

Psychological Compliance Techniques for Marketing Sports Product

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to identify the effectiveness of psychological compliance techniques approach to promote sports product to the customers. Therefore, this survey aims to determine the most preferred psychological techniques of promoting sports product. The instrument used for this study is a 20-item Psychological Compliance Techniques questionnaire which had been distributed to sports product managers. The questionnaire included 4 techniques of promoting such as Foot-In-The-Door, Lowball Technique, Door-In-Face-Technique and That's-Not-All-Technique. The respondents consist of 75 managers, including, top-level managers (N=12), middle-level managers (N=25) and low-level managers (N= 38). The results show that the most effective psychological compliance techniques for marketing sports product for top-level managers are That's-Not-All-Technique, $F(2, 75) = 13.625, p < .01$, and Lowball technique, $F(2, 75) = 11.418, p < .01$. While, Door-In-Face technique, $F(2, 75) = 15.559, p < .01$, and Foot-In-The-Door technique, $F(2, 75) = 12.314, p < .01$, are the most effective Psychological Compliance Techniques for Marketing Sports Product for low-level managers. Sports industry can use this psychological compliance techniques to market their sports product effectively and efficiently. Psychological compliance techniques are useful methods in changing customers' behaviour due to the request or direction of sales personnel.

Key Words: Foot-In-The-Door, Lowball Technique, Door-In –Face-Technique, That's-Not-All-Technique

1. INTRODUCTION

Pitts and Stolar (2013) defines sports marketing as “the process of designing and implementing activities for the production, pricing, promotion, and distribution of a sports product or sports business product to satisfy the needs or desires of consumers and to achieve the company’s objectives” (p.69).

According to Pedersen, Parks, Quarterman and Thibault (2011), a well-developed marketing plan is essential to the marketing success of sports products. The four elements of a marketing plan- product, price, place, and promotions usually – make up the marketing mix. These elements are well established in the marketing industry and are universally known as the Four Ps. A brief definition on the Four Ps are presented below:

- Product- A tangible good (object), a service, or an intangible quality that satisfies consumers’ wants or needs
- Price- The value of the product and the cost that the consumers must accept to obtain the product.
- Place- The distribution channels that allow consumers to access or obtain the product
- Promotion- The integrated communication and public relations activities that communicate, inform, persuade, and motivate consumers to purchase the product.

According to Mullin, Hardy and Sutton (2014) sales is the revenue-producing element of the marketing process. Furthermore, sales involved moving goods and services from the hands of those who produce them into the hands of those who will benefit most from their use. It usually involves the application of persuasive skills and may be supported by print, audio or video messages designed to promote the product or its brand as essential, the best or desirable.

Marketing sports products can be very challenging. A Sports marketing plan will most likely succeed when marketing is viewed as a comprehensive process of packaging, promoting, and delivering sport to consumers in a manner that satisfied their needs and simultaneously meet the sport organization’s marketing goals and objectives. Therefore, tactical marketing mix strategies should communicate a distinct, positive, and honest image of a product and cater the consumers’ requirement.

Compliance is a type of social influence where an individual does what someone else would prefer them to do, following his or her request or suggestion (McLeod, 2014). According to Breckler, Olson, and Wiggins (2006, p. 307) "Compliance refers to the change of behaviour based on the request of another person or group; the individuals would choose to act in such ways because others asked him or her to do so (but it is always possible to refuse or decline.)"

Compliance is a major topic of interest within the field of consumer psychology. This specialty area focuses on the psychology of consumers’ behaviour, including how sellers could actually influence buyers and persuade them to purchase goods and services (Cherry, 2018). Marketers often rely on a number of different strategies to obtain compliance from consumers.

Some of these techniques are Foot-In-The-Door, Lowball, Door-In –Face and That’s-Not-All-Technique.

