



Enhancing Purchase Decisions of Mie Sukses in Semarang through Brand Image and Brand Ambassador

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of brand image and brand ambassador on purchase decisions of Mie Sukses in Semarang. The research problem is based on the question of how brand image and brand ambassador, both directly and indirectly, affect consumer purchasing behavior. A quantitative research design was applied with a structured questionnaire distributed to 144 consumers of Mie Sukses who were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that respondents had purchased the product at least twice in the past three months. The collected data were analyzed using structural equation modeling to test the relationships between the studied variables. The results reveal that brand image has a strong positive effect on purchase decision, confirming its role as the most important factor in shaping consumer behavior. Meanwhile, brand ambassador shows a significant but negative effect on purchase decision, indicating a possible mismatch between the ambassador's credibility and consumer expectations. Furthermore, brand image significantly affects brand ambassador, while the indirect effect of brand image on purchase decision through brand ambassador is negative. These findings highlight the dominant role of brand image and the importance of aligning ambassador selection with target consumer perceptions.

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INTRODUCTION

The food and beverage industry in Indonesia has developed rapidly in recent years, with instant noodles becoming one of the most consumed products because of their affordability, convenience, and cultural familiarity. In urban areas such as Semarang, competition among instant noodle brands is becoming more intense, requiring businesses to adopt innovative marketing strategies. Two critical variables that significantly affect consumer purchase decisions are brand image and brand ambassador. A strong brand image creates trust, loyalty, and emotional connection with the consumer, while an effective brand ambassador can convey credibility and influence consumer perceptions in the competitive food industry (Firdaus & Budiman, 2021; Rahmawati & Santoso, 2021; Sari & Hidayat, 2023).

Mie Sukses, as a local instant noodle brand, faces challenges in positioning itself against established national and global competitors. Prior studies highlight the importance of marketing innovation, differentiation, and word of mouth strategies in shaping consumer behavior (Firdaus & Mulyanto, 2020; Firdaus, 2020). At the same time, social media marketing and brand awareness have been proven to enhance purchasing decisions when mediated by brand image, especially in the food and beverage sector (Putri, Nurhayati, & Firdaus, 2024). Similarly, the growing role of digital marketing and influencers has reshaped consumer decision-making, particularly among younger demographics (Prasetyo, 2022; Wibowo & Arifin, 2022). Moreover, effective brand communication has been shown to directly influence purchasing intentions and strengthen consumer engagement in the food industry (Susanto & Lestari, 2020).

However, despite the abundance of studies on branding and consumer behavior, empirical research specifically examining the integrated impact of brand image and brand ambassador on purchase decisions in the local instant noodle market of Semarang is still limited. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing how these two variables affect consumer decisions both directly and indirectly. The novelty of this research lies in combining the constructs of brand image and brand ambassador to strengthen the competitiveness of local brands in the instant noodle sector, which has not been widely explored in previous literature (Firdaus, 2025). The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to marketing science and practical implications for local businesses seeking to develop sustainable competitive strategies in the rapidly evolving food industry.

THEORITICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theory and Concept of Brand Image

Brand image refers to the overall perception of a brand as reflected in consumer memory, which develops through consistent experiences, communication, and positioning. A strong brand image enhances consumer trust, builds emotional connections, and differentiates a product from its competitors (Firdaus & Budiman, 2021). Recent studies show that brand image significantly influences consumer loyalty and purchase decisions, especially in highly competitive food and beverage industries (Putri, Nurhayati, & Firdaus, 2024; Sari & Hidayat, 2023). Moreover, brand image is often considered an antecedent variable that shapes consumer behavior and predicts purchase intention in various product categories (Susanto & Lestari, 2020).

Theory and Concept of Brand Ambassador

A brand ambassador is an individual, often a celebrity or influencer, who represents a brand and communicates its value to the target market. The credibility, attractiveness, and expertise of a brand ambassador strongly affect how consumers perceive and evaluate a

product (Rahmawati & Santoso, 2021). The use of brand ambassadors in digital platforms has grown in importance, especially among younger consumers who respond positively to endorsements from relatable figures (Wibowo & Arifin, 2022). Furthermore, studies reveal that brand ambassadors not only increase awareness but also strengthen consumer trust and brand image (Prasetyo, 2022; Sari & Hidayat, 2023).

