceived risk, tweens may develop a feeling that the product is of good added value. Such brands will then gain recognition from tween consumer groups and subsequently promote consumers' brand attitude and purchase intention (Kotler, 2000).

According to Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986), brand image perspectives consist of several components. First is functional brand image, which emphasizes helping consumers solve consumption-related problems. This kind of product usually serves to satisfy consumers' external consumption demand, such as the products' appearance, packaging, and price, among other factors. Therefore, if tween consumers receive messages that the product or service is of good quality and is healthful and safe, they will feel that this product is of good functionality, will feel good about buying the product, and their brand attitude will be more positive. Second is symbolic brand image, which emphasizes satisfying consumers' internal needs. For example, a brand may be a symbol of social status or may promote self-worth, role definition, in-group feelings, and self-identification. This kind of product often serves to associate individual and specific groups, role, or self-image. When tween consumers can derive a sense of superiority from using the product or service and can symbolize social status in their group or promote self-worth, their brand attitude will be more positive. Third is experiential brand image, which emphasizes satisfying consumers' internal needs to go after excitement and diversity and to provide consumers with sensual and cognitive enjoyment, such as amiable service and a comfortable consumption environment. When using the product or service, if tween consumers have positive feelings, such as feeling pleasant, comfortable, or amiable, and their inner demand is satisfied, tween consumers' attitude toward the brand will be more positive. Based on the above inferences, this study advances the following hypothesis:

The **Hypothesis 1:** *The better the brand image of a product or service is, the more positive the brand attitude of tween consumers will be.*

### 2.2 The Main Effect of Brand Attitude on Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers the possibility that consumers will purchase a certain product (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). Reynolds and Wells (1977) discovered that it was more accurate to predict purchasing behavior by purchase intention than by purchasing preference. Kotler (2000) regarded attitude as a person's cognitive evaluation of lasting

like or dislike of a certain individual or idea, as well as his or her emotional feelings and course of action. And, Schiffman and Kanuk (1994) regarded attitude as a psychological tendency arising from learning, which was a lasting evaluation of certain subject. From the above definition, we can surmise that attitude takes shape gradually, it is lasting, and evaluation behavior will be generated. As a result, consumers' brand attitude, favorability, and confidence will influence their purchase intention and behaviour. Kamins and Marks (1991) believed that consumers tended to have better brand attitude and purchase intention toward familiar brands. Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991) suggested that when price was the consumers' only criteria for shopping, the higher the product's price, the higher the consumers' evaluation of product's quality. Yet when brand identity set in, price would exert less influence on quality cognition. Thus, it can be inferred that the more positive tween consumers' brand attitude, the more confidence they tend to have in the brand. With confidence, tweens believe that the uncertainty and risk of buying the product or service will be reduced and purchase intention will increase. Based on the above, this study advances the following hypothesis of brand attitude's influence on purchase intention:

**Hypothesis 2:** *The more positive the brand attitude of product or service is, the higher tween consumers' purchase intention will be.*

### **2.3 The Mediating Effect of Brand Attitude on Brand Image and Purchase Intention**

Keller (1993) believed that brand image can arouse consumers' positive ideas of the brand, and positive ideas of the brand could enable consumers to develop a positive attitude toward the brand. Kotler (2000) also pointed out that for products with better brand image, consumers' perceived risk toward those products to be lower. Subsequently, the lower the perceived risk, the higher the sense of trust consumers have. Therefore, the more positive the brand attitude toward products, accordingly the purchase intention is enhanced (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell (2000). Based on the arguments above scholars have posited that when tween consumers feel the brand image of product or service is better, their perceived risk reduces, and they become identified with the brand. Accordingly, they have a positive brand attitude. In turn, positive brand attitude gives tween consumers more confidence in the brand, feeling less certain of buying the product or service. Combined with brand recognition, the purchase intention is thus higher. As such, the following hypothesis is put forward:

**Hypothesis 3:** *The better the brand image of a product or service is based on positive brand attitude, the higher tween consumers' purchase intention will be.*

### **2.4 Congruence between Celebrity Endorsers and Brand on the Brand Attitude**

Kamins and Gupta (1994) pointed out when the fit between a celebrity and a brand is better, consumers tend to produce more positive attitudes toward the product. When fitness between the celebrity and the brand is good, consumers feel that the celebrity is fit to endorse the brand. As such, celebrity endorsement advertising has a value-adding effect on the positive image-building of the brand, the intrinsic positive value of the brand, and consumers' favorable attitudes and impression toward the celebrity is promoted.

