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THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMER PURCHASE ATTITUDE: A CASE STUDY OF E-COMMERCE IN TAIWAN

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Abstract:

This study intends to investigate the relationships of brand image, consumer purchasing attitude, intention, and loyalty. Purposive sampling is adopted in this study and three hundred questionnaires are sent to graduate students, who have experiences purchasing in E-commerce. There are 185 responses and only 183 valid responses. Our results verifies that brand image positive influence on attitude on e-commerce. Furthermore, we find that consumer purchase attitude significantly influence purchasing intention. Finally, we prove that purchasing intention also significantly influences consumer loyalty. The contribution of this study has proven that brand image affects consumers' purchasing attitude.

Key words: *consumer preference, E-commerce, purchasing attitude, intention, loyalty*

1. Introduction

Internet, technological product in the late twentieth centuries, brings convenience to humans. After years of improvement on bandwidth and designing interactive websites, it provides users excellent surfing experiences as well as attracts a growing number of people browsing on websites. People discover the on-line business opportunities and then develop the innovative industry, E-commerce. The E-business provides on-line shoppers daily necessity for users by a single click, compatible price, suggestions by virtual community members, and placing orders at their wills. Millions of on-line users create E-Business legend. For example, Union Pay card successfully integrates traditional bankcard service as well as protects on-line shopping security resulting to dominate network payment business. Another, the

turnover of Taobao.com reached 10,000 billion RMB in 2015. E-commerce generates enormous business opportunities. In the next decade, approximately seventy percent commodity will be traded through internet and the market value reaches 10,000 billion dollars in each year. As the rapid development in E-commerce it is, it has changed our consuming pattern and behavioral practice.

Brands, which act as an important role on influencing buying decisions, might affect consumer-buying attitudes (Gordon et al., 1993). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) indicated that attitude represents as feeling of either favorable or unfavorable manners toward behaviors. Patterson (1995) stated that attitude had certain connections with behavioral intention. Tellis (1988) argued that loyalty was a repeating behavior on purchasing the products from the same corporates. In this study, we intend to investigate the relationships of brand image, consumer purchase attitude, behavioral intention, and loyalty. The remainder of this paper was organized as follows. We provided a brief review of the related literature in section 2, while Section 3 illustrated the methodology. Section 4 described the results and analysis and finally Section 5 concluded the paper.

2. Literature Review

Theories background

This research is based on the theories of consumer theory and technology acceptance model (TAM). Consumer theory (Debreu, 1951) is based on the conditions of consumer choices including the level, magnitude, and dominance of attractiveness. Some studies argued consumer choice was the combination of multiple dimensions of consumption value (Holbrook, 1994). Therefore, when consumers chose the specific combination of consumer preference, it represented that consumers reached maximum combination on the rational considerations (Spence, 1973). Furthermore, theory of Reasoned Action had been verified on health-related behaviors (Montano & Taplin, 1991), on-line grocery (Hansen et al., 2004), and internet banking (Shumaila et al., 2010). Moreover, the technology acceptance model (TAM) was expanded the theory reasoned action and adopted to clarify and predict the decisive elements on technology acceptance. TAM had been verified positive influences among perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, enjoyment and intention (Davis et al., 1992). Other studies also stated that TAM was confirmed with great merits to predict attitude, intention, loyalty (Al-Gahtani & King, 1999) in wireless service (Lu et al., 2005). Consequently, we incorporate the concepts of consumer theory and TAM in this research. Finally, we intended to explore the relationship of brand image, purchase attitude, behavioral intention, and loyalty. The detail variables will be discussed in the following:

Brand image

Brands act as an important influence on buying decisions (Gordon et al., 1993) and also affects buyers' attitude to pay a premium price with the same products (Mudambi et al., 1997). However, branding (Mudambi, 2002) also needs to involve more direct interactions with the consumers. Prior study have indicated that the importance of spokespersons endorse the products which might intrigue consumer purchasing attitude (Lynch & Schuler, 1994). Through customer choice experiments Bendixen et al. (2004) had examined other appealing elements such as home delivery, price, and technologies, which might influence consumer buying attitudes as well. Even though there are many important elements affecting e-business mentioned in previous studies, we interviewed fifteen experienced buyers and concluded that convenience, price, control and community act as the key factors to build up brand image of firms. The detail information will be discussed as follows: 1). *Convenience*: Lobel et al. (1999) stated that online stores provided convenience service to attract consumers, who live in the busy modern society (Lobel et al., 1999). Some studies verified that convenience was the main reason to affect consumers' purchasing decisions E-commerce (Morganosky & Cude, 2000). People who living in the modern busy world expect having more free time to relax their tired souls. Therefore, anyone who can provide them convenient service such as home delivery service will win their orders. 2). *Price*: Kim et al. (2009) indicated that pricing strategy acts as relative important factor for corporates to compete in dynamic business world. In addition, Choi and Mattila (2009) stated that E-commerce intended to offer competitive price in order to influence consumers' purchasing attitude. In the low wage era, most people can only make limited salary. Thus, any firms provide consumers high CP value products will soon be popular stores. 3). *Control*: Csikszentmihalyi (1975) suggested that control is also referred to unique experiences of decision making on technological interactions. Familiar with the skill of manipulating diversified websites and E-commerce interfaces, it overcomes the terrified feelings of on-line users (Novak et al., 2000). Consequently, e-store not only offers online shoppers the latest product catalogs through friendly interfaces, but also provides consumers 24 hours online purchase service. The e-business give consumers the controlling power to shop online stores at anywhere and anytime. 4). *Real and virtual communities*: Preece (2000) stated that community, a flexible and small-scale place (Kim et al., 2009), comprised of a group people of with a shared purpose. Additionally, Rheingold (1993) argued that virtual community, a modern social network, was regarded as a group of people constantly communicated for information acquisition and exchange on the internet (Rheingold, 1993). Thus, we knew that those communities put great emphasis on information sharing, exchanging, and integration for proposing solutions to problems. The processes make community members increase their cohesiveness (Maeeey et al., 2003). Consequently, the power of word of mouth in community may change others' purchasing decisions. Finally, in this study, we stated that a sound brand image including providing on-line shoppers a simple and easy of use interface, excellent product quality with competitive price,

convenient delivering approach, and managing virtual community may affect consumer purchase attitude, intention, and loyalty.

Attitude

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) indicated that attitude represents as feeling of either favorable or unfavorable manners toward behaviors and other studies argued attitude involved with the degree of desire or undesired from the perspective of social psychology (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995). Nevertheless, attitude was defined as stances, which were natural responses to act consciously or unconsciously (Benavides-Velasco & Quintana-Garcia, 2008). According to above reviews mentioned, we understand an excellent brand image may unconsciously affect consumer purchase attitude. Therefore, brand image acts as an important role on buying decisions. Thus, we propose the first hypothesis as follows:

H1: Brand images of e-stores significantly influence consumer purchase attitude.

Behavioral Intention

Previous studies addressed that attitude had strong relationship on intention (Patterson, 1995). Other study also proved that attitude and playfulness positive affected intention (Moon & Kim, 2001). Another study on information system verified that satisfaction had significantly influenced on intention (Hayashi et al., 2004). For the reviews mentioned above, we conclude that only if E-commerce providing on-line consumer friendly on-line interfaces, competitive price, excellent logistics service, and instant and positive feedbacks from real or virtual communities, their purchasing attitude will be enhanced. Consequently, we reason that the greater purchasing attitude of the on-line consumers might affect their behavioral intention. The second hypothesis was made as follow:

H2: Consumer purchase attitude significantly influences behavioral intention.

Loyalty

Tellis (1988) argued that loyalty, a crucial determinant of repurchase intention (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002b; Liao et al., 2009), was a repeating behavior on purchasing the products from the same corporates. Other studies addressed that loyal consumers hold a strong commitment to re-patronize prefer products or service (Oliver, 1997; Stern & Hammond, 2004). According to the mentioned above, the behaviors of continuous purchasing on the same brand products was regarded as consumer loyalty. Therefore, we assume that the purchasing of behavioral intention may have a strong connection with loyalty and propose the final hypothesis.

H3: Behavioral intention significantly influences loyalty.

3. Methodology

We modified Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) through literature review on consumer preference and the interview results with fifteen experienced on-line shoppers to propose the research framework of this study. Furthermore, operational definitions of this research framework were developed. Moreover, we also defined our target sampling and checked those responses. Finally, we adopted SPSS and AMOS as our statistic tools to verify out hypothesis.