In the foot-in-the-door technique, the person making an appeal first asks for a small favour that will almost certainly be granted. After obtaining initial compliance, the person raises the ante by asking for a larger, related favour (Nevid, 2007). In other words, the customer, initially approves for a small request which later on leads them to find it more difficult to refuse a bigger one. It designed to gain favourable response to a small request. For example, a sales personal offers the free sample (small request) and hope that the person who tastes the sample will be willing to buy the product (larger request). Previous researches done by several scholars indicated that this tactic works in inducing increased compliance. The Foot-In-The-Door technique works on the principle of consistency (Petrova, Cialdini & Sills, 2007), if once a customer said ‘yes’ to the small request, he or she more likely to say ‘yes’ to the subsequent and large ones. This means that as long as the request is in consistent with or similar in nature to the original small request, the technique will work (McLeod, 2014).

Lowball is a technique for gaining compliance in which an offer or deal is changed (made less attractive) after the target person has accepted it. Initially in this technique a sales personal gets the individuals to agree to the request and later increases the original terms. Trick them into agreeing more than they intended. Many automobile sales personnel use this technique. In gaining compliance, customers are offered a very attractive deal which they accept. The deal is then rejected by the sales manager, who raises the price and change to unfavourable deals to the customers. Rationally, people should walk away from such deals but because of their prior commitment they often accept them (McLeod, 2014). The success of this technique works on the principle of commitment. In other words, the customer has said “yes” or agreed to an initial request, and therefore commitment has been given. Once the request changes or becomes unreasonable, then the customer will (to a degree) find it difficult to say “no” because of having originally committed themselves earlier.

Refusing a large request increases the likelihood of agreeing to a second, smaller request is called as Door-In –Face-Technique (McLeod, 2014). In this strategy a sales personal may offer a large, unreasonable request with the expectation that the customer will refuse but will then be more likely to respond favourably to a smaller request at the later part. For example, negotiating a sport t-shirt with the sales personnel. First the sales personnel might offer a request that will not be met and ask for RM 50. Once this is refused, then the sales personnel would offer a more realistic price such as RM 35. This technique works due to the principle of reciprocity (Cialdini, Vincent, Lewis, Catalan, Wheeler & Darby, 1975), it means because of the willingness of the sales personnel to reduce the price, the customer is expected to show their willingness to buy.

In That's-Not-All-Technique, requesters offer target persons additional benefits that they have decided whether to comply with or reject the specific requests. For example, a sales personal presents a product at a certain price and then pauses while the viewer considers the offer. Then the sales personnel announce, but that's not all' and improves the deal by including an extra product.

The objective of this paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of psychological approach in promoting sports product to the customers. Specifically, this paper addresses the importance of promoting techniques to enhance sports market among the industrialized Malaysian society.

2. METHOD AND SAMPLE

The instrument used for the study comprised of a 20-item Psychological Compliance Techniques, which include 4 techniques of selling. They are Foot-In-The-Door, Lowball Technique, Door-In –Face-Technique and That's-Not-All-Technique.

The respondents consisted of 75 managers of sports product, which were categorized as the top-level managers, middle-level managers and low-level managers.

Top-level managers include the board of directors, president, vice-president, and chief executive officer (CEO). They develop goals, strategic plans, company policies, and make decisions on the direction of the business. While Middle-level managers are general managers, branch managers, and department managers. They are accountable to the top management for their department's function. While, low-level managers are supervisors and section lead. These managers focus on controlling and directing. Refer to Figure 1.0 to view the management levels.



Source: Lumen, 2018. Types of Management, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-business/chapter/types-of-management>.

Figure 1.0: Hierarchical View Of Management Levels Of Management In Organizations

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Respondents' Profile

The respondents' profile describes their management levels, types of sports business, gender, experience in selling and age. Table 1 shows the overall results of the respondents' profile for 75 managers. The age of male respondents varied from 27 to 60 years, meanwhile the mean age was 41.67 years old. The age of male respondents varied from 28 to 54 years, and the mean age was 37.51 years old. Majority of the respondents, in this study were males (N=51).

The variable rank which is gathered through this study is categorized into three levels namely, top-level managers (N=12), middle-level managers (N=25) and low-level managers (N=38). The result showed that 25 respondents had involved in sports drink business (100plus, Gatorade, Powered), whilst 21 respondents in sports shoes (Adidas, ASICS, Nike), 19 had involved in sports t-shirts (Adidas Nike, Primer, Puma) and 10 respondents in sports accident insurance.

