

The Impact of Brand Awareness on Consumer Purchase Intention: The Mediating Effect of Perceived Quality and Brand Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of the study are to explore the effects among brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and customer purchase intention and mediating effects of perceived quality and brand loyalty on brand awareness and purchase intention. The samples are collected from cellular phone users living in Chiayi, and the research adopts regression analysis and mediating test to examine the hypotheses. The results are: (a) the relations among the brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty for purchase intention are significant and positive effect, (b) perceived quality has a positive effect on brand loyalty, (c) perceived quality will mediate the effects between brand awareness and purchase intention, and (d) brand loyalty will mediate the effects between brand awareness and purchase intention. The study suggests that cellular phone manufacturers ought to build a brand and promote its brand awareness through sales promotion, advertising, and other marketing activities. When brand awareness is high, its brand loyalty will also increase. Consumers will evaluate perceived quality of a product from their purchase experience. As a result, brand loyalty and brand preference will increase and also purchase intention.

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Loyalty, Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the rising of consumer consciousness has made consumers choose to purchase their familiar and favorable brand. Therefore, if businesses want to defeat their competitors, they have to make consumers love to buy their products and brands. Macdonald and Sharp (2000) mention that even though consumers familiarize and are willing to purchase a product, brand awareness is still an important factor to influence purchase decision. When consumers want to buy a product, and a brand name can come to their minds at once, it reflects that product has higher brand awareness. Consumers' purchase decision can be influenced if a product has higher brand awareness (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; Grewal, Monroe & Krishnan, 1998). This explains why a product with higher brand awareness will have higher market share and better quality evaluation. In addition, while consumers select a product, they care about perceived quality and brand awareness. Perceived quality can help consumers to have a subjective judgment on overall product quality that make a product hold a salient differentiation and become a selective brand in consumers' minds (Aaker, 1991). Besides, businesses have to build up brand loyalty. Some studies suggest that the cost to attract a new customer is more than five times of maintaining a loyalty customer (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Barsky, 1994). That is, the higher the brand loyalty, the less cost businesses to pay. Therefore, the purposes of the study are to explore: (1) the influences of brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty on purchase intention effect, (2) the effect of perceived quality on brand loyalty, (3) whether perceived quality mediates the relations between brand awareness and purchase intention, and (4) whether brand loyalty mediates the relations between brand awareness and purchase intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness means the ability of a consumer can recognize and recall a brand in different situations (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness consists of brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall means when consumers see a product category, they can recall a brand name exactly, and brand recognition means consumers has ability to identify a

brand when there is a brand cue. That is, consumers can tell a brand correctly if they ever saw or heard it. Moreover, Hoeffler & Keller (2002) indicate that brand awareness can be distinguished from depth and width. Depth means how to make consumers to recall or identify brand easily, and width expresses in how many consumers purchase a product, a brand name will come to their minds at once. If a product owns brand depth and brand width at the same time, consumers will think of a specific brand when they want to buy a product. That is, the product has higher brand awareness. Moreover, brand name is the most important element in brand awareness (Davis, Golicic & Marquardt, 2008). As a consequence, brand awareness will affect purchase decision through brand association, and when a product owns a positive brand image, it will help in marketing activities (Keller, 1993). A brand name offers a symbol that can assist consumers to identify service providers and to predict service results (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000; Turley & Moore, 1995).

Brand awareness plays an important role on purchase intention because consumers tend to buy a familiar and well known product (Keller, 1993; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). Brand awareness can help consumers to recognize a brand from a product category and make purchase decision (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). Brand awareness has a great influence on selections and can be a prior consideration base in a product category (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Brand awareness also acts as a critical factor in the consumer purchase intention, and certain brands will accumulate in consumers' mind to influence consumer purchase decision. A product with a high level of brand awareness will receive higher consumer preferences because it has higher market share and quality evaluation (Dodds et al., 1991; Grewal et al., 1998).

