Brand Power: Analyzing the Synergy of Brand Image, Brand Ambassador, and Trust in E-Commerce

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to analyze the influence of brand image, brand ambassador, and trust on online shopping decisions. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method involving respondents who have shopped online in Indonesia. Data were collected through a questionnaire with a Likert scale and analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique. The results of the study indicate that brand image, brand ambassador, and trust have a positive and significant effect on online shopping decisions. In addition, brand image and brand ambassadors also have a positive and significant effect on trust. These findings indicate the importance of companies to strengthen brand image and choose the right brand ambassador to build consumer trust, so that it can encourage online purchasing decisions. This study contributes to a better understanding of consumer behavior in the context of e-commerce and strategic implications for digital marketing management.

Keywords: Brand Image; Brand Ambassador; Trust; Online Shopping

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology and the internet has brought significant changes in the way consumers shop. As the internet becomes more integrated into everyday life, online purchasing decisions have experienced rapid growth and become an important topic in marketing research. This evolution is driven by various factors, both from the consumer and service provider side, which together create an increasingly mature and complex digital shopping ecosystem. Millennials and Gen Z, who grew up with technology, have different preferences compared to previous generations. They are more likely to research products online, look for reviews, and buy goods digitally. This change is also driven by the increasing awareness of sustainability and ethics in business, with many consumers preferring brands that are transparent in their production practices and offer environmentally friendly products. Advances in shipping and logistics technology have also made it easier for consumers to buy products from different countries. The globalization of e-commerce has opened up opportunities for consumers to access international products that were previously difficult to reach. This gives consumers more choice in their purchasing decision process, but also increases competition among providers of goods and services in the global market. Over the past two decades, e-commerce has grown into a major global industry, driven by easy internet access, increasing mobile device penetration, and changing consumer preferences. According to databoks.katadata.co.id, throughout 2023 the most visited e-commerce was Shopee (2.35 billion), Tokopedia (1.25 billion), Lazada (762.4 million), Blibli (337.4 million) and Bukalapak (168.2 million).

The development of online purchasing decisions is influenced by various factors, including the growth of e-commerce, technological innovation, changes in consumer behavior, and the influence of social media. The combination of these factors creates a dynamic and ever-evolving online shopping ecosystem. To remain competitive, businesses must be able to adapt to these trends and changes, and understand the changing preferences of consumers in the digital era. Scholars in a variety of study domains, such as information systems, consumer behavior, and decision making, have been inspired by the recent rapid adoption of e-commerce apps to look at consumers' intentions and attitudes about e-commerce applications, including online purchasing.

There are several empirical studies related to online shopping decisions. Wijaya (2023) examined the influence of brand image and trust on Tiktok shop. The results found that both variables had a positive and significant effect. Furthermore, Dharmawan et al (2024) found that trust, online customer reviews, celebrity endorsers, and price discounts had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions on Lazada. Rahayu et al (2023) found that trust, online servqual and ease of use had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions on Shopee, but brand image had a negative and insignificant effect. This study modifies variables from

several previous studies and tests the effect of brand image, brand ambassadors, and trust on online shopping on four platforms, namely Shopee, Lazada, Tokopedia, and Bukalapak.

Brand image can greatly influence online shopping on a platform because in the digital world, consumer perception of a brand plays a significant role in purchasing decisions. In a digital era full of choices, brand image helps differentiate one product or brand from another. The brand image of an e-commerce platform can be formed from the promotional programs and discounts offered. Platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, or Bukalapak are often known for offering massive discounts and regular promotions that make them attractive shopping destinations. The image of a platform that often provides financial benefits to consumers greatly influences their decision to choose the platform. The brand image of an e-commerce platform is also greatly influenced by the ease and flexibility of payment. Platforms that provide various payment options such as e-wallets, credit cards, cash on delivery (COD), or installments without a credit card can create an image as a platform that is responsive to consumer needs.

