



The Influence of Brand Ambassadors and Brand Image on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Purchase Decisions

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of brand ambassadors and brand image on customer loyalty, with a particular focus on the mediating role of purchase decisions within the Tokopedia e-commerce platform. The rapid expansion of online shopping in Indonesia necessitates a deep understanding of these dynamics to enhance competitive advantage and sustain customer loyalty. A quantitative research methodology was employed, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze data gathered from 110 Tokopedia customers in Jakarta and its surrounding areas. The results indicate that both brand ambassadors and brand image exert significant positive effects on purchase decisions. Furthermore, purchase decisions were found to strongly influence customer loyalty. Notably, brand ambassadors directly contribute to customer loyalty, while the influence of brand image, though positive, is comparatively weaker. Importantly, the study reveals that the indirect effects of brand ambassadors and brand image on customer loyalty are mediated through their influence on purchase decisions. These findings underscore the strategic importance of effectively leveraging brand ambassadors and enhancing brand image to stimulate purchase decisions and foster customer loyalty in a competitive e-commerce environment. The study offers valuable theoretical insights and practical implications for marketers aiming to optimize branding strategies and customer engagement initiatives on e-commerce platforms.

Keywords: Brand ambassadors; Brand image; Customer loyalty; Purchase decisions; E-commerce; Consumer behavior

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, the influence of technology on human life is inevitable and pervasive (Sutomo et al., 2022). Technological advancements have led to shifts in various aspects of life, including how people conduct trade and transitioning from traditional to online platforms. Online commerce, or e-commerce, has revolutionized the buying and selling process, connecting sellers and buyers through online platforms accessible via the Internet (Clarissa & Bernarto, 2022). This transformation has made transactions more accessible and efficient, catering to the increasing demand for speed, accuracy, and convenience (Sutomo et al., 2022).

The surge in online shopping activities has been remarkable, with significant growth observed in recent years. According to Analytic Data Advertising (ADA), online shopping activities surged by 400% since March 2020. Bank Indonesia (BI) recorded a substantial increase in e-commerce transactions, reaching 383.5 million in the second quarter of 2020, marking a 39.5% increase from the first quarter of the same year (Prasetyaningrum & Rahmawati, 2023). Despite this growth, data from the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII) in 2019 indicated that 56% of Indonesia's 171.17 million internet users had not engaged in online shopping (Indiani & Febriandari, 2021). However, the landscape has shifted dramatically, with online purchases becoming the norm.

This transition has simplified transactions and expanded business opportunities for the community (Adirinekso et al., 2021). Indonesia has emerged as a frontrunner in e-commerce growth, ranking first globally and tenth in growth, with a 78% increase in 2019 (Fadillah, 2023). The fierce competition among e-commerce platforms, particularly during special events, underscores the importance of innovation and strategic marketing initiatives (Fedushko & Ustyianovych, 2022).

Among the prominent e-commerce platforms in Indonesia is Tokopedia, founded in 2009. Despite being a local

player, Tokopedia faces stiff competition from regional giants like Shopee (Muna et al., 2022). Shopee's aggressive marketing strategies, including free shipping and cashback programs, have bolstered its popularity among consumers (Hue et al., 2022). This intense competition has prompted Tokopedia to explore avenues to maintain its user base and stimulate purchase behavior.

1.1 Research Gaps

Despite the growing body of literature on e-commerce and consumer behavior, more studies are still needed to investigate the interplay between brand ambassadors, brand image, purchase decisions, and customer loyalty within the context of Tokopedia. Existing research predominantly focuses on global e-commerce trends or overlooks the nuances of individual platforms like Tokopedia. Consequently, there is a notable research gap concerning the unique dynamics and factors influencing consumer behavior on Tokopedia.

1.2 Problem Statement

Maintaining consumer loyalty amid fierce competition and evolving consumer preferences poses a significant challenge for Tokopedia. The platform's fluctuating visitor trends and the growing dominance of competitors underscore the urgency for Tokopedia to enhance its branding strategies and customer engagement initiatives. Understanding the factors driving purchase decisions and fostering customer loyalty is imperative for Tokopedia's sustained growth and market relevance.

1.3 Research Questions

In light of the above context, the study aims to address the following research questions:

- a) Do brand ambassadors influence purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform?
- b) Does brand image influence purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform?
- c) Do purchase decisions influence customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform?
- d) Do brand ambassadors influence customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform?
- e) Does brand image influence customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform?
- f) Do brand ambassadors influence customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform?
- g) Does brand image influence customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform?

1.4 Purpose of Research

This study seeks to:

- a) Analyze the impact of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.
- b) Examine the influence of brand image on purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.
- c) Investigate the relationship between purchase decisions and customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.
- d) Assess the effect of brand ambassadors on customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.
- e) Explore the impact of brand image on customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.
- f) Investigate the influence of brand ambassadors on customer loyalty, mediated by purchase decisions, on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.
- g) Examine the influence of brand image on customer loyalty, mediated by purchase decisions, on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

By addressing these objectives, this study aims to provide not only valuable insights into enhancing Tokopedia's branding strategies, optimizing purchase decision-making processes, and fostering long-term customer loyalty, but also practical solutions, thereby contributing to the existing literature on e-commerce and consumer behavior.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Exchange Theory

The theoretical framework employed in this study is the Social Exchange Theory, initially proposed by Blau in 1964. Social Exchange Theory revolves around the dynamics of relationships, focusing on how relationships are initiated and maintained and whether they dissolve (Ahmad et al., 2023). It suggests that individuals engage in social interactions with the anticipation of receiving rewards. The interaction involves elements of rewards, sacrifices, and profits. Individuals gain rewards through their sacrifices, while sacrifices encompass what individuals forgo. Profit in this context refers to the rewards minus the sacrifices. Thus, social behavior involves

exchanges between two or more individuals based on a cost-benefit calculation (Busser et al., 2019).

According to Social Exchange Theory, relationships gradually develop trust, loyalty, and commitment if both parties adhere to the exchange rules. Individuals voluntarily enter and remain in social relationships only if they find them sufficiently satisfying regarding rewards and costs (Cropanzano et al., 2017). This theory serves as a link between consumer beliefs regarding their loyalty to a brand or company. The research focuses on consumer perceptions influencing their consideration of sacrifices and benefits. Positive relationships lead to consumer satisfaction and loyalty toward a brand or company (Shiau & Luo, 2012).

Furthermore, Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals always act rationally, seeking gains and avoiding dissatisfaction. Consequently, when customers are dissatisfied with substandard service quality, they may consider switching brands or discontinuing the use of products and services from that company. Exchange occurs only when both parties stand to benefit from it (Urbonavicius et al., 2021). For instance, most instances of exchanging personal information in e-commerce, such as purchases and online searches, exemplify negotiated exchanges. Marketers collect buyers' personal information in exchange for benefits such as access, convenience, or monetary compensation through discounts or bonuses (Malgieri & Custers, 2018).

Social exchange also highlights the reciprocal relationship between behavior and the environment. As the environment often consists of others, individuals and others are seen as mutually influencing each other's behavior. Social exchanges are not always measured in monetary value, as tangible and intangible items are exchanged in various social transactions. This includes a brand ambassador socially engaging with a celebrity or public figure by providing promotional services (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Group presence and resilience, including family, are supported by the personal interests of their members. Actions dependent on appreciative responses from others will cease if the expected response does not occur. Consistently providing quality service enhances the spread of a positive reputation, which can indirectly increase the loyalty of faithful customers to the company (Siswadi et al., 2023).