Goldsmith et al. (2000) believed that except for the factor of celebrity endorsement, the factor of a brand's influence on consumers should also be probed more deeply. Their research results revealed that brand could influence consumers more than the celebrity factor, although the celebrity factor indirectly influenced consumer behavior. Their study also pointed out that the fit between celebrity, brand, and consumers is also an important consideration. Graeff (1996) proved that when the degree of fit between brand and consumers is higher, and consumers identify with the brand, consumers will associate that brand with internal self-concept. Their positive attitude toward advertisements and the brand will thus be enhanced. To apply this idea to the fit between tween consumers, brand, and celebrity, tween consumers tend to produce positive cognitive attitudes because the celebrity image within advertisements accords with personal traits. Tweens thus think that the brand and the celebrity endorser are trustworthy (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). The above scholars suggested that a high degree of fit between celebrity and brand is prone to strike a chord with tweens. Further, tweens can produce a sense of identity toward the celebrity, advertisement, and brand. This study thus advances the following hypothesis concerning the relationship between the fit between celebrity and brand and the brand attitude:

**Hypothesis 4:** *The higher the congruence between celebrity endorser and brand of product or service, the more positive tween consumers' brand attitude will be.*

## 2.5 The Mediating Effect of Brand Attitude

Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000), when considering the influence effect of brand trustworthiness, suggested that consumers' attitude toward advertisements and brand would directly influence their purchase intention. In other words, consumers' purchase intention could be influenced by individual brand attitudes toward a product or service. Consumers' purchase intention is subject to the influence of various factors, the most common of which are others' recommendation and advertisements. And, because celebrity endorsements account for significant amounts of advertising, when the celebrity and the brand are well matched, a deep impression will be made. Fitness between celebrity and brand refers to the degree of fit between the product's brand and attributes and the celebrity image (Misra & Beatty, 1990). The higher their degree of fit, the more inclined consumers are to consider the brand and celebrity endorser trustworthy (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Thus, tweens' purchase intention is subject to the influence of brand attitude, and brand attitude is subject to the influence of the fitness between celebrity and brand. Therefore, it can be inferred that brand attitude has mediating effect on fitness between celebrity and brand and purchase intention. As such the following hypothesis is thereby advanced:

**Hypothesis 5:** *The higher the congruency between celebrity endorser and brand of product/service is, via more positive brand attitude, the higher tween consumers' purchase intention will be.*

## 2.6 Definition of Tweens' Conformity Behavior

Kotler and Armstrong (2012) proposed that a consumer was apt to change his or her own behaviour due to the influence of small groups. Group norms are often established in a group to make a distinction from other groups. In order to gain recognition of the group and live up to the expectation of the group, therefore, tween consumers will adopt ideas or behaviours similar to other members of the group (Wilkie, 1994; Macinnis, 1997). This is

termed conformity behavior. Lascu and Zinkhan (1999) collected studies on conformity behavior and put forward a conformity behavior model used for marketing. They divided conformity behavior into three levels, in which compliance and identification with the group produce conformity behavior when an individual is subject to external regulations. Internalization refers to when an individual who obtains certain information changes his or her original idea and changes his or her behaviour. Furthermore, the studies by Kassarian and Robertson(1981) revealed that groups had an influence on consumers regarding which brand to choose. They pointed out that peer groups played a very important part in teenagers behavior. In order to seek peers' recognition, teenagers certainly will take on the values recognized by their peers (Moschis & Churchill,1978). It was also pointed out that if teenagers have more consumption interactions with their peers, they are more inclined to go by their peers' impressions as a reference standard in evaluating the consumption of products (Moshis & Moor,1979). This study, therefore, will probe into whether tweens with high conformity behavior will change their opinion of products and purchase intentions due to peers' influence.

### **3 Research Method**

#### **3.1 Research Framework**

This study seeks to discover whether brand attitude has a mediating effect on tweens in the context of peer conformity. This is in reference to the opinions of scholars Darling (1981), Zeithaml and Kirmani (1993), and Han (1989) who noted that brand image would influence consumers' brand attitude toward products. Mitchell and Olson (1981) pointed out consumers' attitude toward brand would influence their purchase intention. When consumers have good brand image, their perceived risk of the brand reduces, they become identified with the brand, and therefore have positive brand attitude. Positive brand attitude, in turn, will lead consumers' to trust the brand and therefore have higher purchase intention. Kamins and Gupta (1994) pointed out when congruency between celebrity and brand was strong, consumers would produce a positive attitude. In other words, when a celebrity and brand are well matched, consumers will tend to develop deep impressions, and consumers' perceived association between the celebrity and the advertisement can be strengthened. The social and cultural meaning carried by celebrity image and the preference to celebrity are converted into cognitive meaning and attitude toward the brand. Consumers' attitude toward and impressions of the brand are thus promoted, and therefore purchase intention is generated. This study adopts peers conformity as the situation variable; brand image and congruency between celebrity endorser and brand as the independent variables; brand attitude as the intervening variable; and purchase intention as the framework of the dependent variable. With these parameters have been developed into a conceptual framework (Figure 1).