Table 1 Respondents' Profile (n=75)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Managers according to their Management Levels				
Top-Level Managers	12	16.00		
Middle-Level Managers	25	33.33		
Low-Level Managers	38	50.67		
Gender				
Male	51	68.00		
Female	24	32.00		
Types of Sports Business				
Sports drink	25	33.33		
Sports Shoes	21	28.00		
Sports T-Shirts	19	25.34		
Sports Accident Insurance	10	13.33		
Experience in Direct Sales (more than 5 years)				
Top-Level Managers	03/12	25		
Middle-Level Managers	12/25	48		
Low-Level Managers	35/38	92		
Age				
Male			41.67	7.17
Female			37.51	5.61

3.2. Cronbach Reliability Coefficients

In this study, Cronbach alpha coefficients were found relatively high, ranging from .83 to .89. Refer to Table 2.

Table 2 Cronbach Reliability Coefficients

Questionnaire	Cronbach's Alpha (n=75)
Foot-In-The-Door	.8371
Lowball Technique	.8711
Door-In-Face-Technique	.8543
That's-Not-All-Technique	.8569

3.3. Foot-In-The-Door Technique

Table 3 shows the mean scores for the Foot-In-The-Door technique among managers of management levels, $F(2, 75) = 12.314$, $p < .01$. Apparently, significant differences emerge for the managers having different management levels. Overall, the mean score obtained for the low-level managers is higher than those in other categories.

Table 3 Foot-In-The-Door Technique among Management Levels

Management Levels	Mean	F-Value	P-Value
Top-Level Managers	14.5410		
Middle-Level Managers	16.0027	12.314**	0.000
Low-Level Managers	18.1700		

** $p = .01$

Post-Hoc Tukey Test in Table 4 shows that the Foot-In-The-Door technique of Low-Level Managers are higher than Middle-Level Managers ($p = .05$) and Top-Level Managers ($p = .05$). Furthermore, the Foot-In-The-Door technique of Middle-Level Managers are higher than Top-Level Managers ($p = .05$) but lower than Low-Level Managers ($p = .05$). Lastly, the Foot-In-The-Door technique of Top-Level Managers are lower than Middle-Level Managers ($p = .05$) and Low-Level Managers ($p = .05$).

Table 4 Post Hoc Tukey Test: Foot-In-The-Door Technique among Management Levels

Management Levels	Top-Level Managers	Middle-Level Managers	Low-Level Managers	N
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Top-Level Managers	* (1.0058)	* (2.1101)	12
Middle-Level Managers			25
Low-Level Managers			38

The result show that the Foot-In-The-Door technique of Low-Level Managers exhibit the higher score, whereas Middle-Level Managers obtain the lowest score. The Foot-In-The-Door technique is a strategy used to persuade people to agree to a particular action, based on the idea that if a respondent will comply with a small initial request then they will be more likely to agree at the later part, more significant request, which they would not have agreed to had they been asked it outright (Psychologist world, 2018). As we know (Table 1), that most of the Low-Level Managers (92%) directly interact with customers compared to Middle-Level Managers (48%) and Top-Level Managers (25%). Low-Level Managers found out that once the customers have said 'yes' to the small request, then they are more likely to say 'yes' to the subsequent and large ones. They indicated this tactic works in inducing increased compliance, especially those companies marketing sports drinks like 100plus, Gatorade and Powerade. Once the sales personnel offer the free sample (small request) of sports drinks to the customers by hoping that they will taste the sample and consider of buying the product (larger request).

This technique is based on the idea that the persuader makes a small request that is relatively simple enough to find agreement for, and once that request has been agreed upon, an even bigger request is offered. The chances of the subject agreeing to a large, cumbersome, or difficult request if asked in isolation are always less, hence, the persuader first gets him to agree to a comparatively smaller request and follows it up with a bigger request. The interesting thing is that the persuader could get the subject to agree to successively bigger and more difficult requests once he has managed to make him agreed to the initial one (PsycholoGenie, 2018). Customers who are afraid to try something new will try a free sample, then, often, purchase a full order.