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is a result of consumers' subjective judgment on a product (Zeithaml, 1988; Dodds et al., 1991; Aaker, 1991). Bhuian (1997) also consider perceived quality is a judgment on the consistency of product specification or an evaluation on added value of a product. Garvin (1983) proposes that perceived quality is defined on the basis of users' recognition while objective quality is defined on the basis of product or manufacturing orientation. The differences between objective quality and perceived quality lie in that objective quality has a pre-design standard to a product, and perceived quality is influenced by internal and external product attributes which is an evaluation basis for consumers (Olshavsky, 1985; Zeithaml, 1988). Kan (2002) points out that objective quality is that consumers will use their experience and knowledge to evaluate overall product benefit, function, durability, technology and reliability when consumers purchase a product. Perceived quality is a consumer judgment on the accumulative product benefits and a subjective feeling on product quality (Zeithaml, 1988; Dodds et al., 1991). Aaker (1991) argues that perceived quality can show the salient differentiation of a product or a service and becomes a selective brand in consumers' mind.

The reason why perceived quality is different to real quality is because (a) a previous bad image of a product will influence consumers' judgment on product quality in the future. Moreover, even the product quality has been changed, consumers will not trust that product because of their unpleasant experience in previous (Aaker, 1996), (b) manufacturers and consumers have different views on the judgment of the quality dimensions (Morgan, 1985; Aaker, 1996), (c) consumers seldom hold enough information to evaluate a product objectively. Though consumers have enough information, they may be insufficient in time and motivation to do a further judgment, and in the end they can only select little important information and make an evaluation on quality (Aaker, 1996; Wan, 2006). In addition, perceived quality is a relative concept which possesses situational, comparative, and individual attributes. Perceived quality will be affected by factors such as previous experience, education level, and perceived risk and situational variables such as purchase purpose, purchase situation, time pressure, and social background from consumers (Holbrook & Corfman, 1985). In sum, perceived quality is a consumer subjective judgment on product quality, and he or she will evaluate product quality from their previous experiences and feelings.

Brand Loyalty

Aaker (1996) assumes that a loyal consumer base represents a barrier to entry, a basis for a price premium, time to respond to competitors, and a bulwark against deleterious price competition, and brand loyalty is a core dimension of brand equity. In addition, brand loyalty is the final destination of brand management, and if a company wants to test the weakness or strength of its customers' loyalty, it can easily check whether consumers still favor its product in contrast to

competitors. Brand loyalty is consumer attitudes on a brand preference from previous use and shopping experience of a product (Deighton, Henderson, & Neslin, 1994; Aaker, 1991), and it can be measured from repurchase rate on a same brand. Assael (1998) defines that brand loyalty is that consumers satisfy their past experience in use of the same brand and incur repurchase behavior. Brand loyalty means brand preferences that consumers will not consider other brands when they buy a product (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996; Cavero & Cebollada, 1997). Brand loyalty represents a repurchase commitment in the future purchase that promise consumers will not change their brand loyalty in different situations and still buy their favorable brands (Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty includes behavior factors and attitude factors. Behavior loyalty represents repurchase behavior, and loyalty attitude means psychological commitment to a brand (Aaker, 1991; Assael, 1998; Oliver, 1999; Prus & Brandt, 1995; Farr & Hollis, 1997). Thus, purchase frequency is not equal to loyalty. For instance, consumers to repurchase a product do not mean they like it but due to a convenient factor or a variety seeking behavior to purchase a certain specific product occasionally (Tseng, Liao, & Jan, 2004).

A true brand loyalty can be called when consumers are both inclined to these two factors, otherwise, it can only be called a spurious brand loyalty if only attitude or behavior factors are found (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996). Loyalty can also be separated from short term loyalty and long term loyalty. Short term loyalty is not a real brand loyalty because a long term customer will not buy other brands even if there is a better choice (Jones & Sasser, 1995). In addition, Bloemer and Kasper (1995) argue that a real brand loyalty should include brand preferences and repurchase behaviors that present in a long term commitment, brand commitment and psychological processing (decision making and evaluation) function while Fornell (1992) proposes that brand loyalty can be measured from customer repurchase intention and price tolerance. Consumers with a strong commitment to a particular brand will constantly search for any marketing activity related to the brand (Brown, 1952; Barwise & Ehrenberg, 1987; Chaudhuri, 1995; Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996; Bandyopadhyay, Gupta, & Dube, 2005). Furthermore, brand loyalty can be measured in two dimensions: affective loyalty and action loyalty. Affective loyalty is a specific brand preference from accumulative satisfaction to previous using experiences. However, affective loyalty just represents that a repurchase intention. It does not mean that consumers will take purchase action. It is very hard to say that consumers hold brand loyalty (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Oliver, 1999; Kan, 2002). Action loyalty indicates that consumers not only have preferences to a specific brand but also perform purchase action repetitively, and become an action inertia (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Oliver, 1999; Kan, 2002, Lin, 2005).