According to Social Exchange Theory, if a company provides a good relationship, customers will behave satisfactorily and show loyalty to the company. Moreover, it explains that individuals always act rationally by pursuing benefits and avoiding dissatisfaction. High customer loyalty enhances the leader's reputation and the company's value. Such exchange activities are conducted to maintain customer loyalty, ensuring they repeatedly purchase the same brand due to the satisfaction they receive (Sugiat et al., 2023). Another aspect of Social Exchange Theory is the expectation of fairness in exchange within society. People expect equal benefits for equal costs, and they won't be happy if they don't receive them. This is what consumers expect when making purchasing decisions for a brand. The theory also highlights the importance of trust, perceived efficacy, and perceived costs in influencing purchasing behavior (Putra et al., 2023).

While Social Exchange Theory effectively explains the dynamics of rewards, sacrifices, and benefits in consumer-brand relationships, its application in this study goes further by analyzing how these perceived rewards and costs influence purchase decisions and long-term customer loyalty, particularly in the online setting of Tokopedia. In an e-commerce environment, customers are often exposed to numerous brands and offers, making decisions susceptible to perceived value. Here, rewards, such as discounts, ease of use, and brand reputation, and costs, such as time, effort, and perceived risks, become crucial in immediate purchase decisions and ongoing brand loyalty.

This study suggests that when customers perceive a favorable balance of rewards over costs, they are more likely to develop a sense of loyalty to the brand. This is particularly significant in an online marketplace where switching costs are low and alternatives are abundant. Therefore, Social Exchange Theory not only underpins the mechanisms of purchase decision-making but also elucidates the process through which sustained customer loyalty is cultivated in digital commerce.

2.2 Brand Ambassadors

Brand ambassadors represent the best portrait or image of a product. They are often celebrities or famous figures (Indrasari et al., 2019). Brand ambassadors play a crucial role as communicators in delivering messages to consumers about a product offered and connecting society to enhance sales (Triana et al., 2020). They are usually celebrities because they have the power to influence consumers to buy products through their popularity (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

Utilizing public figures as brand ambassadors, instead of advertisements without famous figures, can persuade consumers to like and engage more with the brand. Therefore, companies must choose their brand ambassadors carefully. Selected brand ambassadors represent the product image and have experience as advertising stars, public figures who consistently observe fashion trends, and prominent individuals who are attractive. Brand ambassadors are individuals who support a brand from famous public figures. Brand ambassadors are used to advocate for the brand and influence customers. Because brand ambassadors often depend on people's perceptions of the personalities of famous public figures, they are used to attract consumer interest in using the product. Brand ambassadors serve as business instruments to interact with the public and increase revenue (Sari Dewi et al., 2020).

A product endorsed by a well-known celebrity benefits from brand awareness and positive impressions. Therefore, companies often leverage celebrity endorsements, investing millions to promote their products with celebrity assistance (Chukwu & Pius, 2023).

2.3 Brand Image

The brand image characterizes customer associations with and trust in a particular company. Trust and assessment are components of customer brand reputation, as reflected in customer associations or memories. Brand image differentiates brand messages from competitive brands in the constantly changing market. Customers who perceive the brand as beneficial will show more vital emotional interest and memory for the brand (Artisca Yulia & Ekawati, 2021).

Brand image helps customers digest information quickly when making purchase decisions because it recalls positive thoughts and attitudes about the brand. Moreover, customers can identify their needs and satisfaction levels with the company using brand image (Satornsantikul & Nuangjamnong, 2022). It is a critical element of product marketing, representing the overall consumer perception. Brand image is the consumer's evaluation of the brand or product, reminding consumers of that brand. Consumer evaluations form the basis for consumer follow-up actions (Adirineko et al., 2021).

Brand image can also be defined as consumer perceptions and feelings towards a brand formed by direct or indirect brand experiences, capturing cognitive, sensory, and emotional aspects. Brand image has attributes and benefits associated with the brand that have its characteristics and differ from competitors. Brand image, as a reflection of the general personality and beliefs about a particular brand due to its uniqueness that makes it different from others, allows consumers to distinguish a brand if they have seen or heard it before. Brand image is critical to purchasing, encouraging consumers to appreciate a particular company with a strong brand reputation. Brand image influences customers to make anticipated repeat purchases by helping them determine which brand is best for them (Rambe et al., 2021).

2.4 Purchase Decisions

Before making purchase decisions, consumers try to identify problems, gather information about specific brands or products, and evaluate how well each option solves their problems. Making good purchase decisions is one of the main goals of all businesses. When consumers are aware of a product and decide to purchase it, they make purchase decisions. Consumer purchase choices can be influenced by how attractive a product is (Fadila et al., 2021).

When consumers genuinely intend to purchase a product, it is a phase in the purchase decision-making process. The five phases need identification, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Furthermore, several approaches to purchase decision-making exist, including the stimulus-response approach, the humanistic approach, a combination of stimulus-response and humanistic approaches, and the persuasive communication approach (Lestari et al., 2021).

Consumer decisions to purchase or not purchase a commodity are called purchase decisions or actions when they learn about a product and decide to purchase it (Handi et al., 2018). The attractiveness of a product can influence consumers' decisions to buy it. The greater the benefits a product provides, the greater the desire of consumers to purchase it (Fadila et al., 2021).

2.5 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty refers to the place where consumers make judgments and formulate opinions about products, services, brand relationships, or related to repeated purchases from the company. Customer loyalty is the dedication of customers to a product or business, demonstrated in positive actions such as making repeat purchases and telling others about the product or company (Sutiono et al., 2019). Customer loyalty increases when consumers are satisfied with their purchases (Indrasari et al., 2019).

Customer loyalty is the ability to commit to repurchase goods or services in the future despite external influences and marketing campaigns that may tempt customers to switch. Customer loyalty affects a company's ability to retain some customers over competitors, as it is a continuous process that does not stop with meeting customer needs but continues to build long-term relationships with loyal customers regarding a particular brand (Artisca Yulia & Ekawati, 2021).

Loyalty represents consumer commitment, which in turn generates an intention to repurchase. As loyalty increases, it will significantly impact consumer tendencies to repurchase in the future. Customers loyal to a particular brand are likelier to recommend it to their friends. Those highly faithful to their favorite brands are likelier to tell others about them and buy new products from them (Nadila & Windasari, 2022).

As a result, customer loyalty and a parameter of brand success can directly relate to expanding brand equity to

new products. If customers can associate themselves with the parent brand, it helps enhance broader brand equity (Chanda & Moharir, 2020). Loyalty is defined as an ongoing, strong commitment to repurchase liked products or services consistently in the future. Each customer's loyalty refers to the psychological commitment of clients to the brand as well as repurchasing the brand. As a result of loyalty, consumers will not only buy associated brands but also refuse to buy other brands, even if those other brands are equal to or superior in quality (Satornsantikul & Nuangjamnong, 2022).

2.6 Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Purchase Decisions

Previous research by Lestari et al. (2021) suggests that brand ambassadors influence purchase decisions. Brand ambassadors play a crucial role in efficient local and international marketing initiatives. They represent the company's products by influencing consumers and setting trends. Brand advocates work to foster deeper emotional bonds between the company's brand and its customers, which in turn helps drive customer purchases. This conclusion aligns with the findings of Sabella et al. (2022), indicating that consumers are more interested in products endorsed by public figures who can influence their purchasing decisions.

Moreover, the study by Lestari et al. (2021) concludes that brand ambassadors impact purchase decisions. Trendsetters, often called brand ambassadors in marketing, influence human choices. These ambassadors are passionate about the brand and can influence or persuade customers to purchase or use specific products. Therefore, brand ambassadors can enhance customer purchases. Another study by Clarissa & Bernarto (2022) also suggests that brand ambassadors positively impact purchase decisions. Brand ambassadors, acting as endorsers in advertisements, introduce a specific brand, usually through celebrity figures, aiming to advertise or promote it, thus instilling consumer trust in the product or service and subsequently enticing them to purchase.

Furthermore, Fadila et al. (2021) explained the relationship between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions, highlighting that an individual's affinity for a brand ambassador influences purchase decisions. A favored brand image enhances purchase decisions.