Theory and Concept of Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is the stage of consumer behavior where individuals evaluate alternatives and decide to buy a product. It is influenced by both internal factors such as preferences and perceptions, as well as external factors including marketing strategies, brand communication, and endorsements (Firdaus, 2025). Prior research confirms that purchase decisions are highly determined by brand credibility, social media marketing, and emotional connections with the brand (Putri, Nurhayati, & Firdaus, 2024; Susanto & Lestari, 2020). In the context of food products, purchase decisions are also shaped by consumer trust toward the brand and the influence of endorsers who create a positive perception (Rahmawati & Santoso, 2021; Wibowo & Arifin, 2022).

The Impact of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

Previous studies show that brand image significantly influences consumer purchase decisions because it creates positive associations and reduces consumer risk perception (Firdaus & Budiman, 2021; Sari & Hidayat, 2023; Susanto & Lestari, 2020). A favorable brand image helps consumers justify their purchase choice and strengthens long-term loyalty (Putri, Nurhayati, & Firdaus, 2024).

H1: Brand Image has a positive impact on Purchase Decision.

The Impact of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision

Research indicates that brand ambassadors play a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes and intentions to buy. Credible ambassadors can transfer their attractiveness and trustworthiness to the product, resulting in stronger purchase intentions (Rahmawati & Santoso, 2021; Prasetyo, 2022; Wibowo & Arifin, 2022). Moreover, studies confirm that brand ambassadors influence consumer trust, particularly in industries with high competition such as food and beverages (Sari & Hidayat, 2023).

H2: Brand Ambassador has a positive impact on Purchase Decision.

The Impact of Brand Image on Brand Ambassador

A strong brand image can enhance the effectiveness of a brand ambassador by providing credibility and resonance with the audience. Studies show that when consumers already perceive a brand positively, the ambassador's endorsement becomes more persuasive (Putri, Nurhayati, & Firdaus, 2024; Firdaus & Mulyanto, 2020; Firdaus, 2020). Thus, brand image acts as an antecedent that strengthens the role of brand ambassadors in shaping consumer behavior.

H3: Brand Image has a positive impact on Brand Ambassador.

The Indirect Impact of Brand Image on Purchase Decision through Brand Ambassador

Several studies indicate that brand image influences purchase decisions not only directly but also indirectly through brand ambassador as a mediating variable. A favorable brand image enhances the credibility and effectiveness of ambassadors, which in turn increases consumer purchase intentions (Prasetyo, 2022; Sari & Hidayat, 2023; Wibowo & Arifin, 2022). This suggests that brand ambassador partially mediates the relationship between brand image and purchase decision.

H4: Brand Image has a positive indirect impact on Purchase Decision through Brand Ambassador.

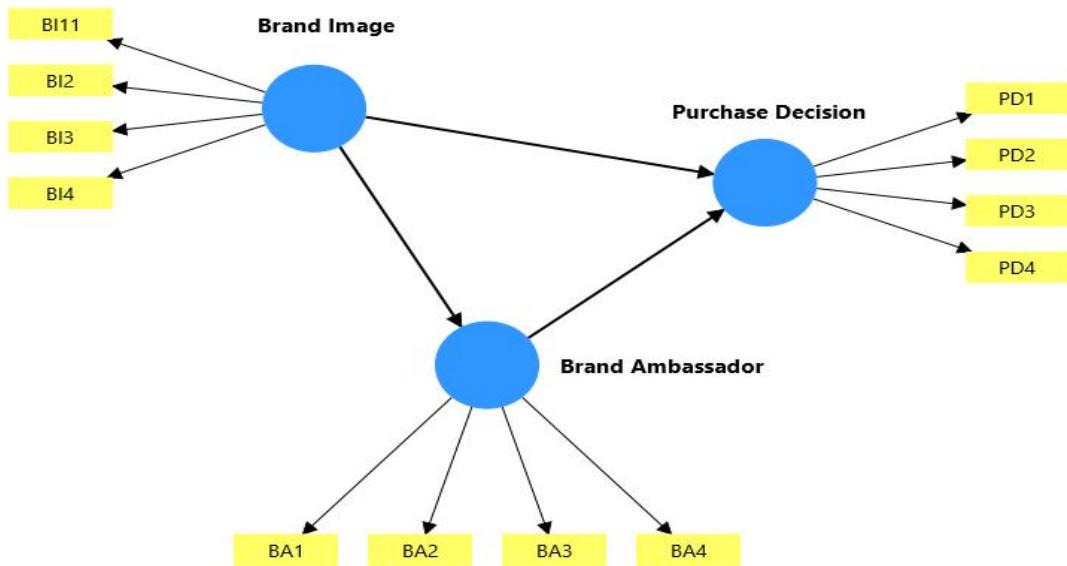


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach to analyze the effect of brand image and brand ambassador on purchase decisions of Mie Sukses in Semarang. A structured research design was applied to ensure objectivity, validity, and reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The chronology of the research can be explained as follows:

Research Design

The study used a causal-explanatory design, aiming to examine cause-and-effect relationships among variables. This design allows testing both direct and indirect influences of independent variables on the dependent variable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

Research Procedure

The procedure included problem identification, literature review, development of hypotheses, design of instruments, pilot testing, and distribution of the questionnaire. After validation and reliability checks, data were collected and processed for analysis.