Purchase Intention

Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1995) present the most recognized model of consumer purchase decision-making. This model divides the consumer purchase decision process into five stages: (1) problem recognition, (2) information search, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) purchase decision, and (5) post-purchase behavior. Also, Mowen and Minor (2001) maintain that consumer decision making are a series of processing results from perceiving problems, searching for solutions, evaluating alternatives, and making decisions. Engel, et al. (1995) further contend that purchase intention can be divided into unplanned buying, partially planned buying and fully planned buying. Unplanned buying means that consumers make all decisions to buy a product category and a brand in a store. It can be regarded as an impulse buying behavior. Partially planned buying means that consumers only decide a product category and the specification before buying a product, and brands and types will decide in the shop later. Fully planned buying means that consumers decide which product and brand to buy before entering the shop. Kotler (2003) proposes that individual attitudes and unpredictable situations will influence purchase intention. Individual attitudes include personal preferences to others and obedience to others' expectation and unpredictable situations signify that consumers change purchase intention because a situation is appearing, for example, when the price is higher than expected price (Dodds et al., 1991). Consumer purchase intention is considered as a subjective inclination toward a product and can be an important index to predict consumer behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Zeithaml (1988) uses possible to buy, intended to buy and considered to buy as measurement items to measure purchase intention.

Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention

Grewal, Krishnan, Baker and Borin (1998) conclude that brand awareness and perceived quality have a positive and significant relationship in a bicycle brand study. Many researches also maintain that the higher the brand awareness is, the higher perceived quality is (Monore, 1990; Dodds and Grewal, 1991; Wall, Liefeld, & Heslop, 1991; Lo, 2002; Lin, 2006). Kan (2002) further suggest that the higher the brand awareness is, the higher the consumers' quality evaluation is. Besides, Aaker and Keller (1990) mentioned that a brand with high awareness and good image can promote brand loyalty to consumers, and the higher the brand awareness is, the higher brand trust and purchase intention are to consumers. Peng (2006) indicates that brand awareness has the greatest total effects on brand loyalty. When businesses develop a new products or a new market, they should promote their brand awareness in order to receive the best result because brand awareness is positively related to brand loyalty (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Peng, 2006; Wu, 2002; Chou, 2005). Chang and Wildt (1994) submit that value can facilitate loyalty. Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) propose that the more positive customer transaction perceptions are, the stronger customer loyalty is. Sirdeshmukh, Sigh and Sabol (2002) also deem that value will bring a positive influence toward customers. Wu (2007) identifies that the perception of consumers will increase or reduce brand loyalty. Judith and Richard (2002) further indicate that perceived quality and brand loyalty have a highly connection, they will positively influence purchase intention. Chi, Yeh and Chiou (2009) a new view and evidence to the study of brand loyalty that customer perceived quality will influence brand trust and brand affect, and further to influence brand attitude and purchase behavior. Thus, perceived quality and brand loyalty are positively correlated, and brand loyalty will increase if perceived quality increases.

