

## The Effect of Brand Ambassador and Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions with Brand Trust as a Mediating Variable for Innisfree Indonesia Consumers

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### ABSTRAK

This study examines the influence of brand ambassadors and brand image on purchasing decisions, with brand trust as a mediating variable for Innisfree consumers in Indonesia. Using an explanatory quantitative approach, data were collected via an online survey of 150 respondents who had made at least two purchases, during August–September 2024. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics in SPSS and structural equation modeling in SmartPLS 3. The results reveal that both brand ambassadors and brand image significantly affect purchasing decisions, with brand trust playing a pivotal mediating role. Brand image has a stronger direct impact, while brand ambassadors significantly build trust that indirectly influences decisions. These findings highlight the importance of trust in strengthening branding strategies

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital marketing has significantly transformed consumer behavior, particularly in the cosmetic industry. Social media platforms serve as powerful tools for brand engagement, allowing companies to influence purchasing decisions through strategic marketing techniques. One of the most influential strategies in this context is the use of brand ambassadors, who not only enhance brand image but also foster consumer trust. This study investigates the impact of brand ambassadors and brand image on purchasing decisions, with brand trust acting as a mediating variable, using Innisfree, a well-known cosmetic brand in Indonesia, as a case study.

The increasing reliance on digital platforms for marketing communication has led to a shift in how consumers perceive and interact with brands. Unlike traditional marketing approaches, social media allows for real-time engagement, fostering deeper connections between consumers and brands. This shift has necessitated an exploration of factors that drive consumer trust, particularly in an industry where product authenticity and brand credibility play a crucial role in influencing purchase behavior. By examining the interplay between brand ambassadors, brand image, and brand trust, this study aims to provide insights into the mechanisms through which digital marketing strategies shape consumer preferences.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on understanding the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between brand ambassadors, brand image, and consumer purchase decisions within the Indonesian market. While previous studies have examined these variables separately, limited research has explored their interconnectedness in a comprehensive framework. This study contributes to knowledge enrichment by highlighting the significance of trust-building strategies in digital marketing, particularly within the cosmetic industry.

This research seeks to address several key questions: How do brand ambassadors influence consumer purchasing decisions? To what extent does brand image contribute to brand trust? How does brand trust mediate the relationship between brand ambassadors, brand image, and consumer purchasing behavior? By answering these questions, this study aims to offer valuable insights for marketers in optimizing their digital marketing strategies to enhance consumer trust and drive brand loyalty.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Explanation of Theory here**

The S-O-R theory, proposed by (Hovland et al., 1953), originates from psychology and has been applied to marketing. It explains that a stimulus (S) is an external factor that triggers consumer reactions. The organism (O) represents the internal cognitive process between awareness and action, leading to a response (R), which manifests as a consumer's decision or behavior. This theory suggests that specific stimuli result in predictable responses, making it useful for understanding how media influences audiences (Maharani, 2022)

### **Brand Ambassador**

Brand ambassadors are influential figures who endorse a brand and significantly impact consumer purchasing decisions (Unnithan et al., 2022). They serve as brand representatives, fostering emotional connections and increasing brand credibility (Mardiyah et al., 2020). Effective brand ambassadors enhance brand trust and influence consumer preferences (Lea Greenwood, 2012).

### **Brand Image**

Brand image refers to consumers' mental associations with a brand, influencing their perception and purchasing behavior (Terence, 2003). A strong brand image builds consumer confidence, differentiates a brand from competitors, and enhances customer loyalty (Arum et al., 2022).

### **Brand Trust**

Brand trust represents consumer confidence in a brand's reliability and integrity (Zaerofi, 2020). It plays a key role in reducing uncertainty, encouraging brand loyalty, and fostering long-term customer relationships (Nurhasanah et al., 2021).

### **Purchase Decision**

A purchase decision is a consumer's choice to buy or not buy a product, influenced by internal factors such as motivation, perception, and attitude (Panich et al., 2023). Trust and brand perception strongly shape purchasing behavior (Kotler & Gary, 2012).