While the existing literature provides robust evidence of the positive influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions, most studies have focused on global markets or general consumer behaviors and have yet to fully explore the specific context of Indonesian e-commerce platforms like Tokopedia. Furthermore, these studies often emphasize celebrity endorsements without addressing how different types of brand ambassadors might differently impact consumer decision-making in an online setting. This gap highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how brand ambassadors can be leveraged to drive purchase decisions, especially in a highly competitive marketplace like Tokopedia. The current study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the specific influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions within the Tokopedia e-commerce platform, considering the unique consumer dynamics in Indonesia.

The explanations and findings from previous studies, combined with this identified research gap, lead to the following hypothesis regarding the research question:

H1: Brand ambassadors influence purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

2.7 Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decisions

Previous research by Sabella et al. (2022) indicates the significant influence of brand image on consumer choices. In this context, purchase decisions rely more on a favorable brand image. Consumers often use brand images as reference points when making decisions about products they have no prior experience with or information about. Products from brands with positive brand reputations are usually perceived to have higher quality than those with negative ones.

Additionally, Adirinekso et al. (2021) demonstrated that brand image impacts purchase decisions, concluding that trustworthy brands with good reputations, specific qualities, and high-quality products can influence consumer purchase decisions. Another study by Clarissa & Bernarto (2022) concludes that brand perceptions enhance purchase decisions. Consumer beliefs about a particular brand, the extent to which they believe that a product or service has certain advantages and evaluative judgments about the quality of a product all influence purchase decisions toward a brand.

Moreover, Fadila et al. (2021) provided insight into the brand image, describing how society perceives a company or product. The better the brand image of a product, the greater the likelihood customers will purchase the product, leading to positive impacts such as repeat purchases and trust-building. A study by Junianti et al. (2023) states a strong correlation between brand image and purchase decisions. The presence of a brand image influences people to choose to purchase on e-commerce platforms that help meet their needs.

While previous studies provide substantial evidence on the influence of brand image on purchase decisions, much of the existing research has primarily focused on brand image in the context of well-established global brands, often neglecting the unique characteristics and challenges faced by local e-commerce platforms like Tokopedia. This gap underscores the need for more localized research that examines how brand image interacts with cultural

factors and consumer behavior in the Indonesian e-commerce landscape. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring the influence of brand image on purchase decisions specifically within the context of Tokopedia, thus contributing valuable insights to the literature on e-commerce and consumer behavior in emerging markets.

The explanations and findings from previous studies, combined with this identified research gap, lead to the following hypothesis regarding the research question:

H2: Brand image influences purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

2.8 Influence of Purchase Decisions on Customer Loyalty

Previous research by Purbasari & Arimbawa (2019) claims that consumer choices impact brand loyalty, suggesting that consumer behavior involving choosing what to buy occurs when people want to fulfill their desires or needs. Customers often return to the exact location to meet their needs and desires by purchasing goods or services, fostering customer loyalty. Furthermore, Yang & Yuan (2018) affirmed that interactions during information acquisition and processing contribute to purchase decision-making. Purchase decisions involve concluding information, helping consumers improve quality and efficiency, and shaping customer loyalty to suppliers.

Additionally, Khanifah & Budiono (2022) explained that purchase decisions represent the combined method of consolidating knowledge to choose one of several behavioral alternatives. Therefore, purchase decisions are considered intentional or unintentional behaviors by customers before purchases. Customer satisfaction with what they have purchased can lead to loyalty. Furthermore, Jeevananda (2011) explained that customer loyalty presents a paradox. It is primarily viewed as an attitude-based phenomenon significantly influenced by positive impacts. Another study by Pinota (2023) explains that customer loyalty is created by individuals who make purchases, especially those who do so routinely and repeatedly, because what they have purchased aligns with their expectations. Customer loyalty is born when customers experience satisfying experiences.

While existing studies offer compelling evidence that purchase decisions significantly impact customer loyalty, much of the literature focuses on traditional retail settings or well-established markets. More research is needed to examine this relationship within the rapidly evolving context of e-commerce, particularly in emerging markets like Indonesia. Furthermore, most studies treat purchase decisions and customer loyalty as linear and uniform processes without considering the influence of factors such as digital engagement, personalized marketing, or online customer reviews. This study aims to address these gaps by analyzing how purchase decisions influence customer loyalty, specifically on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in the digital marketplace.

The explanations and findings from previous studies, combined with this identified research gap, lead to the following hypothesis regarding the research question:

H3: Purchase decisions influence customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

2.9 Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Customer Loyalty

Previous research by Sutomo et al. (2022) shows that brand ambassadors influence customer loyalty, with the conclusion that customer loyalty is demonstrated in decision-making behavior for repeat purchases. Customers with strong loyalty make regular repeat purchases, recommend and speak positively to everyone they know, and be immune to the pull of competitors. Another study by Nadila & Windasari (2022) concludes that brand ambassadors can attract customers to purchase a product, especially brand ambassadors with many enthusiastic fans.

Moreover, Artisca Yulia & Ekawati (2021) explained that celebrities with physical attractiveness can drive customers to purchase the brand. Companies with strong brand ambassadors gain a better position, maintain competitive profit margins, and increase customer loyalty. Furthermore, Chukwu & Pius (2023) also explained that emotional consumers make decisions to purchase a particular brand repeatedly. Customers perceive that a specific brand has reliable brand ambassadors who will meet their expectations and engage with customers personally. Additional research by Rahmawati et al. (2022) states that brand ambassadors aim to influence consumers to make purchases. Brand ambassadors serve to influence and become trendsetters for the products offered by the company. When consumers recall a famous brand, they tend to make repeat purchases.

While existing literature demonstrates the positive influence of brand ambassadors on customer loyalty, many studies focus predominantly on global brands and celebrity endorsements, often overlooking the impact of non-celebrity or micro-influencer brand ambassadors. Additionally, much of the current research is centered on traditional or offline retail environments, with limited attention given to the dynamics of online platforms, particularly within the Indonesian market. These gaps highlight the need for research exploring how different brand ambassadors, beyond just celebrities, influence customer loyalty in a digital e-commerce context. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the specific role of brand ambassadors in fostering customer loyalty on Tokopedia, one of Indonesia's leading e-commerce platforms, with the potential to significantly impact the

understanding of brand ambassadorship in the digital age.

The explanations and findings from previous studies, combined with this identified research gap, lead to the following hypothesis regarding the research question:

H4: Brand ambassadors influence customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

2.10 Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty

Previous research by Artisca Yulia & Ekawati (2021) suggests that brand image impacts customer loyalty. According to this study, businesses with a strong brand perception can gain market share, maintain competitive advantages, and enjoy greater customer loyalty. Customer loyalty increases with a stronger brand image. The pattern of customer loyalty is influenced by brand image. Another study by Durmaz et al. (2018) suggests that brand image is essential for businesses as it can affect how customers perceive products and services. When clients purchase products from a company, they actively collaborate with the company, ignore competitors, and help the business maintain long-term profitability. A solid brand image enhances the company's value and fosters customer loyalty.

Furthermore, Rahman et al. (2023) explained that when customers are aware of a particular brand and believe it can meet their needs, they decide to repurchase it in the future. After making the first purchase, customers have received good information about the brand. Additionally, Abbas et al. (2021) explained that brand uniqueness is a criterion most companies use to introduce new products. Customers focus on product value at the time of purchase, which helps them make repeated purchases. If consumers are satisfied with the product from that brand, they become loyal to it. Another study by Diallo (2022) explains that customer loyalty means a commitment to conducting business with a particular company or organization and continually purchasing certain products and services. Loyalty can produce a positive brand image in the minds of customers.

While previous research has shown a positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty, most studies have focused on established markets or global brands. This leaves a significant gap in the understanding of how brand image influences customer loyalty on local e-commerce platforms, particularly in emerging markets like Indonesia. Furthermore, the specific contributions of different dimensions of brand image, such as brand uniqueness or cultural relevance, to customer loyalty in a digital context are often overlooked. This research aims to fill these gaps by investigating the impact of brand image on customer loyalty within the Tokopedia platform, offering fresh insights into consumer behavior in Indonesia's e-commerce market. The potential impact of this research on marketing strategies and consumer behavior in the e-commerce industry cannot be overstated.

