



Influence of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Intention and Brand Image as Intervening Variable (Case Study onShopee Application Users in Makassar City)

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine (1) the influence of brand ambassadors on the brand image ofshopee application users in Makassar (2) the influence of brand image on purchase intentionofshopee application users in Makassar, (3) the influence of brand ambassadors on purchahse intentionofshopee application users in Makassar, (4) the influence of brand ambassadors through brand image on purchase intentionof shopee application users in Makassar. This study used a non-probability sampling technique with 97 respondents. This research is a quantitative research. Data were analyzed using path analysis. The results showed that (1) brand ambassadors influencedthe brand image ofShopee application users in Makassar, (2) brand image influencedpurchase intentionof Shopee application users in Makassar, (3) brand ambassadors influencedpurchase intentionofShopee application users in Makassar, and (4) brand ambassadors influencedpurchase intention with brand image as an intervening variable.

Key words: brand ambassador, brand image, purchase intention.

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The time and people's lifestyle are now increasing to a higher business competition. Nowadays, the number and variations of products enhance due to technology advance, resulting in a bigger number of demands. Therefore, costumers realize that brand image is significant in the decision-making. A marketing strategy which employs brand ambassadors can certainly not be considered a new thing. Quite long time ago, such strategy has been applied by many corporations and proven effective for promoting products to the public. An advertisement delivered by an interesting source (such as a famous celebrity) mostly captures public attention and is easily remembered by people.. Brand ambassadors might give effects to a brand image because their personalities can influence the brand identities.

Aside from the 'brand ambassador' methodology, one of nowadays trends of marketing strategy is a phenomenon so-called Korean Wave. Korean wave (or 'hallyu') is a kind of rapid dissemination of Korean's modern cultures and products

in the East Asia, which began in the middle of 1990's (Chung, Yang, Seung, 2005). Korean wave can also be considered a huge expansion of Korea's cultures and products. According to Febrina (2017), Korean cultures (hallyu) developed rapidly through media. This strategy was supported and implemented by companies. This strategy is in the form of Korean dramas or Korean music videos (K-pop). As described by Ogura in Yasumoto (2006), the Korean wave was related to Korean dramas and Korean pop songs (K-pop).

In Indonesia, one of the trending industries is e-commerce industry. According to information published in Kompas.com, e-commerce is getting bigger now due to the growing number of marketplace companies that offer their services (<https://www.kompasiana.com/>). Online marketplace is provided by the internet service providers to the sellers so that they could sell products at the cyber world (Sakti, 2014:89)

The number of transactions performed in Shopee (for the period of August 2018 to December 2018) was not actually high enough to defeat the 'king of Indonesian e-commerce' namely Tokopedia. According to the data provided by katadata.co.id, Tokopedia remained to be the only Indonesian marketplace with the highest number of visitors and transactions, while Shopee could only reach the third place during the period of 2017-2018. The results of an earlier study conducted by Raswen (2019) showed that brand ambassadors may impact the image of a company. This result is in line with the results of the study conducted by Rutha et al. (2019), suggesting that brand ambassadors directly affected a brand image, but this study also found that brand ambassadors indirectly affected consumers' decision making while buying a product. In relation to consumers' decision-making, a study conducted by Sagia and Situmorang (2018) identified that brand ambassadors and the Korean wave significantly affected the decision-making in product purchase. Meanwhile, a contrary result was found in the study conducted by Lestari et al. (2019), suggesting that brand ambassadors did not influence the decision-making.

B. Research Questions

According to the facts elaborated in the research background, the core questions in this study are:

1. Do brand ambassadors significantly affect a brand image based on Shopee customers' perspective in Makassar?
2. Does a brand image significantly affect the purchase intention of Shopee customers in Makassar?
3. Do brand ambassadors significantly affect the purchase intention of Shopee customers in Makassar?
4. Do brand ambassadors significantly affect purchase intention through the brand image based on Shopee costumers' perspective in Makassar?

RESERACH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employed the quantitative approach. It was an explanatory research which described the causal relationship between variables though hypothesis test. The independent variable of this study was brand ambassador,

while the dependent variable was purchase intention and the intervening variable was brand image.

B. Population and Sample

The population of this study included Shopee marketplace users who lived in Makassar. The actual number of those users could not be estimated surely. The samples of this study were Shopee marketplace users (who lived in Makassar), who had the following criteria: (1) above 17 years old, (2) being Shopee customers, (3) living in Makassar, (4) had purchased some products through Shopee Indonesia in the last three months. The samples were taken using non-probability sampling method, and selected through convenience sampling. The samples were 97 respondents as the users of Shopee and live in Makassar.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. RESULTS

This study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to the Shopee users (living in Makassar) for two weeks.

1. Analysis of the Results

The data analysis of this study was performed through path analysis using SPSS and Sobel test.