3.4. Lowball Technique

Table 5 shows the mean scores for the Foot-In-The-Door technique among managers of management levels, $F(2, 75) = 11.418$, $p < .01$. Apparently, significant differences emerged for the managers having different management levels. Overall, the mean score obtained for the Top-Level Managers is higher than those in the other categories.

Table 5 Lowball Technique among Management Levels

Management Levels	Mean	F-Value	P-Value
Top-Level Managers	13.5677		
Middle-Level Managers	10.1563	11.418**	0.000

Low-Level Managers	10.1700
** p=.01	

Post-Hoc Tukey Test (Table 6) show that the Lowball technique of Top-Level Managers are higher than Middle-Level Managers ($p=.05$) and Low-Level Managers ($p=.05$). Furthermore, it was identified that there are no significance differences in the Lowball technique of Middle-Level Managers with the Top-Level Managers.

Table 6 Post Hoc Tukey Test: Lowball Technique among Management Levels

Management Levels	Top-Level Managers	Middle-Level Managers	Low-Level Managers	N
Top-Level Managers		* (1.2112)	* (1.0071)	12
Middle-Level Managers				25
Low-Level managers				38

* $p=.05$

The result show that the Lowball technique of the Top-Level Managers obtains the highest sports product performance compared to the Middle-Level Managers and Low-Level Managers. The result in this research show that most of the Top-Level Managers, who worked in insurance companies found that this technique is very effective in promoting sports accident insurance. Many insurance agents and sales personnel use this technique. In gaining compliance, customers are offered a very basic insurance deal which they could accept. The deal is then upraised by adding sports accident insurance for athletes and therefore the price increases. Rationally, people should walk away from such deals but because of their prior commitment, they often accept the offer. Furthermore, customers are often persuaded with the benefits of adding sports accident insurance such as ‘Our Sports Accident Insurance’ policy which also includes coverage for personal injuries, personal liability, legal fees, broken bones, physiotherapy and much more as the standard policy coverage. These insurance agents continue to persuade the athletes on their coverage on sports activities on a regular occasion, even on Sunday league footballer. For example, the agents persuade further by explaining that by just taking part in a one-off event, their Sports Accident Insurance could offer better coverage to the clients until the customers realized that it’s not easy to reject such a benefiting deal.

3.5. Door-In-Face Technique

Table 7 shows the mean scores for the Door-In-Face technique among managers of management levels, $F(2, 75) = 15.559$, $p < .01$. Apparently, significant differences emerge for the managers having different management levels. Overall, the mean scores obtained for the low-level managers are higher than those in other categories.

Table 7 Door-In-Face Technique among Management Levels

Management Levels	Mean	F-Value	P-Value
Top-Level Managers	12.1124		
Middle-Level Managers	17.4746	15.559**	0.000
Low-Level Managers	20.1109		

** p=.01

Post-Hoc Tukey Test (Table 8) show that the Door-In-Face technique of Low-Level Managers are higher than Middle-Level Managers (p=.05) and Top-Level Managers (p=.05). Furthermore, the Foot-In-The-Door technique of Middle-Level Managers are higher than the Top-Level Managers (p=.05) but lower than Low-Level Managers (p=.05). Lastly, the Foot-In-The-Door technique of Top-Level Managers are lower than the Middle-Level Managers (p=.05) and Low-Level Managers (p=.05).

