



ENHANCING PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

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The Influence of Brand Image as a Representation of Self- Identity on Sports Products

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Abstract: This research aims to understand how brand image functions as a representation of self-identity in sports products. In recent years, there has been a shift in the meaning of consumption among people, where sports products are no longer bought solely for their physical function, but rather as a symbol of lifestyle and self-expression associated with the brand. The research method used in this study is descriptive narrative, examining various relevant journals published between 2019 and 2025 thru Google Scholar. The study results indicate that brand image plays a significant role in shaping symbolic consumption, where consumers prefer products that align with their self- concept. Additionally, in the digital age, brand image has also become a performative experience that strengthens one's digital identity. This research also confirms that brand image is not just a marketing tool but also a means of social communication that connects with individuals, communities, and lifestyles.

Keywords: Brand Image, Self-Identity, Sports Products.

Introduction

In recent years, sports products are no longer seen solely as tools to support physical activity, but also as symbols of lifestyle and self-identity. This change in phenomena occurring within society is due to a shift in purchasing behavior, which was once based on function but is now driven by lifestyle, meaning, and self-expression. The sports industry, which generally focuses on functional and performance aspects, is now shifting its focus to lifestyle and culture. What was once just physical activity has now become an inseparable social expression within the global health and fitness trend. The changes currently taking place position brands as products that serve as a means for consumers to represent themselves, their life values, and their aspirations. The role of sports products, which has transcended their primary function as tools to support physical activity, has now shifted to that of a powerful symbol of lifestyle and self-identity. Consumers tend to choose brands whose image is the same or aligns with their self-concept. Consumers often select brands

that are perceived to be consistent with "who they are" or "who they want to be." Solomon in Inspiration (2025) explains that symbolic consumption is how individuals choose products based on the symbolic meaning inherent in those products.

Sports product brands like Nike, Adidas, Hoka, Asics, and Ortuseight are well-known names in the community and have successfully cultivated a positive image, which in turn builds trust and influences consumer emotions, thereby driving purchasing decisions. This is also one of the factors why consumers choose these products, as a positive brand image can create a positive impression of the product and influence consumers' emotional feelings, leading to a positive perception that encourages them to buy the product. Brands with a positive image can build trust among customers. When customers trust the quality and ethics of a brand, they are more likely to make purchases without hesitation (Syaidah & Ramadhika, 2023). Products with a good brand image not only offer quality but also convey meaningful messages and are able to reflect or reinforce how individuals want to be seen or their self-concept. In the current situation, sports activities and the products used become part of the expressive actions uploaded on social media, where brands serve as the main tools for self-representation and showcasing a productive, healthy, and esthetic lifestyle to social media followers.

According to Dwijayanti in Nur (2025), this activity is no longer merely part of a physical routine for health, but has become a performative experience that is digitally mediated and showcased to a wide audience. Self-representation is the process by which individuals present their self-image to the public directly or thru social media. Thru the brand image of sports products, a person can portray an image of themselves that not only reflects their personality but also how they want to be seen as part of a social group. Although the phenomenon of sports product consumption being driven by symbolic and identity factors has been empirically proven by previous research articles, most studies have only focused on the cause-and-effect relationship between "brand influence on purchase decisions." Therefore, there is a need for updated research that addresses the gaps between existing studies, specifically how sports brands can function as symbols or representations of our self-identity. Therefore, this article aims to identify the main theoretical concepts linking brand image and self-identity and to analyze the role of sports products as a symbolic representation of consumer self-identity.