1. **H1** : Brand Ambassador (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y)  
A well-known and attractive brand ambassador enhances brand awareness and influences consumer decisions (Ayyattika et al., 2024).
2. **H2** : Brand Image (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y)  
A positive brand image increases consumer trust and preference, reducing perceived risks (Fauzul et al., 2022).
3. **H3** : Brand Ambassador (X1) → Brand Trust (Z)  
Ambassadors strengthen emotional connections and reinforce brand credibility (Mardiyah et al., 2020)
4. **H4** : Brand Image (X2) → Brand Trust (Z)  
A strong brand image builds consumer confidence in the brand's reliability (Hokky & Bernarto, 2020).
5. **H5** : Brand Trust (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)  
Higher brand trust leads to lower uncertainty and increased consumer willingness to buy (Prasetiyo et al., 2024)
6. **H6** : Brand Ambassador (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y) via Brand Trust (Z)  
The endorsement of a trusted brand ambassador strengthens brand trust, which positively mediates purchasing decisions.
7. **H7** : Brand Image (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y) via Brand Trust (Z)  
A positive brand image fosters greater brand trust, which subsequently influences consumer purchase decisions (Hokky & Bernarto, 2020).

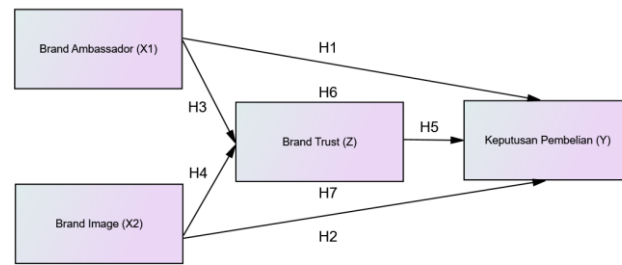


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs an explanatory research design with a quantitative approach. Explanatory research aims to test hypotheses and explain relationships between variables objectively and systematically (Thompson et al., 2020). This method was chosen to analyze the influence of brand ambassadors and brand image on purchase decisions, with brand trust as a mediating variable among Innisfree consumers in Indonesia. A survey method was used to collect data through structured questionnaires distributed online via Google Forms on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter/X.

The research population consists of Innisfree consumers in Indonesia, while the sample was selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. The criteria for respondents include having purchased Innisfree products at least twice, being familiar with the brand ambassador and brand image, and being between 17 and 50 years old. Following Hair et al., (2010), the sample size was determined by multiplying the number of indicators by ten, resulting in a total of 150 respondents.

The study examines three main variables: independent variables (brand ambassador and brand image), a mediating variable (brand trust), and a dependent variable (purchase decision). Data collection was conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was designed to ensure validity and reliability in measuring the variables.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS software. This approach was chosen because SEM is effective in testing complex relationships between multiple variables and evaluating mediation effects. SmartPLS was used to assess the measurement model (validity and reliability tests) and the structural model (path analysis and hypothesis testing). Bootstrapping techniques were applied to determine the significance of direct and indirect effects between variables.

The survey method allowed for the collection of extensive data from a sample representing the broader population, ensuring the generalizability of the findings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Likert Scale Instrument

Scores	Criteria
5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Neutral
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

### 1. Prerequisite Testing

#### a. Instrument Validity and Reliability Test

##### 1) Validity Test

##### a) Convergent Validity

Convergent validity measures how well the indicators of a latent construct correlate with each other. Indicators designed to measure the same concept should show similar results and cluster within the same construct.

##### b) Outer Loading

Outer loading values indicate the strength of the relationship between each indicator and its respective latent construct. A value greater than 0.7 confirms strong validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The summary of outer loading values is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Outer Loading Summary

Construct	Indicator Range
Brand Ambassador	0.709 - 0.791
Brand Image	0.747 - 0.844
Brand Trust	0.738 - 0.846
Purchase Decision	0.757 - 0.838

### Descriptive Analysis

According to Sugiyono (2019), descriptive analysis aims to describe or present data in a concise and clear manner, facilitating better understanding.