The second variable in this study is brand ambassadors. When consumers see brand ambassadors they trust or admire using a particular product, it can speed up the decision-making process. Consumers may feel that the product has been verified or recommended by figures they respect, so they don't need to do too much additional research before purchasing. In the world of e-commerce, where consumers cannot interact directly with products, the presence of brand ambassadors is an effective tool to influence consumer perception. Brand ambassadors help increase brand exposure to a wider audience, often on social media or digital platforms. With brand ambassadors who have millions of followers, brands can reach new consumers who may not have previously known about their products or services.

Trust and security factors are important aspects in online purchasing decisions. In the early days of e-commerce, many consumers were reluctant to shop online due to concerns about the security of their personal data and the risk of fraud. However, with the development of encryption technology and increased regulations related to consumer data protection, the level of public trust in online shopping platforms has increased. Large e-commerce providers have invested in sophisticated security systems and offer consumer-friendly return policies. Social media also has a major impact on the online purchasing decision process. Consumers are often influenced by product reviews, influencer content, and promotional campaigns spread through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The use of social media as a marketing tool provides consumers with direct access to see other people's experiences, which ultimately influences their purchasing decisions. This phenomenon is known as social proof, where recommendations from others, especially from trusted figures, strengthen the decision to buy a product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Shopping

Today's consumers increasingly prioritize convenience and efficiency in shopping. Online shopping offers the convenience of comparing prices, reading product reviews, and making purchases from anywhere and at any time. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world in 2020 has further accelerated the adoption of online shopping, as consumers were forced to limit physical interactions and rely more on digital platforms. This has accelerated changes in consumer behavior in making purchasing decisions. Technological advances have also played a major role in the development of online purchasing decisions. Innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI)-based recommendation systems, big data analytics, and content personalization provide a shopping experience that is more in line with individual preferences. In addition, mobile commerce (m-commerce) technology has made online shopping more accessible via mobile devices. The use of e-wallets and digital wallets also increases transaction convenience, reducing friction in the purchasing process.This study will test several factors, namely brand image, brand ambassador, perceived risk and also trust as factors found to influence online purchase decisions in previous studies.

Brand Image

Brand image is an asset that shapes customer beliefs about a brand (Mirzai, Fard, & Slambolchi, 2016). The accounting dimensions of brand image, such as brand meaning, attributes, and associations, build customer perceptions and influence their beliefs about the value of a brand (Chuenban, Sornsaruht, & Pimdee, 2021). Popular brands have a strong presence in the market, and their reputation plays an important role in customers' minds (Wu, Liao, Chen, & Hsu, 2011; Rather, Rasul, Khan, & Khan, 2024). The benefits of brand image relate to five main aspects: experience, symbolism, functionality, social change, and appearance (Wang, F., Wang, Han,

& Cho, 2024). Based on Tahir, Adnan, & Saeed (2024) research, it appears that consumers are drawn to brands that they associate positively. Research from Wijaya (2023), Nugroho et al (2024), and Rahayu (2023) found that brand image has a positive and significant effect on online shopping. Therefore, this study hypothesizes as follows:

H1: Brand image has a positive and significant influence on online shopping.

One of the main reasons consumers choose a particular e-commerce platform is because they feel safe and trust the platform. For example, platforms with a strong brand image are often associated with data security, secure transactions, and consumer protection. If consumers believe that the platform can protect their personal information and financial transactions, they are more likely to make purchases there. If an e-commerce platform often collaborates with big brands and holds exclusive events to launch new products, its image as a trusted platform for premium products and official collaborations helps increase consumer trust. Research from Chandra (2023) found that brand image has a positive and significant effect on trust, while research by Diyanti & Edastama (2022) found that brand image did not have a significant effect on trust. In this study, the relationship between brand image and trust is hypothesized as follows:

H2: Brand image has a positive and significant influence on trust

Brand Ambassador

Social media has become a significant platform in influencing online purchasing decisions. The use of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok allows consumers to be exposed to influencer content or product recommendations that provide a social proof effect. A brand ambassador is an individual or group of people chosen by a company to represent and promote their brand in a positive way. In the modern marketing era, the use of brand ambassadors has become an important strategy to increase brand awareness, build relationships with consumers, and strengthen brand image and reputation. Brand ambassadors act as a liaison between brands and consumers, creating a more personal and emotional influence in the marketing process. Brand ambassadors are often considered to be part of the same social group as the target audience, so the messages they convey are more credible than traditional advertising.Content produced by brand ambassadors on social media, such as testimonials, reviews, or lifestyle posts, is often more convincing than traditional advertising because it is considered more authentic. Consumers are more likely to be influenced by brand ambassadors who are active on social media because they engage in two-way dialogue, which allows for deeper and more responsive interactions with the audience. These interactions create a greater sense of community and loyalty to the brand. Empirical research from Clarissa & Bernarto (2022) and Nurhasanah et al (2021) found that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on online shopping. Therefore, the hypothesis in this study is:

H3: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on online shopping

Brand ambassadors, especially those who are well-known or respected among the target audience, can give consumers confidence in a brand or product. Consumers tend to have more trust in products or brands that are endorsed by people they know or admire. In online shopping, where the risk of product disappointment is higher because consumers cannot try or see the product directly, endorsements from brand ambassadors help reduce skepticism. Brand ambassadors are important in influencing online purchasing decisions because they can build trust, credibility, and emotional connections with consumers. Through personal testimonials, social media engagement, and the creation of relevant brand images, brand ambassadors help strengthen consumer confidence in the products they promote, encourage purchases, and create long-term loyalty to the brand. The results of Yuwansa et al (2023) found that brand ambassadors have a positive but insignificant effect on trust. However, Diyanti & Edastama (2022) found that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on trust. Therefore, the hypothesis in this study is

H4: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on trust

Trust

Trust is a crucial element in online shopping decisions, given the intrinsic nature of e-commerce shopping that requires consumers to make decisions without direct physical experience of the product or service. Consumer trust in the security of an e-commerce platform influences whether or not they will make a transaction. Data security and privacy protection are important aspects discussed in various studies. Consumers feel more comfortable making transactions if the website provides a strong security system. In online shopping, consumers often face uncertainties regarding product quality, transaction security, and the reliability of service providers. High trust in a brand or platform can reduce this skepticism, encouraging consumers to feel more comfortable making purchases. Munadia, Usiai, Sentosa, & Nurlina's (2024) research tested trust as a mediating variable between security and sharia compliance. The results found that security, sharia compliance and trust affect online

purchase decisions. In addition, trust also mediates the influence of security and sharia compliance toward online purchase decisions. Diyanti & Edastama (2022) found that trust has a positive but insignificant effect, while Dharmawan et al (2024) and Wijaya et al (2023) found that trust has a positive and significant effect on online shopping. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis in this study is formulated as follows

H5: Trust has a positive and significant influence on online shopping.

Based on the background and theoretical basis that have been put forward, the proposed model in this research can be seen in Figure 1.
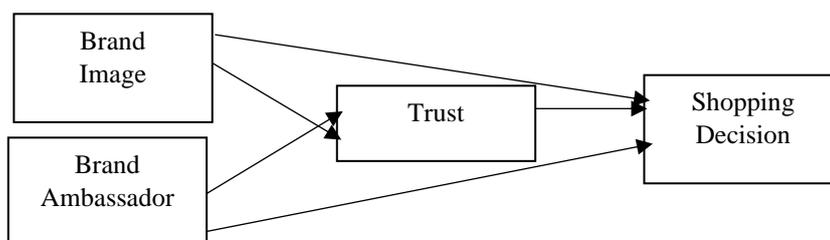

Figure 1. Proposed Model

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with the aim of analyzing the influence of brand image, brand ambassadors, and trust on online shopping decisions. This approach aims to test hypotheses through statistical data processing. Respondents in this study were consumers who had shopped online in Pekanbaru City. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, where respondents were selected based on certain criteria, such as having shopped online. The number of samples used was 96 respondents. Primary data was collected by distributing questionnaires filled out by respondents online. This questionnaire consists of several parts, including respondent identity, questions related to brand image, brand ambassadors, consumer trust, and online shopping decisions. Respondents provided answers based on a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree. Data analysis was carried out using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique with SmartPLS4 software. PLS was chosen because it can handle structural models with small to medium sample sizes and latent variables that are not normally distributed. The hypothesis in this study was tested using the bootstrapping method in PLS to see the significance of the path between the independent and dependent variables. Hypothesis testing is done by looking at the t-statistic and p-value for each path.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze how factors such as brand, brand ambassador, and trust influence online purchasing decisions. Based on the data analysis, several key findings were found as follows:

Respondent identity

The identity of respondents in this study can be seen in Table 1. The majority of respondents were female, aged between 20-29 years, earning less than 3 million, and shopping at Shopee and Lazada.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Profile of the Sample

Profile	Category	Amount	%
Gender	Male	40	42
	Female	56	58
Age groups	≤ 20	22	23
	20-29	53	55
	≥ 30	21	22
Income	≤ 3 million	73	76
	3-5 million	10	10
	>5 million	13	14
Market place	Bukalapak	10	10
	Lazada	33	34
	Shopee	33	34

Profile	Category	Amount	%
	Tokopedia	20	22

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Outer Loading

Outer loading is a value that indicates the strength of the relationship between the observed variables and the latent variables. This value helps determine the extent to which the indicators are able to represent the latent variables being measured. Outer loading is an important indicator for assessing the strength of the relationship between indicator variables and latent variables in PLS, as well as ensuring the validity and reliability of the research model. According to Hair et al (2019), an outer loading value of more than 0.7 indicates that all items are valid. The results of the outer loading test can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Outer Loading

	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Trust	Online Shopping
BA1	0.887			
BA2	0.873			
BA3	0.909			
BA4	0.850			
BI1		0.726		
BI2		0.832		
BI3		0.855		
BI4		0.771		
BI5		0.867		
OD1				0.834
OD2				0.893
OD3				0.849
OD4				0.855
TR1			0.866	
TR2			0.898	
TR3			0.847	

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct Reliability and Validity are two important aspects in model evaluation that help ensure that the instrument used in the study is able to measure what it is supposed to measure. Composite reliability measures the internal consistency of the indicators that form the latent construct. The CR value must be higher than 0.70 to indicate that the construct has good reliability. Cronbach's alpha is a traditional measure for measuring the internal consistency of a construct. It provides a value similar to composite reliability but not exactly the same. Higher values indicate better consistency. AVE measures how much variance in the indicators can be explained by the latent construct. AVE must be greater than 0.50 to indicate good convergent validity. According to Ghozali & Latan (2015) a good Cronbach Alpha is above 0.7, composite reliability (rho_c)> 0.7, while AVE 0.5. The data in Table 3 shows that it has been fulfilled.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Ambassador	0.903	0.905	0.932	0.774
Brand Image	0.869	0.871	0.906	0.659
Trust	0.841	0.842	0.904	0.758
Online Shopping	0.881	0.887	0.918	0.736

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Discriminant Validity Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

HTMT is the ratio between the average covariance between indicators of different constructs (heterotrait) and the average covariance between indicators within the same construct (monotrait). HTMT is an effective method for measuring discriminant validity in PLS analysis. By using HTMT, researchers can assess how well

different constructs in a model can be distinguished from each other, which is important to ensure that the constructs are valid and reliable. HTMT values below 0.9 indicate good discriminant validity, while values above this threshold require further attention to improve the separation between constructs.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Online Shopping	Trust
Brand Ambassador				
Brand Image	0.462			
Online Shopping	0.630	0.672		
Trust	0.394	0.717	0.653	

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Fornell- Larcker

The Fornell-Larcker method helps to check whether a construct has a larger variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. This means that the construct should be more related to the indicators that measure itself compared to indicators of other constructs. Based on the data in Table 5, it can be seen that the diagonal axis is already greater than the correlation between variables and this assumption has been met.