Consumers will have a higher purchase intention with a familiar brand (Kamins & Marks, 1991). Likewise, if a product has higher brand awareness it will have a higher market share and a better quality evaluation (Dodds, et al., 1991; Grewal, et al., 1998). A well known brand will have a higher purchase intention than a less well known brand (Hsu, 2000). Garretson and Clow (1999) suggest that perceived quality will influence consumer purchase intention, and Monore (1990) indicates that perceived quality will positively influence purchase intention through perceived value. Ho (2007) also asserts that the higher the perceived quality and perceived value of the private brand foods, the higher buying intention to consumers. In addition, Chang (2006) and Wu (2006) conclude that perceived quality and purchase intention are positively related. Brand loyalty is a repurchase commitment that promises consumers will repurchase their favorable brands in the future, and they will not change their loyalty under any circumstance (Oliver, 1999). Aaker (1991), Assael (1998), and Wang and Kan (2002) also mention that consumers must have positive feelings to a brand, and then they will produce purchase intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

According to the purposes and literature reviews on above, the study presents research structure in Figure 1. Brand awareness is the independent variable, purchase intention is the dependent variable, and perceived quality and brand loyalty are the mediating variables.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses are proposed as follows:

- H1: Brand awareness will be positively affected to perceived quality.
- H2: Brand awareness will be positively affected to brand loyalty.
- H3: Perceived quality will be positively affected to brand loyalty.
- H4: Brand awareness will be positively affected to purchase intention.
- H5: Perceived quality will be positively affected to purchase intention.
- H6: Brand loyalty will be positively affected to purchase intention.
- H7: Perceived quality will mediate between brand awareness and purchase intention.
- H8: Brand loyalty will mediate between brand awareness and purchase intention.

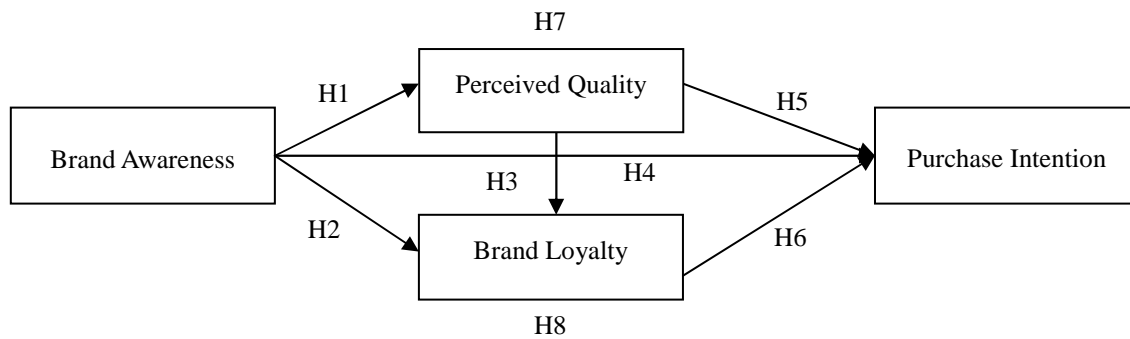


Figure 1. Research Structure

Sampling and Data Collection

The measurement constructs include brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and purchase intention with a Likert 7-point scale from 7 to 1 to present extremely agree, agree, a little agree, no opinion, a little disagree, disagree and very disagree. The convenience sampling is to collect data from cellular phone users living in Chiyi by a questionnaire. The sampling duration was from September 15th, 2008 to October 15th, 2008. Totally 315 questionnaires were dispatched. Excluding 48 invalid questionnaires, the effective questionnaires are 267 copies, and the response rate is 84.76%.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

The study uses Cronbach's α to measure the internal reliability of the questionnaire. As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's α of brand awareness is 0.8159. Brand identity and brand recall are 0.7511 and 0.7618, respectively. Brand loyalty is 0.8705. Action loyalty and affective loyalty are 0.8296 and 0.8139, respectively. Perceived quality is 0.7965, and purchase intention is 0.7849. According Guilford (1965) suggestion, when Cronbach's α is greater than 0.7, it shows the questionnaire has a relative high internal reliability. The results of the study show that Cronbach's α in all variables is higher than 0.7. It indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire is acceptable.