Table 2. Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	116	77.3%
Male	34	22.7%
Total	150	100%

From Table 6, it can be observed that out of 150 respondents, 116 (77.3%) are female and 34 (22.7%) are male. This indicates that Innisfree's consumers are predominantly female.

Table 3. Respondents by Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
17-25	110	73%
26-35	36	24%
36-50	4	3%
Total	150	100%

### Regional Distribution

Respondents come from 38 provinces across Indonesia, with the highest concentrations in:

1. Yogyakarta (62 respondents, 41.3%)
2. Central Java (22 respondents, 14.7%)
3. DKI Jakarta (19 respondents, 12.7%)
4. East Java (12 respondents, 8%)
5. West Java (8 respondents, 5.3%)

This indicates that the majority of respondents are from Yogyakarta.

### 2) Variable Descriptive Analysis

Based on Appendix 8, the descriptive statistics for each measured variable are as follows:

#### a) Sample Size (N)

All variables were measured using a sample of 150 respondents, which is sufficient for statistical analysis.

#### b) Minimum and Maximum Values

All variables have a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 5, indicating the use of a Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

#### c) Mean (Average Score)

The mean values range from 3.49 to 3.79, indicating a moderately positive response from participants.

The highest mean score (3.79) is found in X1.7 (brand ambassador), suggesting a stronger agreement among respondents.

The lowest mean score (3.49) is in Y.9 (purchase decision), indicating slightly lower agreement.

#### d) Standard Deviation

Standard deviation values range from 1.071 to 1.278, reflecting moderate variability in responses. The highest standard deviation (1.278) is in X1.9, suggesting greater response variation.

#### e) Skewness

Skewness values range from -0.333 to -0.841, indicating a slight negative skew. The highest negative skew (-0.841) is in Y.6, showing a tendency towards higher ratings.

**f) Kurtosis**

Kurtosis values range from -0.106 to -0.705, indicating that the distribution is relatively flat compared to a normal distribution. The lowest kurtosis (-0.106) is in Z.10, suggesting a near-normal distribution.

**c. Inner Model Analysis**

1. R-Square

Table 4. R Square

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Brand Trust	0.903	0.902
Purchase Decision	0.932	0.931

The R-Square value of 0.903 for brand trust indicates that 90.3% of the variance in brand trust can be explained by the exogenous variables (brand ambassador and brand image). In other words, this model explains the majority of the changes occurring in brand trust based on these two variables. This suggests that the exogenous variables in the model have a strong influence on brand trust.

Similarly, the R-Square value of 0.932 means that 93.2% of the variance in purchase decision can be explained by influencing variables. This demonstrates that the model is highly effective in explaining consumer purchase decisions. The high R-Square values for both constructs – 90.3% for brand trust and 93.2% for purchase decision – indicate that the model has strong predictive power. Most of the variance in both endogenous variables is explained by the exogenous variables involved in the model. According to Hair et al., (2017), a higher R-Square value indicates a better model in explaining data variance.

2. F-Square

Table 5. F Square

Variable	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Brand Trust	Purchase Decision
Brand Ambassador	-	0.464	0.093	-
Brand Image	-	-	0.220	0.164
Brand Trust	-	-	-	0.243

Based on (Cohen, 1988) guidelines for F-Square testing, the value of 0.464 > 0.35 indicates a strong effect of brand ambassador on brand trust, meaning that brand ambassador significantly enhances consumer trust in the brand. Conversely, the value of 0.093 suggests a weak effect on purchase decision, indicating that while brand ambassador influences purchase decision, it is not highly significant, and other factors may play a more dominant role in determining purchase decisions.

A value of 0.220 < 0.35 signifies a moderate effect of brand image on brand trust, while a value of 0.164 < 0.35 also indicates a moderate effect on purchase decision. Finally, a value of 0.243 < 0.35 implies that brand trust has a moderate influence on purchase decision. Overall, brand ambassador strongly affects brand trust, while brand image and brand trust have moderate effects on purchase decision, and brand ambassador does not have a significant direct impact on purchase decision.

3) Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test aims to identify whether there is a strong relationship between independent variables in the regression model, which may

affect the analysis results. The assumption used is that  $VIF < 5$ , meaning no significant collinearity issues exist (Hair et al., 2017). Based on Appendix 9, the VIF values for all variable indicators (X1.1 to Z.10) are  $< 5$ , confirming no collinearity among the measured variable indicators. The absence of significant collinearity supports the overall integrity of the model, making it more valid and reliable for research purposes.

High collinearity indicates that one independent variable can be well explained by other independent variables, which may interfere with the accuracy of coefficient estimation.

**3. Analysis of Inner Model**  
**a. R-Square Analysis**

Table 6. R Square Values

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Brand Trust	0.903	0.902
Purchase Decision	0.932	0.931

The R-Square value of 0.903 for Brand Trust indicates that 90.3% of its variance can be explained by the exogenous variables (Brand Ambassador and Brand Image). This suggests that the model strongly explains changes in Brand Trust based on these variables.

Similarly, an R-Square value of 0.932 means that 93.2% of the variance in Purchase Decision is explained by influencing variables. This high R-Square value indicates a strong predictive capability of the model in explaining consumer purchase decisions. According to (Hair et al., 2017), a higher R-Square value signifies better model explanatory power.

**b. F-Square Analysis**

Table 7. F-Square Values

Relationship	F-Square Value
Brand Ambassador -> Brand Trust	0.464 (Strong)
Brand Ambassador -> Purchase Decision	0.093 (Weak)
Brand Image -> Brand Trust	0.220 (Moderate)
Brand Image -> Purchase Decision	0.164 (Moderate)
Brand Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.243 (Moderate)

Following (Cohen, 1988) guidelines, an F-Square value greater than 0.35 is considered strong, between 0.15-0.35 is moderate, and below 0.15 is weak.

- a. Brand Ambassador significantly influences Brand Trust (0.464), indicating that a strong ambassador positively impacts consumer trust.
- b. Brand Ambassador's effect on Purchase Decision (0.093) is weak, suggesting other factors might have a more significant influence.
  - a. Brand Image moderately affects Brand Trust (0.220) and Purchase Decision (0.164), highlighting its importance in building consumer trust and influencing purchases.

- b. Brand Trust moderately influences Purchase Decision (0.243), reinforcing the idea that consumer trust is a key determinant in purchasing behavior.

**c) Multicollinearity Test**

A multicollinearity test ensures that independent variables do not exhibit high correlation, which could distort regression results. Using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), a value below 5 indicates no significant multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2017).

From Appendix 9, all variable indicators (X1.1 to Z.10) have VIF values < 5, confirming no significant multicollinearity issues. This supports the model's validity and reliability for further analysis.

**4. Hypothesis Testing**

**a. Direct Effect (Path Coefficients)**

Table 8. Direct Effects

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Mean Sample (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistic	P-Value
Brand Ambassador -> Purchase Decision	0.259	0.270	0.085	3.066	0.002
Brand Ambassador -> Brand Trust	0.573	0.585	0.077	7.408	0.000
Brand Image -> Purchase Decision	0.315	0.308	0.072	4.375	0.000
Brand Image -> Brand Trust	0.394	0.382	0.079	5.010	0.000
Brand Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.413	0.410	0.080	5.183	0.000

The direct effects analysis shows:

- a. Brand Ambassador significantly influences Brand Trust (T = 7.408, P = 0.000, O = 0.573), meaning a strong ambassador enhances consumer trust.
- b. The effect of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision is significant but weaker (T = 3.066, P = 0.002, O = 0.259), suggesting additional factors influence purchases.
- c. Brand Image significantly affects Purchase Decision (T = 4.375, P = 0.000, O = 0.315) and Brand Trust (T = 5.010, P = 0.000, O = 0.394), reinforcing its importance.
- d. Brand Trust significantly impacts Purchase Decision (T = 5.183, P = 0.000, O = 0.413), confirming its critical role in driving consumer purchases.