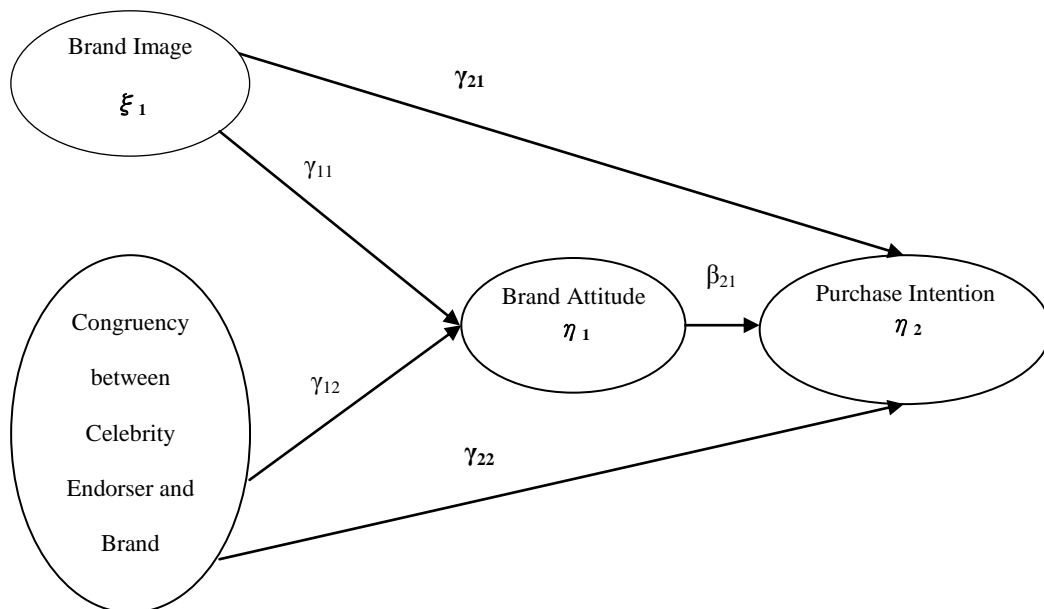


Figure 1: Structural Equation Model of Research

### 3.2 Object of Study

The subjects of interest to this study are 13- to 18-year-old students at junior and senior high schools, who are consumers with disposable monthly pocket money. The sample selection method combines convenience sampling and judgmental sampling. According to the purpose of this study, the survey is carried out at a McDonald's restaurant near junior or senior high schools. Proper communication with testees shall be initiated, and the purpose of this study shall be explained. The questionnaire survey will be used to verify whether brand image, congruency between celebrity endorser and brand, via brand attitude, will influence the respondents' purchase intention. In this study, 530 questionnaires are issued, 478 of which were valid questionnaires, accounting for a 94.09% response rate.

### 3.3 Study Variable Measurement and Operational Definition

Because LISREL possesses the capacity to verify hypotheses, it can also eliminate the obvious multicollinearity of independent variables and one variable being the dependent variable of a certain variable, while being the independent variable of another. It is more capable of analyzing the characteristics of complicated causality than general path analysis (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993). Moreover, LISREL not only verifies the fitness between global theory model and data style using a chi-square test, but also examines the significance of a specific path by T value or sequential chi-square difference test. LISREL is composed of two parts: One is structural equation modeling, which describes the relationship between latent variables that cannot be observed directly. The other is the evaluation model, which describes the relationship between latent and manifest variables that can be observed directly (Hair et al., 1998). In concert with the research framework, this study defined that the latent exogenous variable includes brand image ( $\xi_1$ ) and congruency between celebrity endorser and brand ( $\xi_2$ ); the latent endogenous variable

includes brand attitude ( $\eta_1$ ) and purchase intention ( $\eta_2$ ). Evaluating the exogenous manifest variable (X) and endogenous manifest variable (Y) combined theories and interview experience to develop the 7-point Likert scale questionnaire for the above-noted survey. A detailed explanation follows:

### **3.3.1 Brand image**

This study adopts the research questionnaire of Cronin and Taylor (1992), dividing brand image into three types: functional, symbolic, and experiential. Functional type emphasizes solving consumer difficulties and problems. Symbolic type emphasizes satisfying consumers' internal needs. Experiential type emphasizes satisfying consumers' desire for the products to provide perceptual pleasure. In this study, the brand image measurement perspectives scale falls into the following three kinds. First, questions regarding Functional brand image perspective include seven items as follows: the product of this brand gives me a sense of safety, high quality, superior function, very practical, trustworthy, continuous improvement of the product's function, and the product is an excellent design. Second, questions regarding the symbolic brand image perspective include six items: the brand is a leading brand, a lot of friends have products of this brand, products of this brand symbolize social status, I may use the brand probably because of celebrity recommendation, products of this brand are fashionable, and it has a good reputation. Third, questions in the experiential brand image perspective include four items: the brand gives me a warm feeling, comfortable feeling, joyous feeling, and amusing feeling.