Table 5. Fornell – Larcker

	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Online Shopping	Trust
Brand Ambassador	0.880			
Brand Image	0.414	0.812		
Online Shopping	0.566	0.589	0.858	
Trust	0.348	0.618	0.577	0.871

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Cross Loading

In the PLS output, cross loading is presented in the form of a table that shows the loading value of each indicator against all constructs in the model. Ideally, the loading of the indicator on the measured construct should be higher than the loading on other constructs. Based on the data in Table 6, it can be seen that the loading value on the measured construct is higher than on other constructs.

Table 6. Cross Loading

	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Online Shopping	Trust
BA1	**0.887**	0.340	0.449	0.259
BA2	**0.873**	0.428	0.512	0.350
BA3	**0.909**	0.388	0.512	0.258
BA4	**0.850**	0.297	0.509	0.346
BI1	0.364	**0.726**	0.439	0.570
BI2	0.414	**0.832**	0.498	0.538
BI3	0.359	**0.855**	0.479	0.470
BI4	0.234	**0.771**	0.452	0.426
BI5	0.292	**0.867**	0.518	0.488
OD1	0.454	0.490	**0.834**	0.288
OD2	0.513	0.488	**0.893**	0.565
OD3	0.463	0.500	**0.849**	0.578
OD4	0.508	0.544	**0.855**	0.510
TR1	0.240	0.585	0.514	**0.866**
TR2	0.283	0.508	0.443	**0.898**
TR3	0.384	0.516	0.542	**0.847**

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Collinearity Statistic - Inner Model

Collinearity Statistics in the Inner Model in PLS analysis is used to detect multicollinearity problems between independent variables in a structural model. Multicollinearity occurs when independent variables are

highly correlated with each other, which can cause problems in estimating path coefficients and reduce model accuracy. Based on the data in Table 7, it can be seen that there is no value that exceeds 5 so it is concluded that there is no multicollinearity.

Table 7. Collinearity Statistic - Inner Model

	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Online Shopping	Trust
Brand Ambassador			1.227	1.207
Brand Image			1.745	1.207
Online Shopping				
Trust			1.646	

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Hypothesis Testing

P Values <0.05 indicate a significant influence so that it can be concluded that only brand ambassadors do not have a significant influence on trust. Likewise, if seen from the t value where the influence of brand ambassadors on trust is also small from 1.96. The original sample with a positive value means that the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable is positive.

Table 8. Collinearity Statistic - Inner Model

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Brand Ambassador -> Online Shopping	0.356	0.356	0.089	4.021	0.000
Brand Ambassador -> Trust	0.112	0.115	0.095	1.180	0.238
Brand Image -> Online Shopping	0.262	0.265	0.098	2.668	0.008
Brand Image -> Trust	0.572	0.576	0.071	8.034	0.000
Trust -> Online Shopping	0.291	0.291	0.094	3.099	0.002

Source: Processed Data, 2024

The results of the study show that brand image has a positive and significant influence on online purchasing decisions. This result is in line with research from Nugroho et al (2024), Rahayu et al (2023), and Wijaya (2023). Consumers tend to be more confident in making purchases when they have a positive perception of the brand image. The second hypothesis in this study is that brand image has a positive and significant influence on trust is supported. Brands that have a good image in the eyes of consumers can create a sense of trust and comfort, thus encouraging consumers to make purchases. This result support previous study by Rahayu et al (2023). A positive brand image can create good associations in the minds of consumers, thereby increasing trust. If consumers have a good perception of product quality and brand reputation, they are more likely to trust the brand. Brands that are consistent in their message and values are more likely to build trust. Consistency in product quality, service, and customer experience helps reinforce a positive brand image. A good brand image is often supported by positive reviews from other consumers. Good reviews and recommendations from previous consumers can increase other people's trust in the brand.

The brand ambassador factor also has a significant impact on online purchasing decisions. The presence of a credible and relevant brand ambassador to the target audience has been shown to influence consumer perceptions of the brand, strengthen positive associations, and ultimately increase interest in purchasing products online. This result support research of Clarissa & Bernarto (2022), Nurhasanah (2021).