Table 8 Post Hoc Tukey Test: Door-In-Face Technique among Management Levels

Management Levels	Top-Level Managers	Middle-Level Managers	Low-Level Managers	N
Top-Level Managers		* (1.3511)	* (2.7789)	12
Middle-Level Managers				25
Low-Level Managers				38

*p=.05

The result show that the Door-In-Face technique of Low-Level Managers are higher than the Middle-Level Managers and Top-Level Managers. According to this technique, the sales personnel would first make a request to the customers that is excessive and to which they will most naturally refuse. Once the customers looked disappointed, then the sales personnel could request for something more reasonable. Then the customers will then be more likely to accept the new offer (Changingminds, 2018). This research indicate that this technique works in promoting sports shoes. In this technique, initially the sales personnel could make a big request, like introducing the most expensive brand sports shoes which a person can be expected to refuse. Then the sales personnel can make some smaller request by introducing the most less expensive brand sports shoes which the customers would find it difficult to refuse because they feel that they shouldn't always say no!

This technique of promoting sports product also effective in night markets such as selling sports shoes on the street. For example, the price offered for a pair of sports shoes is RM 300. The customer politely declines the offer and turns to walk away. Then, the sales personnel offer a cheaper rate such as RM 250. The sales personnel might in view that this second price is much more reasonable in purchasing the shoes. The sales personally idea would be instilling in the customers' view that by reducing the price has resulting in him of winning a good deal. However, the sales personally will benefit the most from the sale, using the Door-In-Face

technique. Door-In-Face technique works by first getting a ‘no’ response and then persuading into obtaining a ‘yes’ response’.

3.6. That’s-Not-All-Technique

Table 9 shows the mean scores for the That’s-Not-All-Technique among managers of management levels, $F(2, 75) = 13.625$, $p < .01$. Apparently, significant differences emerge for the managers having different management levels. Overall, the mean score obtained for the Top-Level Managers was higher than those in other categories.

Table 9 That’s-Not-All-Technique among Management Levels

Management Levels	Mean	F-Value	P-Value
Top-Level Managers	16.2517		
Middle-Level Managers	14.9631	13.625**	0.000
Low-Level Managers	12.7768		

** $p = .01$

Post-Hoc Tukey Test (Table 10) show that the That’s-Not-All-Technique of Top-Level Managers are higher than Middle-Level Managers ($p = .05$) and Low-Level Managers ($p = .05$). Furthermore, the That’s-Not-All-Technique of Middle-Level Managers are higher than Low-Level Managers ($p = .05$) but lower than Top-Level Managers ($p = .05$). Lastly, the That’s-Not-All-Technique of Low-Level Managers are lower than the Middle-Level Managers ($p = .05$) and Top-Level Managers ($p = .05$).

Table 10 Post Hoc Tukey Test: Lowball Technique among Management Levels

Management Levels	Top-Level Managers	Middle-Level Managers	Low-Level Managers	N
Top-Level Managers		* (1.5369)	* (2.7153)	12
Middle-Level Managers				25
Low-Level Managers				38

* $p = .05$

The result show that the That’s-Not-All-Technique of the Top-Level Managers are higher than the Middle-Level Managers and Low-Level Managers. Top-Level Managers, who are directly involved in decision making on the sales, find that the sales increased drastically when there are some additional benefits. Top-Level Managers find that people buy more when there are special offers. This reveals that by simply presenting a “gift” increases sales of sports products. The word “free” seems to be more attractive to customers, like free shipping for sports t shirt, ‘buy two sports t shirt, get one free’, “for every RM 100 you spend in a single receipt buying sports t shirt, you get RM10 off your next purchase" and so on.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of the research determine that there are differences in the psychological compliance techniques for marketing sports product among the level of management of top-level managers, middle-level managers and low-level managers. The most effective psychological compliance techniques for marketing sports product for top-level managers is That's-Not-All-Technique and Lowball technique. While, Door-In-Face technique and Foot-In-The-Door technique are the most effective psychological compliance techniques for marketing sports product for low-level managers. Low-Level Managers find Foot-In-The-Door Technique effective on marketing sports drinks like 100plus, Gatorade and Powerade. Top-Level Managers, who worked in insurance companies find that lowball technique is very effective in promoting sports accident insurance. Furthermore, the result support Door-In-Face technique of marketing sport products in night market. Sports industry can use this psychological compliance techniques to market their sports product effectively and efficiency. Psychological compliance techniques are useful methods in changing customers behaviour due to the request or direction of the sales personnel.

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