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## **ATHLETE CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT, BRAND AWARENESS, AND PRODUCT QUALITY AFFECTING CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION IN THE CASE STUDY OF NIKE PRODUCTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the impact of Athlete Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Awareness, and Product Quality on Consumer Purchase Intention for NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Targeting employed consumers aged 18+ who regularly shop for NIKE, data were collected from 403 participants via online surveys using closed-ended, multiple-choice, and 5-point Likert scale questions. Statistical analyses, including multiple regression, confirmed all three factors significantly influenced purchase intention at a 0.05 significance level. The findings offer academic insights into consumer behavior and practical guidance for brands to enhance endorsements, brand awareness, and product quality in competitive markets like Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Athlete Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Awareness, Product Quality, NIKE Products, Consumer Purchase Intention

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the Vietnamese market has experienced a notable influx of international fashion labels, notably the renowned sportswear leader Nike (Nguyen et al., 2008). The rising per capita income and expanding disposable income of the nation's youth have rendered Vietnam an appealing destination for international retailers. (Nguyen & Ha, 2021) Ho Chi Minh City has become a pivotal site for Nike's regional operations. The expanding middle class, urbanization, and increasing disposable incomes in the city have established a conducive climate for the corporation to exploit the surging demand for sportswear and athletic footwear.

Celebrity endorsements, brand awareness, and product quality significantly impact purchase intentions. Endorsers enhance brand credibility and create favorable consumer impressions (Choi & Rifon, 2012). Brand awareness influences consumer recognition, recall, and marketing performance (Tazkiyatunnisa, 2019). Product quality has long been acknowledged as an important factor in influencing consumer purchase behavior (Chang & Wildt, 1994)

This study explores the influence of celebrity endorsement, brand awareness, and product quality on purchase intention for Nike products in Ho Chi Minh City. It offers insights for brands navigating Vietnam's growing sportswear market.

### **Objective of the study**

1. To study the impact of Athlete Celebrity Endorsement factors (Trustworthiness, Expertise, and Attractiveness) on Consumer Purchase Intention for NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City.
2. To study the impact of Brand Awareness factors (Brand Recognition, Brand Recall, and Top-of-Mind) on Consumer Purchase Intention for NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City.
3. To study the impact of Product Quality on Consumer Purchase Intention for NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City.

### **Scope of the study**

This study examines the effects of three independent variables—athlete celebrity endorsement, brand awareness, and product quality—on consumers’ purchase intentions for Nike products in Ho Chi Minh City. The target population includes individuals aged 18 and above, employed part-time or full-time, who regularly purchase Nike products and reside in Ho Chi Minh City. With a population exceeding 9 million (World Population Review, 2024), Yamane's sampling formula indicates that a sample size of 400 respondents is appropriate for a precision level of  $\pm 5\%$ .

### **Literature Review**

The global sports apparel industry has grown rapidly, driven by increasing health awareness, active lifestyles, and the athleisure trend. In 2021, global revenue reached USD 189.3 billion, with continued growth expected (Statista, 2024). Technological advancements, such as moisture-wicking and temperature-regulating fabrics, have further boosted consumer demand. Athlete endorsements and social media have significantly influenced consumer preferences, increasing demand for branded sportswear. Vietnam, particularly Ho Chi Minh City, has emerged as a key market due to its expanding middle class and rising interest in fitness (Fakhri, 2021). The country’s leather and footwear industry plays a major role in exports but faces labor shortages and supply constraints (Phan et al., 2016). Global brands like Nike have capitalized on Vietnam’s growing sportswear market, leveraging its strong consumer base and economic potential.

Purchase intention reflects a consumer's likelihood of purchasing a product and serves as a key predictor of buying behavior (Ghosh, 1990). The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) emphasizes attitudes, subjective norms, and intentions as determinants of behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), while the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) extends this by including perceived behavioral control, which considers the ease or difficulty of acting (Ajzen, 1991). Studies suggest that factors like celebrity endorsements, brand awareness, and product quality positively influence purchase intentions, with perceived value and consumer attitudes playing critical roles (Cuomo et al., 2019). Consumers engage in cognitive decision-making processes, seeking information and evaluating product quality before making purchases (Naderibani et al., 2016).

Celebrity endorsement is a strategic marketing tool where well-known figures leverage their social influence to promote products (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). The "meaning transfer perspective" explains how a celebrity's symbolic attributes are transferred to a brand and ultimately to consumers (McCracken, 1989). Athlete celebrity endorsement is a powerful marketing strategy where renowned athletes promote products, leveraging their expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness to influence consumer behavior (Ohanian, 1990). Athletes' credibility stems from their professional achievements, enhancing endorsed products' perceived quality and reliability (Braunstein-Minkove et al., 2011).

Brand awareness refers to consumers' ability to recognize or recall a brand and its distinguishing features. It plays a crucial role in purchasing decisions, as familiar brands are more likely to be chosen (Ene & Özkaya, 2018). The Awareness Pyramid (Aaker, 1991) categorizes brand awareness into four levels: unawareness, recognition, recall, and top-of-mind. Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model links brand awareness to consumer perceptions, brand associations, and loyalty. The Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) (Young & Rubicam, 1994) assesses brand value through differentiation, relevance, esteem, and knowledge. Research highlights that strong brand awareness enhances credibility and purchase intention, particularly in competitive markets (Wang & Yang, 2010).

Product quality significantly influences consumer purchase behavior, as consumers assess products based on perceived quality, impacting their willingness to buy (Gong & Jiang, 2023). Perceived product quality reflects subjective judgments of a product's excellence and value, shaping purchase intention (Magnier et al., 2016). Research highlights a strong link between product quality and consumer engagement, particularly when endorsed by influencers. Additionally, factors like price perception and brand image mediate this relationship, with perceived value emerging as a key determinant of purchase decisions (Chang & Wildt, 1994).