The explanations and findings from previous studies, combined with this identified research gap, lead to the following hypothesis regarding the research question:

H5: Brand image influences customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

2.11 Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Purchase Decisions

Brand ambassadors typically represent a product or company and are expected to be able to speak about the represented product, thereby significantly impacting increased sales. Brand ambassadors influence consumer purchase decisions, and then consumers have feelings about a product and the possibility of wanting to repurchase it, thus generating customer loyalty. This finding is based on the research by Lestari et al. (2021), which indicates that brand ambassadors play a vital role in facilitating smooth marketing processes. Influencing and encouraging customers to use the product are the strategy's objectives. The goal is to make customers interested in purchasing the advertised product and easily stick to their minds.

While existing literature robustly supports the notion that brand ambassadors can positively influence customer loyalty through their impact on purchase decisions, much of the research has primarily focused on direct effects rather than exploring the mediating mechanisms at play. This study, in contrast, takes a comprehensive approach, aiming to fill these gaps. Additionally, many studies emphasize traditional retail contexts or global markets, overlooking the unique dynamics of e-commerce platforms in emerging markets like Indonesia. Moreover, there is limited exploration of how different types of brand ambassadors, such as influencers, micro-influencers, or non-celebrity endorsers, differentially impact purchase decisions and subsequent loyalty. This study aims to address these gaps by examining the mediating role of purchase decisions in the relationship between brand ambassadors and customer loyalty, specifically within the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

The explanations and findings from previous studies, combined with this identified research gap, lead to the following hypothesis regarding the research question:

H6: Brand ambassadors influence customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

2.12 Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Purchase Decisions

Customer loyalty to a brand is an essential component in the decision-making process. Brands must be

effectively positioned in the minds of consumers, according to marketers. Positive perceptions of a brand and its products influence prospective customers to buy the product and make them reluctant to consider other brands. The level of decision-making to purchase and repurchase increases with the well-portrayed brand image of a company. This statement is a conclusion drawn from the research conducted by Kuncoro & Windyasaki (2021).

Additionally, research by Mardiana & Nuryakin (2022) explains that purchase decisions occur when products have a good brand image, thus influencing customer loyalty. The higher the level of purchase decisions for a food product, the higher the consumer loyalty.

While the existing literature provides a strong foundation for understanding the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty, particularly through the mediating role of purchase decisions, there is a notable lack of research focused on the context of e-commerce platforms, especially in emerging markets like Indonesia. This gap is particularly significant given the rapid evolution of consumer behavior in these markets. Most studies have centered on established brands in mature markets, with limited exploration of how brand image influences customer loyalty in a digital environment. Moreover, the impact of cultural and regional factors on the relationship between brand image, purchase decisions, and customer loyalty remains underexplored. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating how brand image influences customer loyalty through purchase decisions specifically within the Tokopedia e-commerce platform, offering new insights into consumer behavior in the Indonesian market.

The explanations and findings from previous studies, combined with this identified research gap, lead to the following hypothesis regarding the research question:

H7: Brand image influences customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

A research conceptual framework was constructed based on the above hypotheses, as depicted in Figure 1.

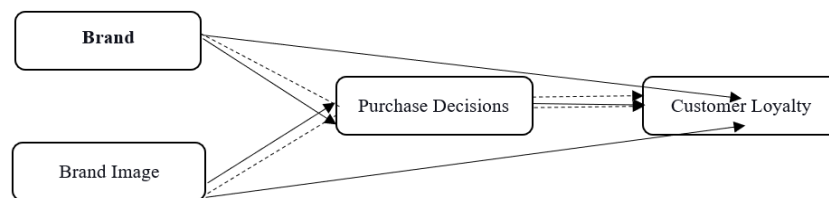


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach, allowing for data collection and statistical computation. The purpose of this positivist-based research technique is to test pre-determined hypotheses through the use of research instruments for data collection, specific populations or samples, and statistical or quantitative data analysis (Chan et al., 2020). The research employs an associative approach, which formulates research questions that inquire about relationships between two or more variables, thereby developing hypotheses that help explain and manage a phenomenon. In this study, the researcher aims to investigate brand ambassadors, brand image, customer loyalty, and purchasing decisions. The independent variables are brand ambassadors and brand image; the dependent variable is customer loyalty; and the intervening variable is purchasing decisions.

3.2 Research Object

The research object is any data that can take several forms, such as an individual, object, transaction, or event that the researcher focuses on for deeper investigation (Marey & Purwanto, 2020). This study's chosen research object for in-depth analysis is customer loyalty on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The population is the generalization area consisting of entities or subjects with specific quantities and characteristics selected by the researcher for the study and subsequently used as a basis for concluding. This study's population consists of Tokopedia e-commerce customers residing in Jakarta, Tangerang City, South Tangerang City, and Tangerang District who have made a minimum of three repeated purchase transactions.

While this study focuses on Tokopedia customers within the metropolitan area (Jakarta, Tangerang City, South Tangerang City, and Tangerang District), it is essential to consider the generalizability of the results to other regions or similar e-commerce platforms. Jakarta and its surrounding cities represent a highly urbanized area with a relatively high income level, advanced infrastructure, and widespread digital literacy. These factors may

influence consumer behavior differently compared to other regions in Indonesia, with varying economic conditions, cultural practices, or levels of internet penetration. For example, consumer preferences in rural areas may be shaped by different brand loyalty dynamics or purchasing power, which could impact the generalizability of the findings.

Moreover, although Tokopedia is one of the largest e-commerce platforms in Indonesia, the findings may only partially extend to other platforms that cater to different demographics or market niches. Platforms with distinct user bases, such as those focusing on specific product categories or targeting younger consumers, might exhibit different customer loyalty patterns.

By acknowledging these cultural and economic factors, it can be recognized that while the findings of this study provide valuable insights into consumer behavior within the Tokopedia platform in the Jakarta region, people have the responsibility as professionals to exercise caution when applying these results to other regions or e-commerce contexts. Future research could explore these variables to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

A sample represents the population's size and arrangement. This research employs non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is a technique that only gives some population members an equal chance of being selected because it is based on specific criteria. In this study, the sampling method uses non-probability sampling with a quota sampling technique. Quota sampling involves selecting a sample from a population that possesses specific characteristics with the desired number (quota). As suggested by Hair et al. (2010), the sample size should ideally be 100 or larger. As a general rule, the minimum sample size should be at least five times the number of items/questions to be analyzed. Given that this study contains 22 statement items, the required sample size was calculated as 22 items multiplied by a factor of 5, resulting in a sample size of 110 respondents. Consequently, the sample size for this study was set at 110.

Criteria for the sample in this study include: (a) age of at least 17 years old, (b) residing in Jakarta, Tangerang City, South Tangerang, or Tangerang District, and having made transactions on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform more than three times.

3.4 Data Collection Method

The primary tool used for data collection in this research is the questionnaire. Data was collected by presenting a written list of questions or statements to respondents for their responses. The questionnaire was distributed to Tokopedia e-commerce customers aged at least 17 and residing in Jakarta, Tangerang City, South Tangerang City, and Tangerang District using an online platform, specifically through Google Forms disseminated via social media.

3.5 Data Analysis Method

Data analysis involves breaking down a whole into smaller components to identify dominant components, compare them, and relate them to the whole. This study utilizes SEM via smartPLS software to answer research questions and test hypotheses. SEM addresses regression method limitations and was employed in this study as Partial Least Square (PLS), suitable for analytical assumptions like categorical, ordinal, interval, or ratio scales, not requiring multivariate normal distribution or large sample sizes (Purwanto & Purwanto, 2020).