Table 2. Factor Analysis and Cronbach's α

Variables	Measurement item	Squared loadings (Cumulative, %)	Cronbach's α
Brand awareness (BA)	9		0.8159
BA-Brand identity	4	28.584	0.7511
BA-Brand recall	5	55.752	0.7618
Perceived quality (PQ)	6		0.7965
Perceived quality (PQ)	6	50.730	0.7965
Brand loyalty (BL)	9		0.8705
BL-Action loyalty	3	32.437	0.8296
BL-Affective loyalty	6	61.492	0.8139
Purchase intention (PI)	4		0.7849
Purchase intention (PI)	4	61.916	0.7849

Regression Analysis

The study uses simple regression analysis to examine the relationship between brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. As shown in Table 3, perceived quality ($\beta=0.466$, $p<0.001$) and brand loyalty ($\beta=0.477$, $p<0.001$) are positively and significantly related to brand awareness. Also, brand loyalty ($\beta=0.255$, $p<0.001$) is positively and significantly accounted for perceived quality. In addition, brand awareness ($\beta=0.384$, $p<0.001$),

perceived quality ($\beta=0.422$, $p<0.001$), and brand loyalty ($\beta=0.471$, $p<0.001$) are positively and significantly related to purchase intention. This brings the results that H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6 are all supported.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention

Variables	β	R ²	t	F	Sig.
Brand awareness to perceived quality	0.466***	0.217	8.574	73.514	0.000
Brand awareness to brand loyalty	0.477***	0.228	8.837	78.101	0.000
Perceived quality to brand loyalty	0.255***	0.065	4.286	18.372	0.000
Brand awareness to purchase intention	0.384***	0.147	6.767	45.787	0.000
Perceived quality to purchase intention	0.422***	0.178	7.573	57.345	0.000
Brand loyalty to purchase intention	0.471***	0.221	8.680	75.345	0.000

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Meditating Test

According to Baron & Kenny (1986, p.1177) suggestions, there are three steps to examine the mediating effects, First, the independent variable must be shown to affect the dependent variable in the first equation, second, the independent variable must affect the mediator in the second equation; and third, the mediator must affect the dependent variable in the third equation. If these conditions all hold in the predicted direction, then the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable must be less in third equation than in the second equation. Perfect mediation holds if the independent variable has no effect when the mediator is controlled.

Therefore, to test hypothesis seven (H7), a regression analysis is applied to examine whether brand awareness will mediate purchase intention through perceived quality. First, let perceived quality as the dependent variable, and brand awareness as the independent variable. The result reveals that brand identify ($\beta=0.420$, $p<0.001$) and brand recall ($\beta=0.388$, $p<0.001$) are significantly affected to perceived quality. Second, let purchase intention as the dependent variable, and brand awareness and perceived quality as the independent variable. The results show that brand identity ($\beta=0.334$, $p<0.001$), brand recall ($\beta=0.331$, $p<0.001$), and perceived quality ($\beta=0.422$, $p<0.001$) are significantly accounted for purchase intention. Third, regresses with purchase intention by adding the mediating variable, perceived quality in brand awareness. The results exhibit that β value of purchase intention reduces from 0.334 to 0.190 in brand identifies and from 0.331 to 0.198 in brand recall. As a consequence, the effects between brand identity and brand recall and purchase intention are reduced because of adding the mediator, perceived quality. So, hypothesis seven (H7) is supported, and there is a mediating effect (see Table 4).

Table 4. Meditating Test of Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention

Variables		Model 1	Model 2		Model 3
		Perceived quality	Purchase intention	Purchase intention	Purchase intention
Brand awareness	Brand identity	0.420***(0.000)	0.334***(0.000)		0.190**(0.002)
	Brand Recall	0.388***(0.000)	0.331***(0.000)		0.198***(0.001)
Perceived quality	Perceived quality			0.422***(0.000)	0.342***(0.000)
					0.345***(0.000)
Adj. R ²		0.213	0.141	0.175	0.214
F		36.930	22.816	57.345	25.120