Sampling Procedure

The population comprised consumers of Mie Sukses in Semarang. Purposive sampling was used with specific inclusion criteria: respondents must have purchased Mie Sukses at least twice in the last three months. This technique is appropriate to ensure that the sample represents actual consumers (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Taherdoost, 2021).

Measurement

Constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Indicators for brand image were adapted from Firdaus and Budiman (2021), brand ambassador from Rahmawati and Santoso (2021), and purchase decision from Susanto and Lestari (2020).

Data Collection

Data were collected from March to April 2025 using both online (Google Form) and offline (direct survey) questionnaires. A total of 144 valid responses were obtained and included in the analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS. This method is recommended for medium-sized samples and complex models with mediating variables (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021). Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, while validity was tested using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity. Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping with a 5% significance level.

Table 1
Demographic participants

| Age | Male | Female | |
|-------|------|--------|-----|
| 20–29 | 35 | 29 | 64 |
| 30–50 | 42 | 38 | 80 |
| Total | | | 144 |

Source: Processed primary data (2025), N = 144

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research model was tested using Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The evaluation covered measurement model (outer model) and structural model (inner model). The results are presented as follows.

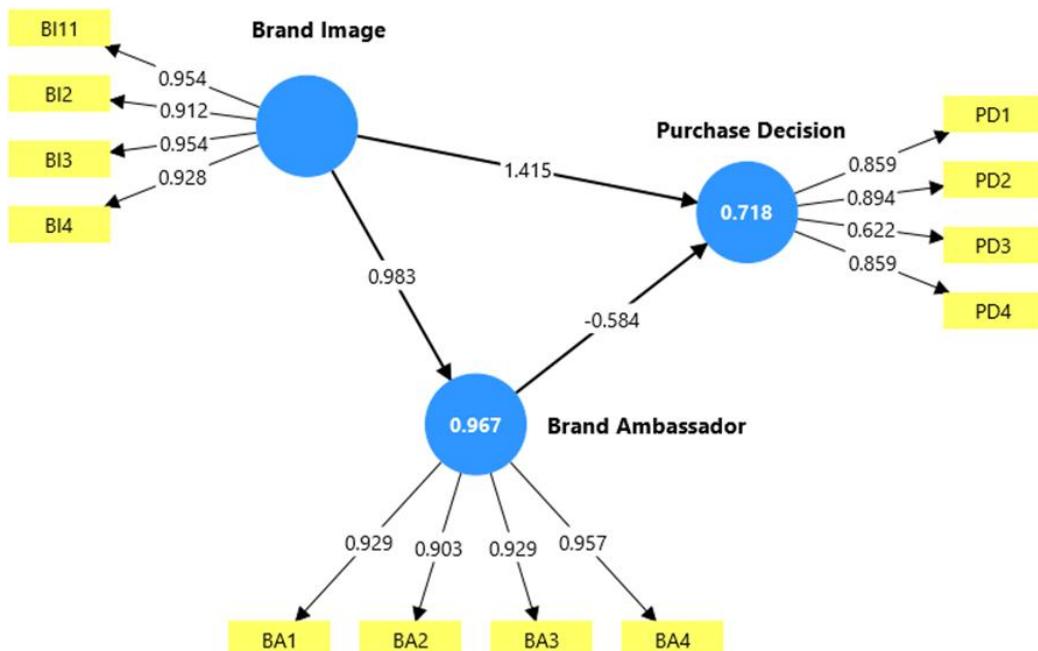


Figure 2. Final Result

Tabel 2.
Construc validity dan realibility

| | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability (rho_a) | Composite reliability (rho_c) | Average variance extracted (AVE) |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Brand Ambassador | 0,948 | 0,949 | 0,962 | 0,864 |
| Brand Image | 0,954 | 0,955 | 0,967 | 0,878 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Purchase Decision | 0,833 | 0,929 | 0,887 | 0,665 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

Construct Validity and Reliability

The evaluation of construct validity and reliability was conducted using four main criteria: Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (ρ_a and ρ_c), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results are summarized as follows:

Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs were above 0.70, which indicates good internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021). Brand Ambassador (0.948) and Brand Image (0.954) showed excellent reliability, while Purchase Decision (0.833) also met the minimum threshold. These results confirm that the items used to measure each construct are reliable.