### **3.3.2 Congruency between celebrity endorser and brand**

Congruency between celebrity and brand refers to the degree of fit between the products' brand and attributes and the celebrity's image (Misra & Beatty, 1990). The higher the degree of fit between the two is, the more trustworthy consumers will feel about the brand and the celebrity endorser. This study refers to Misra and Beatty (1990), Goldberg and Hartwick (1990) and in accordance with the design circumstances of sponsoring advertisement, raises five measurement questions: does the celebrity endorser agree with the image characteristics of the brand; is as good as the reputation of the brand; shares the equal popularity with the brand; matches the value of the brand; and the endorser's appearance and the visual image design of the brand look equally pleasing to the eye.

### **3.3.3 Brand attitude**

This study adopts the definition by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), defining brand attitude as "the tendency of consumers' sustained preference or dislike of particular brand,". It also refers to the AdSAM scale used by Morris, Woo, Geason, and Kim (2002) in their study to predict intention to measure brand attitude. There are four measurement items for brand attitude: I like the product and service and the McDonald's brand brings a sense of enjoyment, is attractive, and I hold a positive opinion.

### **3.3.4 Purchase intention**

This study adopts Howard's (1994) operational definition of purchase intention as: during certain specific period, the mental state of planning to consume certain amount of products of particular brand. After referring to the study of Zeithaml (1988), the current



study also puts forward the method of measure purchase intention by perceived value. There are five measurement items for purchase intention: dining in McDonald is inexpensive but substantial; the food price is acceptable; dining in McDonald's is a good choice; I have the possibility of thinking about dining at McDonald's; and the possibility of me dining at McDonald's is high.

### **3.3.5 Tweens' peer conformity behavior**

This study continues to use the consumers' conformity model applied in marketing areas by Lasca and Zinkhan (1999) by defining conformity as: conformity is the tendency to build group norms, and this tendency will make an individual inclined to comply with group norms. The ATSCI (The Attention to Social Comparison Information Measure) scale by Bearden and Rose (1990) is referred to as the measurement instrument of conformity attitude. There are 13 questions: It is a very nice behavior pattern to follow the behaviour of most people; it is important to fit in the group; on party occasion, you can easily fit in; take notice of others' response to my behaviour, in order to avoid improper behaviour; when don't know what to do, watch others' behavior; when don't know what to do in public occasions, refer to the behavior of schoolmates or friends; pay attention to the eating pattern of other schoolmates; change your own eating pattern because of schoolmates or friends; change my behavior when someone is dissatisfied with me; behave as expected by other schoolmates; at the party, try to avoid eating the same food with schoolmates or friends; learn the pet phrase of other schoolmates, and speak out naturally; and do what you intend to, and do not care about the idea of other schoolmates. Questions 11 and 13 adopt reverse scoring.

## **3.4 Research Procedures**

Collection methods of research material include several steps. First, determine the object of the brand research. This study determines that McDonald's is the most ideal choice as tweens' fast-food chain restaurant. A random check of 170 students from junior and senior high schools found that they all have dining experience in a fast-food restaurant, and 75.4% love going to McDonald's, KFC (13.2%), and Mos Burger (6.4%). Furthermore, according to a Taiwan Television (2006) survey, McDonald's is the most valuable fast-food chain restaurant in the mind of junior and senior high school students. Further, McDonald's is the fast-food industry dealer that most frequently uses advertisement marketing in Taiwan and whose high advertisement exposure leaves deep impressions on consumers. This study, therefore, adopts the McDonald's brand as the object of this research. The research is carried out using a questionnaire survey. Second, pretesting occurs. In this study, to ensure the reliability, validity, and preciseness of the designed questionnaire before formal questionnaires are issued, a convenience sampling method is carried out to pretest the questionnaire with 30 junior and senior high school consumers. The questionnaire is then revised to produce the final, formal questionnaire. Data analysis adopts SPSS and LISREL, respectively, going by the following statistical processing procedures: (1) Calculate the reliabilities in the research variables in the factor extraction of the respondents and the reliability of research perspectives; (2) adopt cluster and discriminant analysis to group the conformity behavior; (3) put the grouping results through independent t-testing and verify their differentiation; (4) adopt a linear structure model to conduct an integrated analysis to this research framework. These steps allow this

study to explore the relationship between brand image, fitness between celebrity and brand, brand attitude, and purchase intention.