Consumers are more easily influenced by opinions or endorsements from figures they admire or trust. The presence of a well-known and respected brand ambassador can increase trust in a brand. When an influencer or celebrity promotes a product, their followers tend to trust the recommendation because they consider the figure to be a reliable source of information. However, brand ambassadors were found to have no significant influence on trust. This result contrary to study of Diyanti & Edastama (2022).

Trust also found have influential variable in driving online purchasing decisions. When consumers feel confident that the platform or seller is reliable, has good service, and respects their privacy and security, online purchasing decisions become easier to make. This result in line with research by Nurhasanah (2021) and Rahayu et al (2023).

f square

If the f square value is 0.02, it means low, 0.15 means moderate, and 0.35 means high. This means that the influence of brand ambassadors on online shopping is included in the moderate category and on trust is included in the low category. Furthermore, the influence of brand image on online shopping is included in the low category and on trust is included in the high category. Finally, the influence of trust on online shopping is included in the low category.

Table 9. f square

	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Online Shopping	Trust
Brand Ambassador			0.217	0.017
Brand Image			0.082	0.446
Online Shopping				
Trust			0.108	

Source: Processed Data, 2024

R Square

R Square (R²) is a measure used to assess the predictive power of a model, specifically how much the independent variables in the model can explain the variability of the dependent variable (endogenous latent variable). The R^2 value provides an overview of the proportion of variance explained by the independent variables to the dependent variable. R^2 describes what percentage of the variability of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The higher the R^2 value, the better the model is at explaining the variability of the dependent variable. If the R-square value is 0.75, it is included in the high category, 0.50 is moderate, and 0.25 is weak. This means that the magnitude of the influence of brand ambassadors, brand image, and trust on online shopping is in the moderate category, while the influence of brand ambassadors and brand image on trust is in the weak category.

Table 10. R square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Online Shopping	0.524	0.508
Trust	0.393	0.379

Source: Processed Data, 2024

Model Fit

Model Fit is used to evaluate how well the constructed model fits the empirical data collected. SRMR is the most commonly used measure in PLS to assess the global fit of a model. SRMR measures the average difference between the observed covariance and the covariance predicted by the model. If the SRMR value is still below 0.10, it is still acceptable. The data on shows a figure of 0.077 which means it is smaller than 0.10 so the conclusion is still acceptable.

Table 11. Model Fit

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.077	0.077
d_ULS	0.808	0.808
d_G	0.487	0.487
Chi-square	264.681	264.681
NFI	0.765	0.765

Source: Processed Data, 2024

CONCLUSION

Based on research on the influence of brand image, brand ambassadors, and trust on online shopping decisions, it can be concluded that these three variables have a significant impact on consumer decisions in making purchases on e-commerce platforms. Brand image plays an important role in creating a positive perception of the quality and reputation of a product or e-commerce platform. Consumers tend to make purchases if they feel the brand has a good image, is trustworthy, and is in line with their values. The presence of brand ambassadors,

especially those who have influence among the target audience, can increase brand appeal and encourage purchasing decisions. Brand ambassadors provide added value in building trust and creating emotional connections with consumers, especially in the competitive world of online shopping. Trust is a key factor in online shopping decisions. Consumers tend to choose platforms or brands that have a good reputation for transaction security, product quality, and customer service. This trust is not only built from direct experience, but also from reviews from other consumers and the support of trusted brand ambassadors. These three factors interact synergistically to shape online purchasing decisions. Brands that succeed in building a strong image, supported by the right brand ambassadors, and are able to maintain consumer trust will find it easier to attract consumers to shop.

The suggestion for the finding of the insignificant influence of brand ambassadors on trust is that e-commerce platforms and brands need to continue to increase trust by providing a safe and satisfying shopping experience. This can be achieved through transparency in product descriptions, clear return policies, consumer data protection, and a secure payment system. Trust can also be strengthened through responsive customer service and proactive solutions to consumer problems. Given that brand image, brand ambassadors, and trust are interrelated in influencing purchasing decisions, brands should integrate these three elements into a comprehensive marketing strategy. Marketing campaigns that prioritize trust, supported by a strong image, and strengthened by brand ambassadors, will be able to create long-term relationships with consumers and increase purchase conversion rates.

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