**Table 1. Results of Multiple Regression Test Model 1
Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.098	.136		-.720	.473
	Brand Ambassador	1.006	.036	.945	28.098	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Brand image

Source: Data Processing Results produced by SPSS 24 (2020)

According to the output of Multiple Regression Test Model 1, the regression equation was as follows:

$$CM = -0.098 + 1.006 BA + e$$

- Constant value (a) = -0.098, implying that if the brand ambassador was absent or 0; then, the brand image would be -0.098.
- *Brand Ambassador* (BA) = 1.006, implying that if there was an increment within the variable of 'brand ambassador' by one unit; then, the brand image would increase by 1.006.

**Table 2. Results of Multiple Regression Test Model 2
Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.082	.148		-7.288	.000
	Brand Ambassador	.694	.119	.552	5.855	.000
	Brand image	.491	.111	.415	4.408	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Source: Data Processing Results produced by SPSS 24 (2020)

According to the output of Multiple Regression Test Model 2, the regression equation was as follows:

$$MB = -1.082 + 0.694 BA + 0.491 CM + e$$

- Constant Value (a) = -1.082, implying that the brand ambassador and brand image were absent or 0; then, the purchase intention would be -1.082.
- *Brand Ambassador* (BA) = 0.694, implying that there was an increment within the variable of 'brand ambassador' by unit; then, the purchase intention would increase by 0.694.
- Brand Image (BI) = 0.491, implying that if there was an increment of the variable of 'brand image' by one unit; then, the purchase intention would increase by 0.491.

a. Hypothesis Test on the Direct Effects

The First Hypothesis (H1)

According to the results of regression test provided in Table 1, the variable of 'brand ambassador' has a beta value of 1.006 with the t-statistic score of 28.098 > t-table score of 1.985 (df=97; alpha=0.05), and the significance score of 0.000 < 0.05. Thus, Ho1 was rejected and Ha1 was accepted. It could be concluded that brand ambassador affected the brand image for Shopee customers in Makassar.

The Second Hypothesis (H2)

According to the results of regression test provided in Table 2, the variable of 'brand image' has a beta value of 0.491 with the t-statistic score of 5.885 > t-table score of 1.986 (df=97; alpha=0.05), and the significance score of 0.000 < 0.05. Thus, Ho2 was rejected and Ha2 was accepted. It could be concluded that brand image affected the purchasing intention of Shopee customers who lived in Makassar.

The Third Hypothesis (H3)

According to the results of regression test provided in the Table 2, the variable of 'brand ambassador' has a beta value of 0.694 with the t-statistic score of 4.408 > t-table score of 1.986 (df=97; alpha=0.05), and the significance score of 0.000 < 0.05. Thus, Ho3 was rejected and Ha3 was accepted. It could be concluded that brand ambassador affected the purchasing intention of Shopee customers who lived in Makassar.

**Table 3. Results of Determination Coefficient Test Model 1
 Model Summary^b**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.945 ^a	.893	.891	.21584

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Ambassador

b. Dependent Variable: Brand Image

Source: Results of Data Processing produced by SPSS 24 (2020)

According to the Table 3, the R-Square value produced during the determination coefficient test was 0.893 or 89.3%, meaning that brand ambassador contributed to brand image (10.7%), influenced other variables out of this study model.

**Table 4. Result of Determination Coefficient Test Model 2
 Model Summary^b**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.954 ^a	.910	.908	.23422	2.084

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Image, Brand Ambassador
- b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Source: Data Processing Results produced by SPSS 24 (2020)

According to Table 4, the R-Square value produced during the determination coefficient test was 0.910 or 91%, meaning that brand ambassador and brand image contributed to purchase intention (9%), influenced by other variables out of this study model.

b. Hypothesis Testing on the Indirect Effects

The hypothesis test was conducted to figure out the effect of brand ambassadors on the purchase intention with brand image as the intervening variable. The test on indirect effects in this study was performed by using Sobel Test. The results of this test are presented in Figure 5.9.

- 1) The effect of brand ambassador on the purchase intention with brand image as the intervening variable.

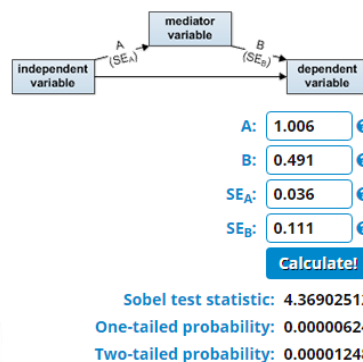


Figure 1. Results of Sobel Test Calculation of the Effect of Brand Ambassador on the Purchasing Intention with Brand Image as the Intervening Variable

The Fourth Hypothesis (H4)

According to the Sobel test results depicted by the Figure 1, the coefficient of Sobel test statistics was 4.370, which was bigger than 1.98, with a significance level of 5%. Thus, Ho4 was rejected and Ha4 was accepted. It could be concluded that brand ambassadors affected the purchase intention with brand image as the intervening variable.