Interview with experts

We had interviewed with fifteen experienced on-line shoppers to reason the crucial factors for on-line users to enact purchase on E-commerce. They had mentioned about price, convenience, unique products, promotion, community, installment, free-gift, control, and variety products were all the reasons to drive them for online transaction. However, we only valued those important elements, which were supported by seven experienced shoppers at least. In this study, twelve experienced on-line shoppers regarded price and convenience as the most important factors. Nine experts indicated that suggestions from real or virtual community members might influence consumer purchase attitude. Finally, eight experts stated the control was equally important as well. Therefore, we adopted those four consumer preferences as independent variables in this research model shown on table 1.

Table 1. The Results of interviewing with experts

Crucial factors	Numbers of experts
Convenience	12
Price	12
Real & virtual communities	9
Controlling	8
Free gift	5
Unique products	5
Promotion	4
Installment	2

Research Model and measurement of constructs

The modified TAM were delivered both by interviewing with experienced on-line shoppers and literature review on consumer preference. This model included seven major constructs (see figure 1). The major independent variables were brand image, attitude, and behavior intention. The dependent variable was loyalty. We labeled three items in each variable such as convenience (Kempiak and Fox, 2006), price (Choi and Mattila, 2009), control (Ghani and Deshpande, 1994), and community (Armstrong and Hagel, 1996) in brand image. Attitude, behavioral intention, and loyalty measurements were respective from (Davis, 1989b) and (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002a). The measurements are shown on table 2.

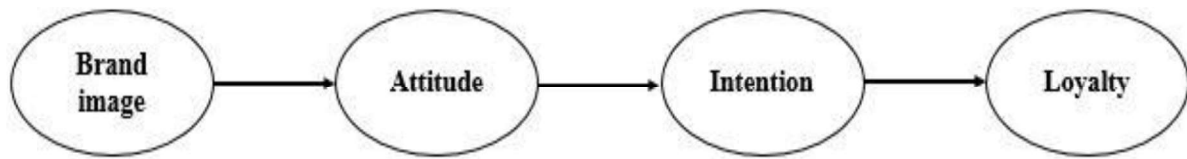


Figure 1. The concept of framework

Table 2. Operational definitions

Convenience: Sources: Kempiaik and Fox (2006), Likert 7 point scale

CONV1. I can shop on internet anytime.

CONV 2. I can shop on internet anywhere.

CONV 3. I think home delivery is convenience..

Price: Sources: Choi and Mattila (2009), Likert 7 point scale

PRI1. I think the price on internet is cheaper.

PRI 2. I think the promotion on internet provides competitive price.

PRI 3. I think group purchase has more bargaining power on price.

Control: Source: Ghani and Deshpande (1994), Likert 7 point scale

CONL1. I can choose the information I want on the internet anytime.

CONL 2. I can purchase products on the internet anytime.

CONL 3. I can avoid crowds while in on-line shopping.

Community: Sources: Armstrong and Hagel (1996), Likert 7 point scale

COMU1. I believe the experience sharing from community members.

COMU 2. I believe the post information from community members is reliable.

COMU 3. I believe the recommendations from community members.

Attitude: Sources: Davis (1992), Likert 7 point scale

ATT1. I think on-line shopping is attractive.

ATT 2. I have a positive image of on-line shopping.

ATT 3. I will pay more attention on on-line shopping information.

ATT 4. I will recommend on-line shopping to my friends.

Behavior Intention: Sources: Davis (1992), Likert 7 point scale

INT1. If possible, I will proceed purchasing products on the internet.

INT 2. I will regard on-line shopping as an entertainment.

INT 3. I will try on-line shopping.

INT 4. I have interesting in participating on-line shopping community

INT 5. If I have opportunities to get on the net, I will engage in on-line shopping.

Loyalty Sources: Eggert and Ulaga (2002), Likert 7 point scale

LOY1. I will recommend friends to proceed on-line shopping.

LOY 2. I will continue on-line shopping.

LOY 3. I will increase times of on-line shopping.