**b. Indirect Effect**

Table 9. Indirect Effects

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Mean Sample (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistic	P-Value
Brand Ambassador -> Brand Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.237	0.238	0.050	4.750	0.000
Brand Image -> Brand Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.163	0.158	0.050	3.238	0.001

- a. The indirect effect of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision through Brand Trust is significant ( $T = 4.750$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ,  $O = 0.237$ ). This implies that Brand Trust acts as a key mediator in the relationship.
- b. Similarly, Brand Image has a significant indirect effect on Purchase Decision via Brand Trust ( $T = 3.238$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ,  $O = 0.163$ ). While its effect is not as strong as Brand Ambassador, it still plays an essential role in shaping consumer trust before purchase.

The findings of this study demonstrate the significant role of brand ambassadors in shaping consumer purchase decisions. A strong brand ambassador effectively represents the brand's identity, increasing consumer trust and engagement. This aligns with prior studies that emphasize how brand ambassadors influence consumer perception by establishing an emotional connection with the audience (Suleman & Adya Prasetyo, 2022). The study confirms that while brand ambassadors positively impact purchase decisions, their effect is more pronounced in fostering brand trust. This suggests that consumers are more likely to trust a brand when it is endorsed by a credible and relatable figure, which subsequently enhances their purchase intentions.

Similarly, the study finds that brand image significantly influences purchase decisions. A well-established brand image creates strong associations in the minds of consumers, leading to higher brand preference and loyalty (Putri et al., 2023). Consumers tend to associate a positive brand image with product quality, reliability, and credibility, which reinforces their decision to purchase. The significance of this relationship highlights the necessity for brands to develop and maintain a consistent and favorable brand image to strengthen their market positioning and consumer appeal.

Moreover, the role of brand trust in mediating the relationship between brand-related factors and purchase decisions is evident. Brand trust serves as a bridge that enhances the impact of brand ambassadors and brand image on purchase behavior. The study supports previous research by (Mardiyah et al., 2020) which suggests that trust plays a critical role in consumer-brand relationships by reducing perceived risks and increasing confidence in product quality. When consumers trust a brand, they are more likely to exhibit repeat purchasing behavior and advocate for the brand among their peers.

The mediation effect of brand trust between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions further underscores the indirect yet significant influence of trustworthy brand representatives. Brand ambassadors contribute to brand trust by reinforcing positive brand associations and authenticity (Hera & Fourqoniah, 2023). This trust, in turn, fosters greater confidence in the brand, leading to stronger purchase decisions. Similarly, the mediation effect of brand trust between brand image and purchase decisions suggests that a well-crafted brand image enhances consumer trust, which subsequently drives purchase intention (Kristian et al., 2021).

These findings collectively reinforce the strategic importance of brand trust in modern marketing. By carefully selecting brand ambassadors who align with the brand's values and cultivating a strong, positive brand image, businesses can effectively build consumer trust and drive purchase behavior. Future research could further explore the long-term effects of these factors on brand loyalty and consumer advocacy.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the research findings, brand ambassadors and brand image have a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions, both directly and through brand trust as a mediating variable. The better the performance of the brand ambassador and the stronger the brand image, the higher consumer trust, ultimately driving purchasing decisions. Therefore, Innisfree is advised to enhance its marketing strategies by selecting brand ambassadors relevant to its target market and strengthening brand image through transparent communication and sustainability values. Additionally, the company should optimize consumer interactions through social media to build stronger emotional connections, thereby increasing brand trust and customer loyalty.

## **FURTHER STUDY**

This study has several limitations. First, the questionnaire distribution was restricted to certain platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter/X), limiting respondent diversity and potentially excluding users of other social media like Facebook, Telegram, or LinkedIn. Second, the limited number of respondents may reduce the reliability and generalizability of the findings, increasing the risk of bias. Lastly, the research was confined to specific locations, making it difficult to apply the results to a broader population. Future studies should expand questionnaire distribution across multiple platforms, increase the sample size, and include respondents from diverse geographic areas to enhance result accuracy and applicability.

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