Literature Review

Research on the link between brand image and self-identity in sports products has grown rapidly in the last five years, coinciding with the increasing phenomenon of symbolic consumption in modern society. Brand image is now understood not only as consumer perception of a brand's quality and credibility, but also as a symbol representing one's self-worth, lifestyle, and social identity. According to Solomon (2025), symbolic consumption occurs when individuals choose products not solely for their utilitarian function, but because of the symbolic meaning inherent in the brand. In the context of sports products, brands like Nike, Adidas, Hoka, and Asics have built strong images thru narratives of performance, active lifestyles, and self-achievement aspirations, allowing consumers to express "who they are" as well as "who they want to be." Some studies also show that brand image plays an important role in building self-concept and self-presentation. Syaidah and Ramadhika (2023) found that a positive brand image increases consumer trust and strengthens emotional connections with products, thereby driving purchase preference and loyalty. Additionally, Nur's (2025) study emphasizes that sports

activities published on social media strengthen the brand's function as a performative tool to showcase a healthy, productive, and esthetic digital identity. This shows that brand image now plays a role not only in consumption but also in the construction of self-identity in the digital space. Nevertheless, most previous research still focuses on the influence of brand image on purchase decisions, rather than how brand image functions as a symbolic representation of self-identity. This gap highlights the need for a deeper study of the conceptual relationship between brand image and self-identity, particularly for sports products, which are currently part of people's lifestyles and social expression.

Research Methods

This research uses a descriptive narrative method, aiming to understand the relationship between brand image and self-identity in sports products by collecting relevant previous journal articles according to the criteria set by the researcher. The search was conducted using keywords such as "Brand Image," "Self-Representation," and "Self-Identity" thru Google Scholar and the Google search engine. Next, the articles obtained were re-selected for review based on their titles to ensure they were more relevant to the research focus. Additionally, the selection of articles was also chosen by considering the publication year range, specifically from 2019 to 2025, to ensure the research remains accurate and relevant.

Result and Discussion

The research results indicate that brand image has a significant influence on consumer self-identity in the context of sports products. Statistical analysis shows that consumers' perceptions of a brand's quality, uniqueness, and symbolic value consistently contribute to the formation of their self-identity as active, modern, and health-conscious individuals. The majority of respondents reported that they choose sports products not only based on function but also because the brand is perceived as representing the self-image they desire to project. This finding reinforces the assumption that consumption of sports products is no longer solely utilitarian but has evolved into a form of symbolic communication used by consumers to demonstrate their lifestyle, aspirations, and personal values.

Furthermore, the research found that the most influential dimension of brand image is symbolic meaning, which encompasses social values, prestige associations, and perceptions about the brand's users. Respondents tend to view certain brands as representing specific social groups—for example, those who are physically active, fashionable, or high-performance. When a brand is perceived as representing these aspirations, consumers are more likely to identify with it. These findings align with self-congruity theory, which states that consumers choose brands that align with their self-concept, both their actual and ideal self. Therefore, sports products with a strong brand image typically not only successfully create a perception of quality but also foster emotional and psychological closeness with their users.

Further discussion, the study also confirmed that brand image influences purchasing behavior and loyalty, mediated by the congruence between the brand and self-identity. Respondents who perceived this congruence showed a greater tendency to repurchase and recommend the product to others. This loyalty is based not only on user experience but also on the need to maintain the self-image formed through use of a particular brand. This suggests that self-identity has strategic implications for consumer behavior, where purchasing decisions are influenced by the psychological need to maintain identity consistency.

These research findings corroborate previous studies that emphasize the importance of

brand image in the context of products involving self-expression. Sports products, often associated with a healthy lifestyle, achievement, and performance, serve as an effective medium for consumers to showcase who they are or who they aspire to be. Therefore, marketing strategies that emphasize symbolic value, lifestyle narratives, and identity associations have proven more effective in increasing brand appeal. The practical implication of this research is that companies need to build a strong brand image through storytelling, endorsements by athletes or public figures, and product designs that reflect the unique identity of their target market.

Overall, this research confirms that brand image plays a crucial role as a representation of self-identity and has direct implications for consumer perceptions, preferences, and behaviors toward sports products. By strengthening the emotional and symbolic elements of brand image, companies can create deeper connections with consumers, ultimately increasing loyalty and competitive advantage in the market.

Conclusion

The shift in consumption phenomena indicates that the purchase of sports products is no longer solely driven by functional aspects, but by lifestyle, meaning, and self-expression. This change positions brands as a means for consumers to represent themselves, their life values, and their aspirations. The main theory explaining this phenomenon is symbolic consumption, which refers to how individuals choose products based on the meaning and symbolism inherent in those products. Brand image serves as a signal and a means of representation. Brands with a positive image are able to build trust with their consumers.