3.5.1 Measurement model evaluation (outer model)

Firstly, the validity testing was conducted. Convergent validity determines the strength of indicator relationships; indicators should have loading factors exceeding 0.6-0.7 for significance. Average variance extracted (AVE) evaluates validity by examining AVE values (a value exceeding 0.5 is acceptable). Discriminant validity assesses if variables differ sufficiently; it is valid if cross-loadings show greater association within respective latent variables.

Secondly, the reliability testing was conducted. Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to measure the consistency of responses, aiming for values exceeding 0.7 for reliability.

3.5.2 Structural model testing (inner model)

First, R-square (R^2) testing was conducted. R^2 changes were monitored to determine the significant influence of independent latent variables on dependent ones; the values indicate strength (Ghozali, 2018). Second, Q-square (Q^2) testing was conducted to evaluate the PLS model's predictive relevance; $Q^2 > 0$ indicates good predictive ability (Ghozali, 2018). Third, the hypothesis testing method was used. The hypothesis testing method, a key component of this research, involves testing the significance of SEM models with PLS. This was done by examining the effects of independent variables on dependent and intervening variables. Bootstrap procedures in SmartPLS test hypotheses use a statistical criterion (t -statistic > 1.96 and p -value < 0.05) to accept hypotheses (Ghozali, 2018; Sandra & Purwanto, 2017).

4. Results

Responses from 150 individuals were gathered through Google Forms in this study, focusing on residents of

Jakarta, Tangerang City, South Tangerang City and Tangerang District areas who had conducted transactions on Tokopedia at least three times. After screening for outliers, data from 110 respondents were used for analysis.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondents' perceptions across four variables: brand ambassadors, brand image, purchase decisions, and customer loyalty.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of brand ambassadors. Respondents demonstrated a positive perception (mean score ranging from 4.0 to 4.3), indicating strong endorsement of Tokopedia's ambassadorship strategies.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics data for the brand ambassador variable

	Mean	Min	Max	Standard Deviation
Item 1	4	1	5	0.96
Item 2	4.2	1	5	0.79
Item 3	4	1	5	1.1
Item 4	4.1	1	5	0.92
Item 5	4.2	1	5	0.9
Item 6	4.2	1	5	0.9
Item 7	4.3	1	5	0.81

Source: Primary data processing (2023)

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of brand image. Tokopedia received favorable ratings (mean score ranging from 4.2 to 4.3) for its brand image attributes.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics data for brand image

	Mean	Min	Max	Standard Deviation
Item 1	4.3	1	5	0.75
Item 2	4.2	1	5	0.80
Item 3	4.3	1	5	0.77
Item 4	4.3	1	5	0.86
Item 5	4.2	1	5	0.88

Source: Primary data processing (2023)

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of purchase decisions. The average score for purchase decisions is high (mean score ranging from 4.1 to 4.3), suggesting a strong inclination towards purchasing on Tokopedia.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics data for purchase decisions

	Mean	Min	Max	Standard Deviation
Item 1	4.2	1	5	0.78
Item 2	4.2	1	5	0.79
Item 3	4.2	1	5	0.95
Item 4	4.3	1	5	0.81
Item 5	4.1	1	5	0.89

Source: Primary data processing (2023)

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of customer loyalty. Respondents exhibited high loyalty (mean score ranging from 4.0 to 4.2), indicating a solid attachment to Tokopedia as a preferred platform.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics data for customer loyalty

	Mean	Min	Max	Standard Deviation
Item 1	4.2	1	5	0.76
Item 2	4.2	1	5	0.80
Item 3	4.2	1	5	0.85
Item 4	4.2	1	5	0.82
Item 5	4	1	5	1

Source: Primary data processing (2023)

4.2 Measurement Model Testing (Outer Model)

4.2.1 Validity testing

Table 5 shows that all items exhibit satisfactory loading values (> 0.6), indicating strong convergent validity

across all constructs.

Table 5. Outer loading

	Brand Image	Brand Ambassador	Purchase Decision	Customer Loyalty
BI1	0.718			
BI2	0.755			
BI3	0.754			
BI4	0.779			
BI5	0.678			
BA1		0.686		
BA2		0.744		
BA3		0.761		
BA4		0.756		
BA5		0.762		
BA6		0.780		
BA7		0.813		
PD1			0.786	
PD2			0.738	
PD3			0.824	
PD4			0.753	
PD5			0.780	
CL1				0.750
CL2				0.758
CL3				0.697
CL4				0.766
CL5				0.747

Table 6 shows that AVE values of all constructs (> 0.5) confirm that each construct captures a sufficient amount of variance, ensuring good convergent validity.

Table 6. AVE

	AVE
Brand image	0.544
Brand ambassador	0.575
Purchase decision	0.603
Customer loyalty	0.554

Table 7 shows that the cross-loading values are higher within their constructs compared to others, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Table 7. Cross-loading

	Brand image	Brand Ambassador	Purchase Decision	Customer Loyalty
BI1	0.718	0.606	0.555	0.522
BI2	0.755	0.561	0.587	0.563
BI3	0.754	0.522	0.584	0.616
BI4	0.779	0.569	0.664	0.580
BI5	0.678	0.519	0.537	0.472
BA1	0.416	0.686	0.518	0.535
BA2	0.580	0.744	0.631	0.678
BA3	0.499	0.761	0.558	0.603
BA4	0.675	0.756	0.596	0.649
BA5	0.599	0.762	0.580	0.578
BA6	0.603	0.780	0.556	0.620
BA7	0.594	0.813	0.575	0.619
PD1	0.659	0.593	0.786	0.659
PD2	0.573	0.600	0.738	0.601
PD3	0.623	0.513	0.824	0.674
PD4	0.583	0.538	0.753	0.608
PD5	0.645	0.693	0.780	0.682
CL1	0.568	0.628	0.651	0.750
CL2	0.594	0.554	0.659	0.758
CL3	0.492	0.548	0.571	0.697
CL4	0.599	0.634	0.615	0.766
CL5	0.530	0.646	0.597	0.747

4.2.2 Reliability testing

Table 8 shows that all constructs surpass the recommended threshold of 0.7 for internal consistency reliability. All constructs exhibit composite reliability values above 0.7, indicating good reliability.

Table 8. Cronbach's alpha & composite reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Brand image	0.790	0.856
Brand ambassador	0.876	0.904
Purchase decision	0.835	0.884
Customer loyalty	0.798	0.861

4.3 Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

4.3.1 R-square and Q-square

Table 9 shows that the R-square of the variables studied strongly influences purchase decisions (69%) and customer loyalty (77%), indicating a robust structural model. Then the Q-square shows predictive relevance was confirmed with values above zero for both purchase decisions (0.405) and customer loyalty (0.398).

Table 9. R-square and Q-square

	R-Square	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Purchase decision	0.692	0.405
Customer loyalty	0.769	0.398

4.3.2 Hypothesis testing

The hypotheses were tested using t statistics and p values, with significant results indicating relationships between brand ambassadors, brand image, purchase decisions, and customer loyalty.

Table 10 shows the results of the hypothesis testing of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions. The hypothesis testing results indicate that the p-value of the test is 0.001, and the t-statistic value is 3.254. These results show that the p-value exceeds 0.05 and the t-statistic exceeds 1.96. This indicates that the brand ambassador significantly influences purchase decisions on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform. The original sample result of this test is 0.370, indicating that the brand ambassador also positively impacts purchase decisions on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform.

Table 10. Path coefficient

Hypotheses	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Value	Status
Brand ambassador → purchase decisions	0.370	3.254	0.001	Accepted
Brand image → purchase decisions	0.518	4.621	0.000	Accepted
Purchase decisions → customer loyalty	0.469	3.232	0.001	Accepted
Brand ambassador → customer loyalty	0.394	3.024	0.003	Accepted
Brand image → customer loyalty	0.080	0.685	0.494	Rejected
Brand ambassador → purchase decisions → customer loyalty	0.174	2.303	0.022	Accepted
Brand image → purchase decisions → customer loyalty	0.243	2.604	0.009	Accepted

The hypothesis testing of brand image on purchase decisions reveals a p-value of 0.000 and a t-statistic value of 4.621, both indicating a significant influence of brand image on purchase decisions on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform. The original sample result of this test is 0.518, underscoring the positive impact of brand image on purchase decisions on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform.