Sample and procedure

We adopted purposive sampling in this study. In order to avoid the issue of common method variance, three procedures were implemented. First, we designed those questionnaires carefully and some reverse questions hidden in it. Second, we demanded on-line shoppers to fill out independent and dependent variables of questionnaire in two different phases. Third, we proved that those constructs had discriminant validity. One hundred questionnaires were sent in this study. However, we only have 63 responses for pilot study to make sure consistency and develop corrected questionnaires on semantic and syntax. The survey took place from September first to October eleventh in 2016. Three hundred questionnaires were filled out and 183 valid responses, which resulted in a 61% percentage of response rate.

4. Analysis and results

Respondent Demographics

One hundred and eighty three people participated in this survey. The distribution of respondents was by gender, age, surfing hours and monthly spending in this study. Male and female occupied 33.6% and 66.4% respectively. The age of shoppers ranging from 21 to 30 engaging in E-commerce occupied 41.8%. Over 96 people spending 6 hours on browsing websites. Finally, 38.1% users spent less than 1000 NT dollars in on-line shopping each month and 47.8% ones spent about 3000 NT dollars.

Validity and Reliability (EFA)

The requirements verified validity and reliability as follows: factor loading >0.5 , Eigen value >1 , KMO >0.5 , communalities >0.5 , Alpha >0.7 , Item-total Correlation >0.6 . Dependent variable: The three items measuring loyalty have factor loadings of 0.80, 0.95, and $(\alpha=0.88)$. The independent variables are determined based on the literature, and the two questions assessing convenience have factor loadings of 0.89 and 0.89 $(\alpha=0.97)$. The two questions measuring price have factor loadings of 0.77 and 0.91 $(\alpha=0.82)$. The three questions assessing control have factor loadings of 0.84, 0.90 and 0.63 $(\alpha=0.82)$. The three questions measuring community have factor loadings of 0.93, 0.90, and 0.91 $(\alpha=0.87)$. The three questions measuring attitude have factor loadings of 0.73, 0.85, and 0.77 $(\alpha=0.87)$. Finally, we preserve four items measuring intention, with factor loadings of 0.83, 0.72, 0.80, and 0.63 $(\alpha=0.86)$. We also assessed the inter-correlation among the items, and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Inter-corelation (n=183)

	Mea n	S. D.	CON	PRI	CONL	COM	ATT	INT	LOY
Convenience (CON)	5.37	1.23	1						
Price (PRI)	5.08	1.01	0.46***	1					
Control (CONL)	5.84	0.86	0.42***	0.27***	1				
Community (COM)	4.29	0.96	0.12	0.23**	0.13**	1			
Attitude (ATT)	4.58	1.03	0.61***	0.48***	0.37***	0.35***	1		
Behavioral intention	4.81	0.98	0.54***	0.44***	0.34***	0.30***	0.84***	1	
Loyalty (LOY)	4.76	1.09	0.73***	0.44***	0.39***	0.30***	0.86***	0.76** *	1

Note: * P<0.05, **P<0.01, *** P<0.001; S.E: standard error

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The results show the good model fit with regard to confirmatory factor analysis: CMIN/DF =1.75, NFI=0.87, RFI=0.83, IFI=0.94, TLI=0.92, CFI=0.93, and RMSEA=0.07. These figures were shown that CFA was acceptable. The results indicated values of items' factor loading are ranged between 0.63 and 0.93. All items are higher than 0.5, and t values are significant. CR values are between 0.82 and 0.88. AVE values were between 0.56 and 0.79. The results are illustrated on Table 4.

Table 4. Analytical results of CFA

Construct	Items	Factor	S.E.	T value	C.R.	AVE
Convenience	Conv1	0.89	0.08	10.50	0.88	0.79
	Conv2	0.89	-	-		
Price	Pri1	0.77	-	-	0.83	0.71
	Pri2	0.91	0.13	7.41		
Control	Cont1	0.84	0.16	7.72	0.83	0.63
	Cont2	0.90	0.19	7.88		
	Cont3	0.63	-	-		
Community	Comu1	0.93	0.16	9.23	0.87	0.70
	Comu2	0.90	0.14	9.18		
	Comu3	0.67	-	-		
Attitude	Att2	0.73	0.08	9.72	0.82	0.61
	Att3	0.85	-	-		
	Att4	0.77	0.13	10.55		

Intention	Int1	0.83	0.09	11.27		
	Int2	0.72	0.12	9.19		
	Int3	0.80	-	-	0.83	0.56
	Int4	0.63	0.13	7.88		
Loyalty	Loy1	0.80	0.09	10.64		
	Loy2	0.95	0.08	13.45	0.88	0.72
	Loy3	0.80	-	-		

There were two criteria to verify discriminant validity: First, composite reliability should be higher than 0.6. Second average variance extracted should be higher than 0.5. As we mentioned above, the standard of measurements were proven that there was no issue of common method variable, CMV, and it also confirmed a good convergent validity of constructs (C. A. D. F. L. Fornell, 1981).