## 4 Empirical Research

### 4.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Validity is a measurement scale that refers to the degree of test scale to correctly verify characteristics (Grondlund & Linn, 1990). Relevant literature and tweens' actual current situation are referred to in the design of the questionnaire in this study. To ensure the integrity and representativeness of the questionnaire content, experts were invited to review the pretesting revisions, so that the questionnaire reaches the the standards of content validity. Meanwhile, to verify the construct validity of the questionnaire, not only are the correlation coefficients between individual items and total points (Kerlinger, 1986) adopted, rejecting the items whose common factor is less than 0.5, but factor analysis is also adopted, retaining the factors whose eigenvalue is greater than 1. The common factor of extraction factors is also verified according to this standard (Kaiser, 1974). Furthermore, this study uses Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient to evaluate the reliability test of consistency degree of results received from replicate measurement of the same or a similar population. If the reliability coefficient received is higher than 0.80, it has a high level of reliability. In general, if the value is beyond 0.70, it is an acceptable reliability value (Wortzel, 1979). As shown in Table 1, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of this study are between 0.814 and 0.938, showing that all evaluation variables meet internal consistency.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Latent Variable	Manifest Variables	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Brand image	Functional Brand Image	0.894
	Symbolic Brand Image	0.814
	Experiential Brand Image	0.938
Congruency between celebrity endorser and brand		0.916
Brand attitude		0.909
Purchase intention		0.931

### 4.2 Cluster and Discriminant Analysis

First, cluster analysis of tessees is carried out in an attempt to divide tessees' peers conformity behavior into varying degrees. This study adopts a two-stage cluster analysis approach. The first-stage cluster analysis adopts Ward's method to determine the appropriate cluster number and cluster center. The second-stage cluster analysis adopts the cluster center as the initial point and analyzing by the K-means method in the non-hierarchical clustering approach. It is determined that among respondents, there are 419 tessees with high peer conformity behavior and 59 tessees with low peer conformity behavior. Then discriminant analysis verifies that the grouping standard accuracy rate reaches 95.8% (Wilks' Lamda value is 0.535,  $p < 0.000$ ) indicating that the grouping results are good.

### 4.3 LISREL Empirical Analysis

#### 4.3.1 Fitness testing of overall model

It is better to have 50-500 samples analyzed by LISREL; otherwise the data will be difficult to converge (Hayduk, 1989). The results in fitness of overall model (Table 2) are as follows: (1) the  $\chi^2$  ratio of the overall sample is 1.882, complying with the standard of less than 3; the fitness indicator GFI is very close to 1, complying with the testing standard of more than 0.98; (2) the adjusted fitness index (AGFI) is more than 0.8, indicating a fine fitness of the model; (3) the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) value reflecting "fitness residual variance/covariation" is 0.034, which is less than 0.05; (4) the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) is larger than 0.9, indicating a perfect fitness with the model (Bentler & Bonett, 1980).

Table 2: Fit Indices for Measurement Model for the Research Model

Fitting Index and Standard	$\chi^2$ Ratio<3	RMSEA<0.08	GFI>0.9	AGFI >0.8	RMR <0.05	IFI >0.9
Fitting Index	1.882<3	0.046<0.08	0.98>0.9	0.96>0.8	0.034<0.05	1.00>0.9

#### 4.3.2 Quality test of internal model

Following the LISREL internal model quality test, this study calculate the SMC indicator of the specific manifest variable, which equals that  $R^2$  value of the manifest variable and latent variable are bigger than 0.5 (see Table 3) and latent variable component reliability (CR) values ( $\rho$ ) are larger than 0.6, representing the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of observation indicators belonged to every latent variable has a fairly high reliability.

Evaluating the construct validity on the basis of the LISREL model determines whether the manifest variable can evaluate the convergent validity effectively of one latent variable and the discriminant validity (see Table 4) designed for a particular latent variable. It determines whether the manifest variable in question differs from the manifest variable of other latent variables. In general, convergent validity can be observed by extracting the average variation of the latent variable. The higher the average variation extraction (AVE), the higher the reliability and convergent validity the latent variable will have. Fornell and Larcker (1981) have suggested only when the normal value is larger than 0.5 can it represent the average variation explanatory power of the manifest variable on the latent variable. The AVE of samples in this study fall between 0.744~0.954 (see Table 3), representing that every manifest variable can receive a considerable degree of latent variable after evaluation (Sharma, 1996).