The hypothesis testing of purchase decisions on customer loyalty demonstrates a p-value of 0.001 and a t-statistic value of 3.232, both indicating a significant influence of purchase decisions on customer loyalty on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform. The original sample result of this test is 0.469, reaffirming the positive impact of purchase decisions on customer loyalty on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform.

The hypothesis testing of brand ambassadors on customer loyalty indicates that the p-value of the test is 0.001, and the t-statistic value is 3.232. These results show that the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-statistic exceeds 1.96. This indicates that the brand ambassador significantly influences customer loyalty on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform. The original sample result of this test is 0.469, indicating that the brand ambassador also positively impacts customer loyalty on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform.

The hypothesis testing of brand image on customer loyalty indicates that the p-value of the test is 0.494, and the t-statistic value is 0.685. These results show that the p-value exceeds 0.05 and the t-statistic is less than 1.96. This indicates that brand image does not significantly influence customer loyalty on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform.

However, the original sample result shows that brand image also positively impacts customer loyalty on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform with a value of 0.080.

The hypothesis testing of the brand ambassador on customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions indicates that the p-value of the test is 0.022 and the t-statistic value is 2.303. These results show that the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-statistic exceeds 1.96. This indicates that the brand ambassador significantly influences customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform. The original sample result of this test is 0.174, indicating that the brand ambassador also positively impacts customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform.

The hypothesis testing of brand image on customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions indicates that the p-value of the test is 0.009 and the t-statistic value is 2.604. These results show that the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-statistic exceeds 1.96. This indicates that brand image significantly influences customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform. The original sample result of this test is 0.243, indicating that brand image also positively impacts customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions on Tokopedia's e-commerce platform.

5. Discussion

5.1 Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Purchase Decisions in Tokopedia E-commerce

The results of hypothesis testing indicate that brand ambassadors have a positive influence on purchase decisions. Additionally, the brand ambassador variable significantly affects purchase decisions on Tokopedia e-commerce. It was found that the presence of brand ambassadors used by Tokopedia influences customers to make online purchases or purchase decisions on the platform. This suggests that brand ambassadors on Tokopedia effectively communicate messages to customers through promotional activities, influencing their purchase decisions. These findings are supported by previous research. Lestari et al. (2021) concluded that brand ambassadors influence purchase decisions, while Sabella et al. (2022) and Clarissa & Bernarto (2022) similarly found that consumers are more inclined towards products endorsed by public figures or trendsetters. Fadila et al. (2021) also established a link between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions based on brand preference.

The influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions within Tokopedia's e-commerce platform is significant. To strategically enhance marketing effectiveness and consumer engagement, it's crucial to align the selection of brand ambassadors meticulously with Tokopedia's target demographic and brand ethos. This alignment ensures that ambassadors effectively communicate the brand's message and values, thereby enhancing credibility and positively influencing consumer behavior. Investing in robust brand ambassador programs emerges as a critical policy consideration. Allocating sufficient resources for ambassador endorsements and promotional activities is essential to amplify their visibility and credibility among Tokopedia's users. This investment increases brand awareness and reinforces trust and loyalty, as consumers perceive endorsed products as reliable and endorsed by figures they admire or trust.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of brand ambassador performance are not just important, they are imperative for Tokopedia. By tracking metrics such as engagement rates, conversion rates, and overall sales impact, Tokopedia can assess the effectiveness of its ambassador campaigns. This data-driven approach allows for informed decision-making regarding future ambassador engagements and ensures that these partnerships contribute meaningfully to Tokopedia's marketing objectives. Establishing clear guidelines and ethical standards for brand ambassador engagements is crucial to maintaining transparency and consumer trust. Tokopedia should enforce policies that prevent ambassadors from engaging in misleading or unethical promotional practices. Upholding integrity in ambassador activities safeguards Tokopedia's reputation and reinforces its commitment to ethical marketing practices.

In practical terms, brand ambassadors can play a pivotal role in enhancing Tokopedia's marketing strategies and customer engagement efforts. Integrating ambassadors into various marketing campaigns, including advertisements and social media initiatives, allows Tokopedia to capitalize on its persuasive power effectively. By featuring ambassadors prominently in promotional content, Tokopedia can amplify their impact on consumer decision-making processes, ultimately driving sales and fostering brand loyalty. Moreover, engaging brand ambassadors in interactive sessions, Question and Answer (Q&A) forums, or live streams enables direct interaction between ambassadors and consumers. This engagement strategy strengthens the bond between ambassadors and Tokopedia's audience and humanizes the brand by sharing authentic stories and experiences. This approach enhances consumer trust and affinity towards Tokopedia, encouraging repeat purchases and long-term customer loyalty.

Measuring the impact and return on investment (ROI) of brand ambassador initiatives is essential for Tokopedia's marketing effectiveness. Analyzing sales data, customer feedback and engagement metrics provides insights into the success of ambassador campaigns. By assessing the ROI of each ambassador partnership, Tokopedia can optimize its marketing strategies, allocate resources efficiently, and continuously improve its

approach to leveraging brand ambassadors. By implementing these policies and their practical implications, Tokopedia can effectively harness the influential power of brand ambassadors. Strategic ambassador selection, investment in comprehensive programs, enforcement of ethical guidelines, and data-driven evaluation are pivotal to maximizing ambassador impact, enhancing consumer engagement, and driving purchase decisions within Tokopedia's e-commerce ecosystem.

5.2 Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decisions in Tokopedia E-commerce

The hypothesis testing results indicate that brand image positively influences purchase decisions. Similarly, the brand image variable significantly affects purchase decisions on Tokopedia e-commerce. The positive brand image associated with Tokopedia influences customers to make purchase decisions, reflecting well on the platform and fostering repeat purchases. This aligns with findings from Clarissa & Bernarto (2022), Adirinekso et al. (2021), Sabella et al. (2022), Junianti et al. (2023), and Maharani et al. (2023), which collectively suggest that brand image influences consumer choices and purchase decisions significantly. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating and maintaining a solid brand image for Tokopedia. A positive brand image enhances customer perception and plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer purchasing behavior. By consistently portraying a favorable brand image, Tokopedia can effectively differentiate itself in the competitive e-commerce landscape, attracting more customers and fostering repeat purchases.

Strategic management of Tokopedia's brand image is recognised as a critical policy consideration, with the role of brand ambassadors playing a pivotal part in this process. It is essential for Tokopedia to invest in initiatives that bolster its brand reputation and credibility. This includes ensuring consistent messaging across all customer touchpoints, from website design and user interface to marketing communications and customer service interactions. By aligning these efforts with the positive brand image associated with Tokopedia, the platform can enhance consumer trust and loyalty, ultimately driving higher conversion rates and customer retention. Furthermore, the practical implications of these findings suggest actionable strategies for Tokopedia to capitalize on its positive brand image. Integrating brand image enhancement strategies into marketing campaigns can amplify its impact on consumer purchase decisions. By showcasing testimonials, user reviews, and endorsements that highlight Tokopedia's reliability and customer satisfaction, the platform can reinforce its positive brand image effectively. Leveraging social proof and influencer partnerships aligned with Tokopedia's brand values can further enhance brand perception and influence consumer choices positively.