According to the results listed in Table 3, the values for convergent validity were 0.88, 0.83, 0.83, 0.87, 0.82, 0.83 and 0.88, while those of AVE were 0.79, 0.71, 0.63, 0.70, 0.61, 0.56 and 0.72. These are all higher than the criteria for composite reliability and average variance, which are 0.6 and 0.5 (C.A.D.F.L. Fornell, 1981), respectively. Hair argued that the square root of AVE should be at least 75% higher than the correlation coefficients among the constructs (Hair et al., 1998). The square root of AVE values were 0.89, 0.84, 0.79, 0.84, 0.78, 0.74 and 0.85, and thus met the criterion, as shown on Table 5, and so the constructs showed good discriminant validity.

Table 5. Test of discriminates validity

	Convenience	Price	Control	Community	Attitude	Intention	Loyalty
1. Convenience (CON)	(0.89)						
2. Price (PRI)	0.46***	(0.84)					
3. Control (CONL)	0.42***	0.27***	(0.79)				
4. Community (COM)	0.12	0.23**	0.13**	(0.84)			
5. Attitude (ATT)	0.61***	0.48***	0.37***	0.35***	(0.78)		
6. Intention	0.54***	0.44***	0.34***	0.30***	0.84***	(0.74)	
7. Loyalty (LOY)	0.73***	0.44***	0.39***	0.30***	0.86***	0.76***	(0.85)

The results of structural equation model

The criteria for the good model fit of structural equation models are as follows: CMIN/DF =2.72, NFI=0.87, RFI=0.84, IFI=0.91, TLI=0.89, and CFI=0.91 shown on table 6.

Table 6. Goodness fit of research model

	X ² /df	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
SEM	2.72	0.87	0.84	0.91	0.89	0.91

Finally, Figure 2 shows the results of the regression model. We find that the brand image ($\beta=0.92$, $p<0.001$) have a significant influence on consumer purchase attitude. Consumer purchase attitude has a positive influence on purchase intention ($\beta=1.00$, $p<0.001$). Additionally, purchase intention has a positive influence on loyalty ($\beta=0.88$, $p<0.001$). Overall, the results of H1, H2, and H3 are supported, as shown in Table 7.