### **Hypotheses Test**

1. H<sub>1</sub>: Athlete Celebrity Endorsement (Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness) has a significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention towards NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
2. H<sub>2</sub>: Brand Awareness (Brand Recognition, Brand Recall, and Top-of-Mind) has a significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention towards NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
3. H<sub>3</sub>: Product Quality has a significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention towards NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

### **Methodology**

#### **Population and Sample**

According to the World Population Review (2024), Ho Chi Minh City has a population of 9,567,656. Based on Yamane's formula for sample size determination, a minimum of 400 respondents is required for populations exceeding 100,000, ensuring a  $\pm 5\%$  precision level.

### **Type of Research and Tool**

This research investigates the effects of Athlete Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Awareness, and Product Quality on consumer purchase intention in the case of NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City. Data collection was conducted using closed-ended questions, multiple-choice questions, and a five-point Likert scale. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms, comprising 45 questions divided into five sections: demographics (12 questions), Athlete Celebrity Endorsement (10 questions), Brand Awareness (9 questions), Product Quality (6 questions), and Purchase Intention (8 questions).

### **Validity Test**

The English version of the questionnaire was reviewed and approved by my advisor, Nisit Manotungvoparun, PhD., while Ms. Han Nguyen, Lecturer and PMK Unit Coordinator for the Western Sydney Offshore Programs, approved the Vietnamese version.

### **Reliability Test**

The reliability test was conducted with a sample of 34 volunteers. The questionnaire data were analyzed using Cronbach’s Alpha in statistical software, and the total reliability was 0.945. The required value to be accepted is 0.6 - 1.0.

### **Statistics**

1. Descriptive statistics consisted of frequency, mean, and standard deviation.
2. Inferential statistics consisted of multiple regression analysis tests.

### **Research Results**

The survey reveals that Millennials (41.7%) and Gen Z (37.7%) dominate the demographic, with a balanced gender distribution of 50.4% male, 43.7% female, and 6.0% preferring not to disclose. Most respondents are single (52.1%) and hold a bachelor’s degree (69.5%). Nearly half (49.9%) purchase NIKE products at least once every six months, with lifestyle shoes being the most popular choice (25.6%). Physical stores are the preferred shopping channel (56.1%), while Kobe Bryant (26.4%) leads as the most admired NIKE athlete.

This study investigates the impact of Athlete Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Awareness, and Product Quality on consumer purchase intention for NIKE products in Ho Chi Minh City. These variables are further analyzed through their respective subcategories for a deeper understanding. Regression analysis indicates that these factors collectively account for 52.3% of the variation in purchase intention, with an F-statistic of 145.633 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming a statistically significant relationship.

Table 1: ANOVA Result Between Independent Variables (Athlete Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Awareness, and Product Quality) and Dependent Variable (Consumer Purchase Intention)

	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Regression</b>	201.873	3	67.291	145.633	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Residual</b>	184.362	399	0.462		
<b>Total</b>	386.235	402			

The coefficients indicate that Athlete Celebrity Endorsement has a positive but marginally insignificant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention (coefficient: 0.102, p-value: 0.054), suggesting a weaker influence than other factors. Brand Awareness significantly and positively affects Consumer Purchase Intention (coefficient: 0.537, p-value: 0.000), demonstrating its critical role in driving consumer decisions. Product Quality exhibits the strongest influence (coefficient: 0.542, p-value: 0.000), highlighting its pivotal role in shaping purchase intention.

Table 2: Model Coefficients Between Independent Variables (Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Awareness, and Service Quality) and Dependent Variable (Consumer Purchase Intention)

	<b>Unstandardized B</b>	<b>Coefficient Std. Error</b>	<b>Standardized Coefficients Beta</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>(Constant)</b>	-0.525	0.199		-2.642	0.009
<b>Athlete Celebrity Endorsement</b>	0.102	0.053	0.075	1.930	0.054
<b>Brand Awareness</b>	0.537	0.053	0.399	10.138	0.000*
<b>Product Quality</b>	0.542	0.050	0.421	10.790	0.000*

The regression model represented as  $\text{Consumer Purchase Intention} = -0.525 + 0.102 \text{ Athlete Celebrity Endorsement} + 0.537 \text{ Brand Awareness} + 0.542 \text{ Product Quality}$ , underscores that all three factors positively affect Consumer Purchase Intention, with Product Quality emerging as the most influential determinant.

## Conclusion and Discussion

This study of 403 respondents, primarily Millennials and Gen Z in Ho Chi Minh City, highlights NIKE consumers' purchase behaviors and brand interactions. The sample is nearly gender-balanced, with most participants being young professionals or students in the middle-income bracket (\$401-\$600/month).

Lifestyle and running shoes are the most preferred products, with physical stores remaining the dominant purchase channel. Athlete endorsements, brand awareness, and product quality all influence purchase intention. While endorsements have a positive impact, credibility, and expertise matter more than appearance. Brand awareness presents growth opportunities, particularly in top-of-mind recognition. Product quality is the strongest driver, with comfort and durability highly valued, though design and innovation warrant improvement.

These findings emphasize the need for NIKE to maintain high product standards, enhance brand visibility through targeted marketing efforts, and align athlete endorsements with brand messages that emphasize durability, performance, and innovation. Future research could explore how these factors differ across consumer segments and regions to provide a broader understanding of their impact on purchase intentions.

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