Moreover, fostering engagement through interactive content and community-building initiatives can deepen consumer connection with Tokopedia's brand image. Hosting live events, virtual workshops, or online forums where customers can interact with Tokopedia representatives and share experiences can humanize the brand and strengthen its appeal. These engagement strategies not only enhance brand loyalty but also encourage advocacy among satisfied customers, amplifying the positive brand image through word-of-mouth and social sharing. The findings regarding brand image's significant influence on purchase decisions in Tokopedia e-commerce underscore the importance of strategic brand management and customer engagement. By prioritizing initiatives that enhance its brand image, Tokopedia can solidify its position as a trusted and preferred e-commerce platform. Implementing these policies and practical implications effectively can attract more customers and foster long-term loyalty and advocacy, driving sustainable growth and competitive advantage in the dynamic digital marketplace.

5.3 Influence of Purchase Decisions on Customer Loyalty in Tokopedia E-commerce

The hypothesis testing indicates that purchase decisions positively influence customer loyalty. The purchase decision variable also significantly affects customer loyalty on Tokopedia e-commerce. Customers who make frequent purchases (more than three times) on Tokopedia tend to exhibit loyalty towards the platform, indicating a strong link between purchase behavior and customer loyalty. This is consistent with research by Purbasari & Arimbawa (2019), Pinota (2023), Sitepu et al. (2023), Sugito et al. (2022), and Amiroh & Winarno (2023), which highlights that purchase decisions significantly influence customer loyalty. The findings regarding the influence of purchase decisions on customer loyalty in Tokopedia e-commerce hold significant policy and practical implications for the platform and its stakeholders. Firstly, acknowledging that purchase decisions positively impact customer loyalty suggests that Tokopedia should prioritize enhancing the user experience during the purchasing process. This could involve streamlining navigation, improving payment options, and optimizing the interface to facilitate smoother transactions. By doing so, Tokopedia can encourage repeat purchases and foster a sense of reliability and convenience among its users.

Moreover, the significant influence of purchase behavior on customer loyalty underscores the importance of personalized marketing strategies. Tokopedia could leverage customer data to tailor promotional offers, recommend relevant products, and provide customized communication based on past purchase history. Implementing such strategies can deepen customer engagement and strengthen the bond between users and the platform, potentially increasing customer retention rates. From a practical standpoint, these insights suggest that

Tokopedia should invest in data analytics capabilities to monitor and analyze customer behavior patterns continuously. The platform can dynamically adapt its marketing and operational strategies by understanding what drives purchase decisions and subsequently influences loyalty. This adaptive approach enhances customer satisfaction and positions Tokopedia competitively within the e-commerce landscape by anticipating and meeting consumer expectations effectively.

The research highlighting the nexus between purchase decisions and customer loyalty in Tokopedia e-commerce is a foundational basis for strategic decision-making. By aligning policies and practices with these insights, Tokopedia can foster a loyal customer base, sustain growth, and maintain a competitive edge in the increasingly dynamic digital marketplace.

5.4 Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Customer Loyalty in Tokopedia E-commerce

The hypothesis testing reveals that brand ambassadors positively influence customer loyalty. Similarly, the brand ambassador variable significantly affects customer loyalty on Tokopedia e-commerce. Brand ambassadors endorsed by Tokopedia contribute to customer retention and loyalty through effective promotional strategies. This finding is supported by Sutomo et al. (2022), Chukwu & Pius (2023), Amiroh & Winarno (2023), Nadila & Windasari (2022), and Rahmawati et al. (2022), all of whom conclude that brand ambassadors enhance customer loyalty. Research revealing a positive correlation between brand ambassadors and customer loyalty suggests that Tokopedia should strategically invest in ambassador programs to bolster customer retention. By selecting ambassadors who resonate with the platform's target audience and embody its values, Tokopedia can leverage its influence to enhance brand perception and foster consumer trust.

Practically, this underscores the need for Tokopedia to cultivate strong relationships with brand ambassadors and empower them with the necessary tools and resources. By providing them with the right resources, it can be ensured that they are equipped to effectively promote the platform. Collaborating closely with ambassadors to create authentic and engaging content can amplify Tokopedia's brand messaging and strengthen connections with potential and existing customers. Additionally, monitoring the impact of ambassador campaigns through analytics enables Tokopedia to refine strategies and optimize resource allocation for maximum ROI.

From a policy perspective, integrating ambassador initiatives into Tokopedia's marketing strategy is not just a strategic move, but also a natural progression that aligns with the platform's goal of building sustainable customer loyalty. Establishing clear guidelines and standards for ambassador partnerships ensures consistency in messaging and ethical practices, safeguarding Tokopedia's reputation while maximizing the ambassadors' potential to influence consumer behavior positively. The research on brand ambassadors' influence on customer loyalty in Tokopedia e-commerce highlights opportunities for strategic enhancement. By leveraging these insights to cultivate effective ambassador programs and aligning policies accordingly, Tokopedia can strengthen its market position, enhance customer engagement, and develop a loyal customer base that drives sustained growth in the competitive e-commerce landscape.

5.5 Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty in Tokopedia E-commerce

While brand image positively influences customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions, the significance level indicates that Tokopedia's brand image does not significantly affect customer loyalty. This discrepancy may be attributed to Tokopedia's brand perception, which appears more masculine and is favored by male users, whereas this study predominantly involves female respondents. This observation aligns with Tumewu et al. (2017), Gultom et al. (2021), Fitrajaya & Nurmahdi (2019), and Ningrum et al. (2022), all of whom found that brand image does not significantly influence customer loyalty. Despite findings that brand image may not significantly impact customer loyalty directly, the mediated influence through purchase decisions underscores Tokopedia's importance in enhancing its brand perception. A brand image perceived as more masculine, favoring male users, suggests a potential disconnect with female consumers, a significant demographic in e-commerce.

Tokopedia can address this by conducting targeted market research to better understand the preferences and perceptions of different customer segments, including female users. Tailoring marketing strategies and communication efforts to resonate with diverse audiences can help bridge this gap and strengthen brand appeal across all demographics. This approach improves customer satisfaction and cultivates a more inclusive brand image that enhances loyalty among a broader customer base. From a policy standpoint, these insights advocate for Tokopedia to adopt a more holistic approach to brand management. This includes refining brand messaging, visual identity, and customer engagement strategies to ensure consistency and alignment with the preferences and values of its diverse customer segments. Implementing robust brand monitoring and feedback mechanisms can further empower Tokopedia to adapt and evolve its brand image in response to market dynamics and changing consumer perceptions.

5.6 Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Purchase Decisions in Tokopedia E-commerce

The hypothesis testing shows that brand ambassadors positively influence customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions. The brand ambassador variable significantly affects customer loyalty through purchase decisions on Tokopedia e-commerce. This indicates that brand ambassadors contribute to customer loyalty by influencing purchase decisions and fostering repeat transactions. This finding is consistent with research by Amiroh & Winarno (2023) and Sari & Hasyim (2022), all of whom emphasized the role of brand ambassadors in enhancing customer loyalty. The influence of brand ambassadors on customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions in Tokopedia's e-commerce platform presents clear policy and practical implications for enhancing consumer engagement and retention strategies. The research confirming a positive correlation between brand ambassadors and customer loyalty through purchase decisions underscores the strategic importance of Tokopedia leveraging ambassador programs. By selecting ambassadors who resonate authentically with Tokopedia's target audience and embody its brand values, the platform can enhance trust and credibility among consumers, thereby influencing their purchase behaviors positively.

Practically, Tokopedia should prioritize nurturing strong relationships with brand ambassadors and equipping them with the necessary resources and support to effectively communicate the platform's offerings. Collaborative efforts to create engaging content and personalized promotional campaigns can amplify the ambassadors' influence in driving repeat transactions and fostering customer loyalty. The use of data analytics to track the impact of these ambassador-led initiatives on purchase decisions is crucial, as it allows Tokopedia to optimize marketing strategies and allocate resources efficiently. From a policy perspective, integrating ambassador programs into Tokopedia's marketing framework necessitates establishing clear guidelines and performance metrics. This is essential to ensure that the ambassador programs are in line with business objectives and brand integrity. Providing ongoing training and monitoring ambassador activities helps maintain consistency in messaging and ethical standards, safeguarding Tokopedia's reputation while maximizing the ambassadors' potential to positively influence customer perceptions and behaviors.