Table 3: Fitness of Internal Structure of Model

Item	Brand Image ( $\xi_1$ )			Congruency between Celebrity Endorser and Brand ( $\xi_2$ )		Brand Attitude ( $\eta_1$ )		Purchase Intention ( $\eta_2$ )	
	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>	Y <sub>1</sub>	Y <sub>2</sub>	Y <sub>3</sub>	Y <sub>4</sub>
SMC	0.52	0.65	0.69	0.53	0.65	0.87	0.94	0.77	0.55
Lambda Loading	0.72	0.80	0.83	0.73	0.81	0.93	0.97	0.88	0.74
CR	0.824			0.739		0.949		0.788	
AVE	0.744			0.793		0.954		0.826	

Additionally, in terms of discriminant validity (see Table 4), Espinoza (1999) considers the average variation extraction value of a certain latent variable must be larger than the square of correlation coefficient of a random pair of latent variables on the non-diagonal. As such, it can be called having the capacity for discriminant validity. This study has adequate discriminant validity among latent variables.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

Item	Brand Image	Congruency between Celebrity Endorser and Brand	Brand Attitude	Purchase Intention
Brand Image	0.744			
Congruency between Celebrity Endorser and Brand	0.256	0.793		
Brand Attitude	0.691	0.259	0.954	
Purchase Intention	0.409	0.279	0.460	0.826

#### 4.4. Verification of Path Relationship

##### 4.4.1 The main effect of brand image, congruence between celebrity endorser, and brand on brand attitude

When brand image is an independent variable, brand attitude is a dependent variable and brand image has positive and significant influence ( $\gamma_{11}$  is 1.64). This supports hypothesis  $H_1$ , which agrees with the results of Darling (1981), Kirmani and Zeithaml (1992), and Han (1989). These scholars believed brand image would influence consumers' brand attitude toward products. Furthermore, this study has found that fit between celebrity and brand has no significant influence on brand attitude ( $\gamma_{12}$  is 0.03). Thus, research hypothesis  $H_4$  fails (see Table 5).

##### 4.4.2 Verification of brand attitude's effect on purchase intention

This result coincides with the opinions of Kamins and Marks (1991), Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991), and Hupfer and Gardner (1971). For consumers today, price is no longer the sole criterion by which they judge product quality; indeed, brand name can also influence consumers' perception of a product's quality. When consumers have a better brand attitude toward the brand, they will naturally have a higher intent to purchase.

##### 4.4.3 Verifying brand attitude's mediating effect

As shown in Table 5, when brand image is an independent variable, via brand attitude, it has a significant influence on purchase intention ( $\gamma_{21}$ 's indirect effect is 0.60). This result shows that brand attitude has a mediating effect on brand image and purchase intention, and brand image can influence purchase intention only via brand attitude. Thus, brand attitude shows complete mediation; therefore, hypothesis  $H_3$  is accepted. Furthermore, when fit between celebrity and brand is an independent variable, it has a significantly

positive influence on purchase intention ( $\gamma_{22}$ 's direct effect is 0.38). When purchase intention is a dependent variable, however, fit between celebrity and brand, via brand attitude, has no significant influence ( $\gamma_{22}$ 's indirect effect is 0.01). This result shows that brand attitude has a mediating effect on the fit between celebrity and brand and purchase intention. Fit between celebrity and brand can influence purchase intention without brand attitude; therefore, brand attitude is a partial mediator. Hypothesis H<sub>5</sub> is thus accepted.

Table 5: Path Coefficient of Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	H <sub>1</sub> ( $\gamma_{11}$ )	H <sub>2</sub> ( $\gamma_{21}$ )	H <sub>3</sub> ( $\gamma_{12}$ )	H <sub>4</sub> ( $\gamma_{22}$ )	H <sub>5</sub> ( $\beta_{21}$ )
Latent Variable	Brand Image	Brand Image	Congruency between Celebrity Endorser and Brand	Congruency between Celebrity Endorser and Brand	Brand Attitude
Dependent Variable	Brand Attitude	Purchase Intention	Brand Attitude	Purchase Intention	Purchase Intention
Direct Effect	1.64*** (13.85)	0.53 (1.53)	0.03 (0.44)	0.38*** (4.21)	0.36*** (2.06)
Indirect Effect	N.A.	0.60* (2.05)	N.A.	0.01 (0.43)	N.A.
Total Effect	1.64*** (13.85)	1.12*** (8.44)	0.03 (0.44)	0.39*** (4.07)	0.36*** (2.06)