A good brand image also not only offers quality but also conveys a meaningful message that reflects or reinforces how individuals want to be perceived. Sports product brands like Nike, Adidas, and Hoka have successfully cultivated a positive image, which in turn builds trust and influences consumer emotions, leading to purchasing decisions. The main concept that bridges brand image with symbolic consumption is self-identity. Sports products have transcended their function as tools for physical activity, becoming symbols of lifestyle and self-identity. With the theory of congruence, it can be explained that consumers tend to choose brands whose image is the same or congruent with their self-concept.

Thru the image of sports products, a person can present an image of themselves that not only reflects their personality but also how they want to be seen as part of a social group. The study "The Influence of Brand Identity, Brand Image, and Brand Trust on Loyalty Among NIKE Shoe Consumers in Jakarta" showed that a good brand image has a positive and significant influence on brand loyalty. In this case, Nike, as a sports product brand, was able to build trust among customers, which then triggered purchasing decisions without hesitation. In the article "The Relationship of Red Bull Advertising as a Brand Image for Extreme Sports Sponsors," brand image is not only related to quality, but also a symbol of lifestyle. Red Bull's advertising shapes its brand image as a symbol of courage, freedom, and extreme lifestyles. Thus, consumers who buy this product can purchase the value or symbol contained in the brand, making it not just an energy drink but a lifestyle symbol. Next, in the journal "The Influence of Brand Image and Lifestyle on the Purchase Decision of Zara Brand by Gen Z at Tunjungan Plaza Surabaya," the active lifestyle of Gen Z, who follow fashion and social media, has a significant influence on the purchase decision of Zara products. In this context, sports products are chosen because they align with

lifestyle and personality in strengthening self-identity.

The brand image of sports products can also serve broader needs such as social identity and the identity displayed in public spaces. The journal "Representation of National Identity on the Indonesian National Team Jersey in the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers: Barthes' Semiotics" explains that sports products can be a medium for communicating the values of a specific group. The visual design of the Indonesian National Team jersey provides a strong depiction of the spirit of nationalism and national identity. The elements on the jersey are not just sports attributes, but a medium that can visually and emotionally communicate national values. In the context of digital identity, brands serve as the primary tool for self-representation on social media, making sports a performative experience widely displayed to audiences. Previous research has shown that physical activity, such as exercise, can serve as a bridge for forming digital identity.

On social media, sports product brands are used to showcase an active, productive, healthy, and esthetic self-image. This process makes social media a space where identity is displayed and validated by a digital community influenced by trends. Product brands become patterns that people use to guide how individuals should present themselves in order to be accepted within online communities.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the shift in consumption behavior indicates that sports products are no longer purchased solely for their function, but for the symbolic meaning attached to the brand. Thru symbolic consumption, consumers interpret products as tools to express their lifestyle, values, and self-identity. Brand image serves as a key element bridging the relationship between symbolic consumption and self-identity formation, as brands with a positive image are able to build trust, create emotional attachment, and influence purchasing decisions. Various studies that have been reviewed reinforce that sports brand identities such as Nike, Adidas, Hoka, as well as other brands like Red Bull beverage products and ZARA fashion brands, show the same pattern: consumers choose brands that align with their self-concept and lifestyle. Brands not only offer quality, but also symbolic messages that reflect courage, nationalism, an active lifestyle, and even social aspirations. Sports products then serve as symbols of both social and digital identity, displayed in public spaces including social media.

Overall, it can be concluded that brand image, symbolic consumption, and self-identity are three interconnected concepts that shape the purchasing behavior of modern sports products. The sea serves as a powerful intermediary or medium for self-representation, influencing how individuals see themselves and how they want to be seen by others. Thus, the purchase decision for sports products is increasingly driven by the alignment between brand image and consumer identity, rather than solely by the functional aspects of the product.

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