The research underscores the strategic importance of brand ambassadors in shaping customer loyalty through purchase decisions in Tokopedia e-commerce. By implementing targeted policies and practical initiatives that enhance ambassador effectiveness and align with consumer preferences, Tokopedia can strengthen its competitive edge, foster sustained customer engagement, and cultivate a loyal customer base in the dynamic digital marketplace.

5.7 Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decisions in Tokopedia E-commerce

The hypothesis testing demonstrates that brand image has a positive influence on customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions. Similarly, the brand image variable significantly affects customer loyalty through purchase decisions on Tokopedia e-commerce. A positive brand image encourages repeat purchases and enhances customer loyalty. These results are consistent with studies by Mardiana & Nuryakin (2022) and Kuncoro & Windyasari (2021), highlighting the impact of brand image on purchase decisions and subsequent customer loyalty. The research affirming a positive correlation between brand image and customer loyalty through purchase decisions underscores the strategic imperative for Tokopedia to manage and cultivate its brand perception actively. A strong and positive brand image influences initial purchase decisions and encourages repeat transactions by fostering trust and affinity among consumers.

From a practical standpoint, Tokopedia can enhance its brand image by focusing on three key areas: consistent messaging, visual identity, and customer experience. This involves refining product presentation, ensuring user-friendly navigation, and maintaining transparent communication to align with the desired brand image. By consistently delivering on brand promises and surpassing customer expectations, Tokopedia can reinforce positive perceptions, increase customer satisfaction, and drive repeat purchases, thereby fostering long-term loyalty. From a policy perspective, Tokopedia stands to gain significantly by implementing strategies that systematically monitor and enhance brand perception across various touchpoints. This could involve conducting regular consumer surveys, leveraging feedback mechanisms, and utilizing data analytics to measure the effectiveness of brand image initiatives. By proactively addressing consumer insights and market trends, Tokopedia can adapt its brand strategies dynamically, maintaining relevance and competitiveness in the ever-evolving e-commerce landscape.

The research underscores the pivotal role of brand image in influencing purchase decisions and fostering customer loyalty in Tokopedia e-commerce. By aligning policies and implementing practical initiatives that strengthen brand perception and resonate with consumer preferences, Tokopedia can enhance its market position, cultivate enduring customer relationships, and drive sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive digital marketplace.

6. Conclusions

The study examines the influence of brand ambassadors and brand image on customer loyalty mediated by purchase decisions within Tokopedia's e-commerce platform. The findings provide significant insights into how these factors shape consumer behavior and affect Tokopedia's market positioning. The research confirms that brand ambassadors influence Tokopedia's purchase decisions. The presence of well-aligned brand ambassadors positively impacts consumer perceptions and encourages purchase behaviors. This underscores the strategic importance of selecting ambassadors who resonate with Tokopedia's target audience, enhancing credibility and driving consumer engagement. Similarly, the study highlights that a positive brand image significantly influences Tokopedia's purchase decisions. A favorable brand image fosters consumer trust and loyalty, affecting their decision-making process and encouraging repeat purchases. This underscores the importance of consistent brand messaging and strategic brand management to maintain a competitive edge in the e-commerce market. The findings indicate a strong link between purchase decisions and customer loyalty on Tokopedia. Customers who frequently make purchases on the platform demonstrate higher levels of loyalty, emphasizing the critical role of seamless transaction experiences and personalized marketing strategies in fostering long-term customer relationships.

The study reveals that brand ambassadors positively influence customer loyalty through endorsement activities. Effective ambassador programs enhance consumer trust and affinity towards Tokopedia, driving repeat transactions and reinforcing brand loyalty. This highlights the strategic value of investing in ambassador partnerships aligned with Tokopedia's brand ethos. While brand image's direct influence on customer loyalty was insignificant, its mediated impact through purchase decisions underscores its role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. Tokopedia can enhance its brand image by aligning with diverse consumer preferences and implementing tailored marketing strategies that resonate with its target demographics. Despite robust findings, this study acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, the research predominantly focuses on Tokopedia's customer base, potentially limiting generalizability across broader e-commerce contexts. Secondly, the study's reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, necessitating cautious interpretation of findings. Future research could address these limitations through more extensive sampling and diversified methodological approaches.

To advance understanding in this field, future research should explore additional variables that may influence customer loyalty in e-commerce platforms. For instance, investigating the impact of emerging technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) or artificial intelligence (AI), on consumer behavior could provide valuable insights into enhancing digital marketing strategies. Additionally, these findings could inform the development of customer service strategies on e-commerce platforms. Specifically, the research could examine how personalized AI-driven customer service can mitigate negative experiences and turn potentially dissatisfied customers into loyal ones. Moreover, it would be a valuable addition to exploring the role of negative experiences, such as delayed deliveries or poor customer support, and their impact on loyalty. Understanding how e-commerce platforms can effectively manage and recover from such situations could provide critical insights into maintaining and strengthening customer loyalty. Comparative studies across different demographic segments and geographic regions would further enrich scholarly discourse and inform tailored marketing approaches, ensuring strategies are adaptable to diverse consumer needs and expectations.

The study offers actionable insights for Tokopedia to strengthen its market position and foster sustainable growth. These strategies are not just theoretical concepts but practical steps that can be implemented in the real world. Below are the strategies along with their potential real-world implementation:

First, strategic brand management. Brand ambassador and brand image strategies can be aligned with consumer preferences and market trends. For instance, Tokopedia could collaborate with micro-influencers who resonate with niche consumer segments. A case example could be partnering with a local fitness influencer to promote health and wellness products, thus targeting a growing trend among urban millennials. This collaboration would involve creating content that highlights the brand's values while offering exclusive promotions through the influencer's channels, thereby strengthening brand loyalty among health-conscious consumers.

Second, enhanced consumer engagement. Personalized marketing initiatives can be implemented and the user experience optimized to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. For example, Tokopedia can leverage data analytics to create customized shopping experiences by recommending products based on past purchases and browsing history. Additionally, the company could introduce a loyalty program that rewards repeat customers with points that can be redeemed for discounts or special offers. A strategic plan could include segmenting customers based on purchase behavior and targeting each segment with tailored email campaigns that provide value-added content, such as tips, tutorials, or product bundles that meet their needs.

Third, ethical considerations. Guidelines for ambassador engagements and brand communications can be established to uphold integrity and trust. Tokopedia should develop a comprehensive ethical framework for selecting and managing brand ambassadors, ensuring that all partnerships reflect the company's values and commitments to social responsibility. A real-world example could involve setting clear expectations for

ambassadors regarding transparency in advertising, including the disclosure of paid promotions and aligning their messaging with Tokopedia's sustainability goals. This could be reinforced by conducting regular reviews and audits of ambassador content to ensure compliance with these guidelines, thereby maintaining consumer trust and avoiding potential reputational risks.

By elaborating on these strategies and providing concrete examples, this study aims to enhance the practical utility of the findings, offering Tokopedia and other e-commerce platforms a clear pathway to implement these recommendations in their marketing efforts. The study offers actionable insights for Tokopedia to strengthen its market position and foster sustainable growth, i.e., strategic brand management, enhanced consumer engagement, and ethical considerations. By integrating these recommendations into its operational framework, Tokopedia can optimize consumer engagement, reinforce brand loyalty, and achieve sustained competitive advantage in the dynamic e-commerce landscape.

Ethical Approval

This study adheres to strict ethical guidelines, ensuring the rights and privacy of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and personal information was protected throughout the study. The methodology and procedures of this research have been approved by the appropriate ethics committee. Participants were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time. All collected data is used solely for the purpose of this research and is stored and processed in a secure and confidential manner.

Data Availability

The data used to support the research findings are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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