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

## 5 Conclusions and Suggestions

### 5.1 Conclusions

Teenagers ("tweens") are one of the major consumer groups in modern society. In spite of their relatively low consumption capacity, they make every effort to buy what they want. Their brand attitude tends to be influenced by their peers. To 'tweens, it is more important to wear the right brand than to wear the right clothes, for they distinguish between one another based on individual choice of brand (Lachance, Beaudoin, & Robitaille, 2003). To teenagers, therefore, brand is significantly symbolic, implying individual expression and symbolizing interpersonal communication and individuality. In addition, in general, consumers' brand attitude has been discussed hotly, although few studies on brand attitude have adopted brand attitude as the intervening variable. To determine the mediating effect of brand attitude, therefore, this study is based on the theories of Darling (1981), Kirmani and Zeithaml (1992), Han (1989), and Kamins and Marks (1991); the framework of Mitchell and Olson (1981) being fit between celebrity and brand as the independent variable; and in general the research of Kamins and Gupta (1994). Building on this previous work, this study seeks to demonstrate that when fit between celebrity and brand is stronger, consumers will develop a positive brand attitude. Furthermore, according to the research by Lindstrom (2004), this study adopts the greatest characteristic of tweens peer pressure, defined as tweens' conforming with peer behavior as the circumstantial variable of this framework to probe the influence of tweens' brand attitude on purchase intention. This study adopted junior and senior high-school students in Taiwan as questionnaire recipients. In total, 530 surveys were distributed, and 508

pieces were returned for a recovery rate of 94.09%. Valid questionnaires totaled 478 surveys. From this data, the following conclusions are drawn.

### **5.1.1 The better the brand image, the more positive the brand attitude.**

Previous studies have all mentioned the positive correlation between brand image and brand attitude. Keller (1993) advanced the notion that brand image could arouse consumers' positive idea of the brand, and positive idea of the brand could make consumers develop a good attitude toward the brand. The empirical results of this study correspond with the research results of Keller (1993). When consumers with high peer conformity receive a positive message of a product's brand image, the brand gives consumers more positive feelings in functionality, symbolically, and experientially, it reduces their perceived risk toward products and helps them identify with the brand. Accordingly they will have a more positive attitude toward the brand.

### **5.1.2 Brand image influences purchase intention via brand attitude**

In previous research studies, scholars Darling (1981), Kirmani and Zeithaml (1992), and Han (1989) noted that brand image would influence consumers' brand attitude toward products. Peyrot and Van (1994) posited that the more positive the consumers' attitude toward brand, the more intense their purchase intention would be. These studies, however, did not probe into brand attitude's mediating effect on brand image and purchase intention. The empirical results of this study demonstrate that brand attitude plays an intermediary role between 'tweens' brand image and purchase intention; that is, when 'tweens have good brand image, their perceived risk of purchasing the brand is reduced. They thus become identified with the brand and therefore have positive brand attitude. Positive brand attitude causes 'tweens to have confidence in the brand, thinking that the risk of buying products of this brand is low. This, accordingly, produces higher purchase intentions. Previous scholars have seldom emphasized the brand attitude's mediating effect on brand image and purchase intention. Their relationship is now verified in this study.

### **5.1.3 Congruence between a celebrity endorser and brand influences purchase intention via brand attitude**

Many previous research studies have demonstrated that when a celebrity endorser's image and brand image fit well, excellent celebrity endorsement advertising effects are produced (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 1983). When celebrity and brand fit well, consumers produce a positive attitude (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). The combination of consumers' attitude toward advertising and brand influence their purchase intention; however, brand attitude's mediating effect on fitness between celebrity and brand and purchase intention has not to date been studied. From this study's empirical results, we have learned that the higher the fit between the celebrity and the brand, the more 'tweens will associate celebrity with brand. Accordingly, this produces more positive brand attitudes toward the product's brand. Via positive brand attitude, 'tweens produce a sense of relying on the brand and have higher purchase intention. Brand attitude, therefore, has a mediating effect on fit between celebrity and brand and purchase intention and is thus partially mediated.

## **5.2 Management Significance**

This study shows that 'tweens with high peer conformity, brand attitude toward a product produces an influence on purchase intention; thus, teenagers pay more attention to brand image than previous consumers. Based on this study's findings, the strategic management suggestions are as follows:

### **5.2.1 Build brand image to promote the positive brand attitude of consumers (Hypothesis 1 verified)**

Brand image is the face of all products, for image leaves an ever-lasting impression; therefore, meticulous operation is a must. To satisfy Taiwan teenagers' actual demand and their personality traits of pursuing new things and to enhance tweens' love of the brand, practitioners should provide products with natural and seasonal ingredients and increase the function appeal of a healthy diet. Meanwhile, they should also follow the fashion trends of 'tweens, diversify the packaging of products, and expeditiously change packaging product/service into a popular idol or cartoon to enhance 'tweens' love of the brand. Regarding the symbolic brand image of promoting consumers' social status and fitting into the group, it is suggested that practitioners create a new popular symbol and build dining environments with different themed experiences. Considering that Taiwan 'tweens face enormous pressure with examinations, they desire the best quality both in physical nutrition and a reading environment. For example, McDonald's can combine natural organic meals and clean comfortable reading spaces, making tweens feel that McDonald represents a good place to "eat healthily, read effectively," and enhance 'tweens' reliance on and attitude toward McDonald's.