B. Discussion

Brand ambassadors had a significant effect on the brand image to Shopee customers (who lived in Makassar). This condition indicated that the existence or the election of brand ambassador as the marketing strategy (of an item or a service), played a significant role to the image building of the offered item or service. This study underlined the fact that a proper choice of brand ambassador, according to the marketing targets, was proven effective in increasing the image of 'Shopee application' based on the Indonesian customers' and/or communities' perspectives. The election of Blackpink, a public figure, as the brand ambassador for the products offered by Shopee Indonesia was proven to successfully increase the image of Shopee Indonesia, in a good way, and it might profit the management during the Indonesian 'e-startup industry' competition, especially the marketplace competition, where Tokopedia remained the most dominating competitor. However, Shopee can be the number one marketplace in

Indonesia if only Shopee's marketing management performs a groundbreaking strategy that suit the demands of the market in the aspect of brand ambassador election.

Brand image influenced the purchase intention of Shopee's customers who lived in Makassar. This condition indicated that a positive brand image embedded within the costumers would influence their purchasing intentions toward the products offered by Shopee application. The image would trigger costumer's curiosity about the way this application serves their customers. In the marketplace industry, fraud is a common thing that ever comes to the costumers who make the transaction. Therefore, building a positive image would be one of the efforts carried out by the marketing management in gaining customers' trust in transaction. By a positive image of Shopee application, it could stimulate customer's intention to purchase products or services in the Shopee Indonesia. This result was supported by the study conducted by Yolanda and Soesanto (2017), proved that brand image significantly gave a positive effect on the purchase decision. A positive brand image would encourage or stimulate the costumers' intention to purchase products. The results of research conducted by Sterie et al. (2019) were in line with the preceding research that found the significant and positive effect of brand image on purchase intention.

Brand ambassador had an effect on the purchase intention of Shopee's customers (in Makassar). The results of this study indicated that the decision over brand ambassador election was a quite important factor that influenced customers' intention to purchase products or services through Shopee Indonesia. According to Mudzakir (2018), brand ambassador is a kind of instrument used by corporations to build communication and be connected with communities, so that the corporation would find the way to increase selling. Corporations might employ renowned public figures as the bait that helps the customers during the decision making to obtain customers' more attentions. The brand ambassadors would build a great relationship between the brands/corporations and the customers. Hence, indirectly, brand ambassadors would build a certain image that affected the intention to purchase and/or use some products.

Brand ambassadors affected the purchase intention due to the brand image they built as the intervening variable. The results of this study underlined that brand ambassador election which was performed to directly influence customers' intention (to purchase through Shopee Indonesia) should consider the factor of 'brand image' served as intervening variable, for which such factor might strengthen the effect of 'brand ambassador' on the customers' demands. Brand ambassador is a key part of marketing strategy because it may affect brand image, including product image (Rutha et al., 2019). Brand ambassadors build a certain image of the brands and companies (who delivered messages) to the customers. In addition, popularity, physical attractiveness, and professional suitability would also be the other considerations during brand ambassador election. This strategy would help the company in gaining customers' recognition, as well as in delivering their product values. Brand ambassadors and brands would work cooperatively in developing and upgrading the brand values in certain community or marketing target.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusions

Based on the analysis and testing on the results and discussions of this study, I could make two conclusions as follows:

- a. Brand ambassador had an effect on brand image based on the perspective of Shopee customers living in Makassar.
- b. Brand image had an effect on the purchase intention of Shopee customers living in Makassar.
- c. Brand ambassador had an effect on the purchase intention of Shopee customers living in Makassar.
- d. Brand ambassador had an effect on the purchase intention due to the brand image they built as the intervening variable.

2. Suggestions

Based on the conclusions, I suggest that:

- a. The management of Shopee considers and increases the credibility of the employed brand ambassadors in promoting the released products because a proper election of public figures (according to the marketing target of a product) would bring a positive effect to the company and the image of Shopee.
- b. The management of Shopee upgrades the brand image by releasing the key products that suit the nowadays developments, so the customers will be more interested in the service of Shopee Indonesia, and the company attain more positivities of their image, resulting in a sustainable popularity and competitiveness level. In addition, the company should prioritize the quality of the released items and services. The products should have some beneficial points that could stand them out of the other competitors.
- c. Blackpink, as the brand ambassador of Shopee Indonesia, should deliver the advantages of the service offered by Shopee Indonesia. By conveying the interesting sides of Shopee Indonesia to introduce their products and services, the customers' purchase intention would increase.
- d. Shopee management considers customers' impression of the election of brand ambassador. A positive image built by the brand ambassador, that is Blackpink in this case, may influence customers' perceptions of the items and services offered through Shopee Indonesia. That positive image would trigger the customers' purchase intention.

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