* $P<0.05$, ** $P<0.01$, *** $P<0.001$

Besides, in order to test hypothesis eight (H8) whether brand loyalty will mediate the effects between brand awareness and purchase intention, first, the study let brand loyalty as the dependent variable and brand awareness as the independent variable. The results demonstrate that brand identity ($\beta=0.364$, $p<0.001$) and brand recall ($\beta=0.209$, $p<0.001$) are significantly affected to action loyalty. Also, brand identify ($\beta=0.524$, $p<0.001$) and brand recall ($\beta=0.356$, $p<0.001$) are significantly affected to affective loyalty. Second, the study let purchase intention as the dependent

variable and brand awareness and brand loyalty as the dependent variable. The results exhibit that brand identity ($\beta=0.334$, $p<0.001$), brand recall ($\beta=0.331$, $p<0.001$), action loyalty ($\beta=0.455$, $p<0.001$) and affective loyalty ($\beta=0.410$, $p<0.001$) are significantly accounted for purchase intention. Third, regress with purchase intention by adding the mediating variables, action loyalty and affective loyalty in brand awareness. The results in action loyalty signify that β of purchase intention reduces from 0.334 to 0.194 in brand identity and from 0.334 to 0.165 in brand recall. In the meantime, in affective loyalty, β of purchase intention reduces from 0.331 to 0.247 in brand identity and from 0.331 to 0.213 in brand recall. Therefore, hypothesis eight (H8) is also supported (See Table 5).

Table 5. Meditating Test of Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention

Variables		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		Brand loyalty		Purchase intention	Purchase intention	Purchase intention	
		Action loyalty	Affective loyalty				
Brand awareness	Brand identity	0.364*** (0.000)	0.524*** (0.000)	0.334*** (0.000)		0.194*** (0.001)	0.165* (0.012)
	Brand recall	0.209*** (0.001)	0.356*** (0.000)	0.331*** (0.000)		0.213*** (0.000)	0.247*** (0.000)
Brand loyalty	Action loyalty				0.455*** (0.000)	0.385*** (0.000)	0.403*** (0.000)
	Affective loyalty				0.410*** (0.000)	0.334*** (0.000)	0.324*** (0.000)
Adj. R ²		0.127	0.280	0.141	0.225	0.265	
F		20.308	52.821	22.816	39.571	24.916	

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study finds that brand identity and brand recall are positively related to purchase intention. It signifies that consumers will buy a familiar and well know product (Keller, 1993; Jacoby & Olson, 1997; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). In other words, the higher the brand awareness, the higher the purchase intention. In addition, the study reveals that action loyalty and affective loyalty are positively related to purchase intention. The results are the same as the findings of Oliver (1999) that brand loyalty represents a repurchase commitment in the future purchase which consumers will not change their brand loyalty under different situations and still buy their favorable brands. The study also testifies that brand awareness is significantly and positively related to perceived quality. The result is the same as findings of Grewal, Krishnan, Baker & Borin 1998; Monore, 1990; Dodds & Grewal, 1991; Wall, Liefeld & Heslop, 1991; Lo, 2002; Lin, 2006. In addition, the study shows that brand awareness is positively and significantly and positively related to brand loyalty. The result is the same as findings of Aaker and Keller (1990). The study further demonstrates that brand loyalty is positively and significantly related to perceived quality. The result is the same as the results of Chen (2002), Wu (2007) and Judith and Richard (2002). Lastly, the study verifies that both perceived quality and brand loyalty act as a mediator between brand awareness and purchase.

The study suggests that cellular phone manufacturers should pay much attention to the influences of brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty on purchase intention. The study finds that if consumers can identify a brand name when they want to buy a cellular phone, it means that the cellular phone holds higher brand awareness. When a product has a well known brand name, it can win consumers' preferences and increase their purchase intention. Thus, cellular phone manufacturers ought to build a brand and promote its brand awareness through sales promotion, advertising, and other marketing activities. When brand awareness is high, its brand loyalty will also increase. The study also suggests that cellular phone manufacturers should emphasize production quality. Consumers will produce brand loyalty because good product quality and increase their repurchase behavior further. Moreover, cellular phone

manufacturers should be aware that consumers will evaluate perceived quality of a product from their purchase experience. A high evaluation indicates that consumers are satisfied. As a result, their brand loyalty and brand preference will increase and also repurchase behavior.

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