### **5.2.2 Brand image influences purchase intention via brand attitude (Hypothesis 2 Verified)**

In previous research studies, scholars Darling (1981), Kirmani and Zeithaml (1992), and Han (1989) noted that brand image influenced consumers' brand attitude toward products; Peyrot and Van (1994) thought that the more positive consumers' attitude toward brand was, the more intense their purchase intention would be. These authors, however, did not probe into brand attitude's mediating effect on brand image and purchase intention.

This study's empirical results demonstrate that brand attitude plays an intermediary role between 'tweens' brand image and purchase intention; that is, when 'tweens have good brand image, their perceived risk of the brand is reduced, and they become identified with the brand. They therefore have a positive brand attitude. Positive brand attitude gives tweens have confidence in the brand, thinking that the risk of buying products of this brand is low; this, accordingly produces higher purchase intention. Previous scholars have seldom emphasized the brand attitude's mediating effect on brand image and purchase intention. Their relationship is now verified in this study.

### **5.2.3 Use of the influence of peer conformity behavior to promote 'tweens' brand attitude**

As social structure changes, social relationships begin to be based on peer relationships. Modern consumers tend to regard consumer products as a medium through which they can find companions with the same taste; indeed, this phenomenon is more remarkable among 'tweens. 'tweens spend more mutual leisure activity time establishing and

maintaining relationships with their peers. Referring to the research by Lindstrom (2004), and according to the strategy of peer-to-peer marketing, suggestions are as follows:

#### **5.2.4 Adopt other approaches**

Because excessive publicity and exposure to the brand may produce adverse effect on 'tweens, it is therefore suggested that practitioners cooperate with beverages or pastries of a certain brand and adopt exclusive selling available only at certain chain restaurants. For instance, McDonald's can cooperate with Coca Cola. When a cola with a new flavor is produced, it should be sold only at McDonald's and not available otherwise. This strategy will thus attract 'tweens, who like to have a taste of what is just in season when dining at McDonald's. The 'tweens' originally positive attitude toward McDonald's can be promoted as well.

#### **5.2.5 Engage in viral marketing**

Viral marketing refers to the message being voluntarily rewritten and transmitted by the audiences themselves. With the popularization of social networks, teenagers often communicate via networks; therefore, viral marketing techniques have become an effective way to arouse and maintain teenagers' attention. Practitioners could issue e-coupons or e-paper to social network site members, encouraging them to distribute the discount information widely to relatives and friends. Taking advantage of the convenience of networking can increase the benefit of advertising.

### **5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies**

This study draws on the theoretical basis of previous research studies, seeking to discover how tweens' high peer conformity behavior influences their purchase intention. The verification method was to carry out an actual questionnaire survey and conduct statistical analysis on teenager groups. Limitations still exist in the study, however. It is anticipated that researchers will probe further into these matters in the future in the following ways:

#### **5.3.1 Change the object of study**

This study adopts teenage consumers as the empirical object of study, which is unable to represent the consumption characteristics of the great majority of other demographic groups. It is suggested that future research go into in-depth study in the future on the general public or on elders, whose consumption power is ever increasing. Furthermore, this study mainly adopts the fast-food industry, specifically McDonald's, as the empirical object. Yet consumption characteristics vary from industry to industry. If studies on different industries or other kinds of products are conducted in the future, it will advance practical applications that can be applied more broadly.

#### **5.3.2 Compare the consumption time variance factor**

This study adopted a questionnaire format, which can only discover the feelings and opinions right when interviewees are answering the questionnaire. As time periods or environments change, consumer demand and ideas may also change. It is suggested, therefore, that when studying related topics in the future, scholars should visit those in the habit of consuming the same product and look deeply into the reasons consumers choose



sustained consumption. It is believed that this will be of more help to marketing in the future.

### 5.3.3 Concentrate sampling and geographic coverage

Due to limitations of time and manpower, only consumers who have dined in McDonald's were targeted. Questionnaires were distributed randomly, and the returned valid sample was 478 pieces. Therefore, the findings of this study's sample cannot represent all consumers within the entire market. If the number of samples increased and concentrated sampling areas also increased, more findings will be uncovered.

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