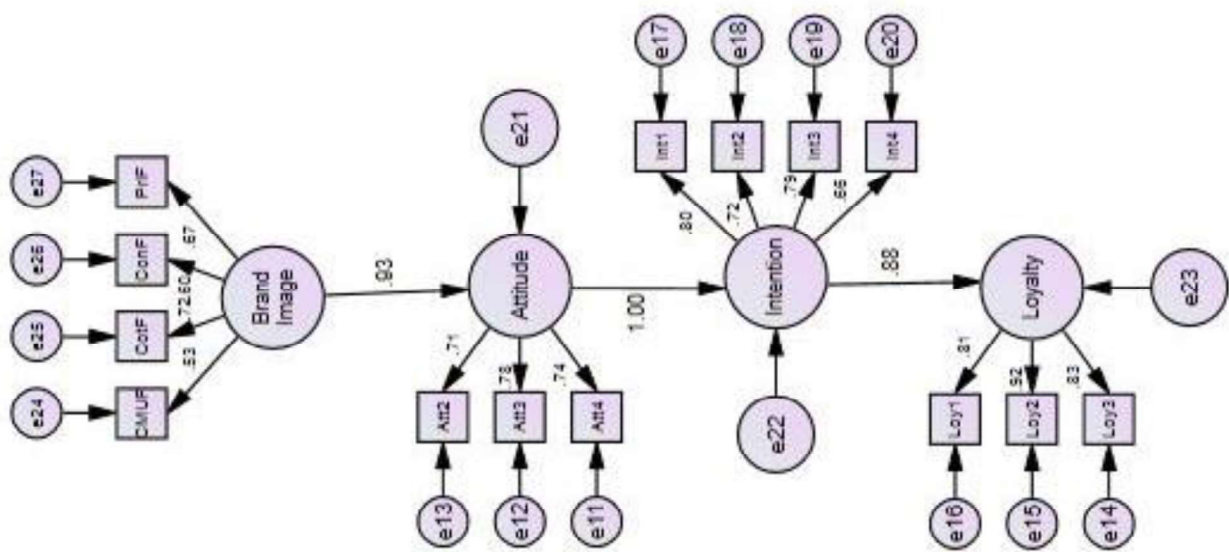


Figure 2. The Results of the Research Framework

Table 7. The results of the hypothesis

Hypothesis	Results
H1 Brand images of e-stores significantly influence consumer purchase attitude.	Supported
H2 Consumer purchase attitude significantly influences behavioral intention.	Supported
H3 Behavioral intention significantly influences loyalty.	Supported

5. Conclusion

A sound brand image helps firms to dominate major market in the competitive business world. However, only successful corporates possess good reputation. This study disclosed the crucial elements of managing brand image and it also verified 1). Brand image significantly influenced consumers' purchasing attitude. 2). Purchasing attitude showed positive and significant on intention. 3). Intention exhibited a positive relation with loyalty. The details will discuss as follow:

In this study, brand image is constitute by control, community, convenience, and price and we will discuss each construct as follows:

Control: Human are borne with the desire of controlling. They dislike the feelings of being constrained but enjoy enacting purchasing decision at free will. While observing this case, we found that E-commerce not only presented attractive pictures of products, detail specifications, and buyers comments and evaluations on the website for consumers, but also provided those shoppers 24 hours online shopping service at anytime and anywhere. Being able to purchasing goods on the Net increases their purchasing attitude. The findings are in line with prior studies (Kempiak & Fox, 2006).

Community: A group of people with a shared goal creates both real and virtual community. The members in the community communicate and share information through the platform. Thus, they have greater influence on other members. Perceived the advantages and the power of managing virtual community, E-business owners should run a virtual community, which post a variety of microfilms such as make-up and dress-up skills, inform the new arrival items' information, give away free coupon, and implement buy one get one free promotion. Through participating these intensive activities, members become open minded and are willing to propose their thoughts and to receive suggestions from community members. The processes of interactions enhance community cohesion and the relationship makes the community members trust on other members' suggestions, while making purchasing decisions. The findings are in accord with previous studies (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996). **Convenience:** E-Commerce gives busy modern people a platform to enact on-line shopping. The E-platform coordinates suppliers, logistic industry, convenience stores, and banks to provide prompt home delivery service in 24 hours by a single click at anytime and anywhere. The convenience that E-commerce has brought to consumers changes their consumptive habits and increases their purchasing attitudes. This is in complete agreement with the results (Kempiak & Fox, 2006). **Price:** Price is another crucial factor of brand image. Comparing to real stores, e-store does not have to pay rents so it can offer online consumers with competitive price. In addition, the unemployment is very high in the current society since financial crisis in 2008. Although most people have full time job, it is hard for them to have a saving with minimum wages. Besides, offering consumers products with greater Cost-Performance ratio will attract their interests. Thus, an increasing numbers of on-line consumers start to engage in online shopping and it also form on-line purchasing trend. The results are remarkably consistent with prior studies (Chevalier & Goolsbee, 2003). Furthermore, consumer purchase attitude is greatly influenced by the shopping experiences. Only if E-shoppers perceived enjoyable services such as friendly interfaces, competitive price, home delivery, and suggestions from communities, their behavioral intention will be enhanced. Moreover, when consumers are conscious or unconscious behaviors of repeating purchasing products from the same firms, they become loyal customers to the brand. Finally, we introduce the case of Book.com, which possess an excellent brand image. The e-business builds up excellent brand image by providing consumers easier and attractive interface, competitive price, 24 hours on-line service, and a sound

real and virtual communities with the purpose of increasing purchasing attitude, behavioral intention, and loyal consumers. The results are in line with prior study (Gordon et al., 1993). Accordingly, the framework of this study is in line with TAM (Davis, 1989a) and the contribution of this study has proven that brand image is the key factors to affect consumers' purchasing attitude as well.

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