Composite Reliability (ρ_a and ρ_c)

Both ρ_a and ρ_c exceeded the recommended value of 0.70 for all constructs. Specifically, Brand Ambassador ($\rho_a = 0.949$; $\rho_c = 0.962$) and Brand Image ($\rho_a = 0.955$; $\rho_c = 0.967$) demonstrated very high composite reliability. Purchase Decision also showed adequate composite reliability with $\rho_a = 0.929$ and $\rho_c = 0.887$. These results confirm that the measurement model has strong reliability across constructs.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

AVE values for all constructs were greater than the recommended minimum of 0.50, which indicates strong convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE values were 0.864 for Brand Ambassador, 0.878 for Brand Image, and 0.665 for Purchase Decision. This suggests that more than 66% of the variance in each construct is explained by its indicators, which is acceptable.

Interpretation

Overall, the results confirm that the measurement model meets the criteria for reliability and validity. Each construct demonstrated strong internal consistency, high composite reliability, and adequate convergent validity. This indicates that the research instruments used to measure brand ambassador, brand image, and purchase decision are both valid and reliable for further analysis.

Fornell–Larcker Criterion

The Fornell–Larcker criterion is applied to test discriminant validity, which ensures that each construct in the model is empirically distinct from the others. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is established if the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs.

Table 3.
Fornell–Larcker Criterion

| Construct | Brand Ambassador | Brand Image | Purchase Decision |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Brand Ambassador | 0.930 | | |
| Brand Image | 0.983 | 0.937 | |
| Purchase Decision | 0.807 | 0.841 | 0.816 |

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

Interpretation

The diagonal values (bold) represent the square roots of AVE for each construct: Brand Ambassador (0.930), Brand Image (0.937), and Purchase Decision (0.816).

These values should ideally be higher than the correlation values between constructs (off-diagonal values).

In this study, the diagonal values are close to, and in some cases slightly lower than, the inter-construct correlations (e.g., Brand Image–Brand Ambassador = 0.983, which is higher than $\sqrt{AVE} = 0.937$).

This indicates that although the constructs show strong convergent validity ($AVE > 0.50$), the discriminant validity is not fully supported because the correlation between Brand Image and Brand Ambassador (0.983) exceeds the square root of AVE of both constructs. This condition suggests that respondents may perceive brand image and brand ambassador as highly overlapping constructs. The Fornell–Larcker criterion shows that while the measurement model demonstrates adequate reliability and convergent validity, discriminant validity between brand image and brand ambassador is weak. This implies that in the context of Mie Sukses, consumers may not clearly differentiate between their perception of the brand itself and the ambassador who represents it. This overlap should be carefully considered in interpreting the structural model results.

Path Coefficient

The structural model (inner model) was evaluated through path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values to determine the significance of causal relationships among variables. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4.
Path Coefficient Results

| Path Relationship | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics | P Values | Result |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------|------------------------|
| Brand Ambassador → Purchase Decision | -0.584 | 1.972 | 0.049 | Significant (negative) |
| Brand Image → Brand Ambassador | 0.983 | 373.723 | 0.000 | Significant (positive) |
| Brand Image → Purchase Decision | 1.415 | 4.995 | 0.000 | Significant (positive) |

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

Interpretation

Brand Ambassador → Purchase Decision

The path coefficient is negative (-0.584) and significant ($p = 0.049 < 0.05$). This indicates that the presence of a brand ambassador reduces purchase decisions for Mie Sukses. This result is contrary to much of the literature (Rahmawati & Santoso, 2021; Wibowo & Arifin, 2022), which typically finds a positive effect. The negative coefficient suggests that consumers may perceive the ambassador as less credible or misaligned with the product image, thus weakening purchase intention.

Brand Image → Brand Ambassador

The path coefficient is very strong and positive (0.983) with high significance ($p = 0.000$). This means that a strong brand image enhances the perceived effectiveness of the brand ambassador. In other words, consumers who already view the brand positively are more likely to accept and trust the ambassador as a representative of the brand (Putri, Nurhayati, & Firdaus, 2024).

Brand Image → Purchase Decision

The path coefficient is positive (1.415) and significant ($p = 0.000$). This confirms that brand image is the strongest determinant of purchase decision in this study. Consumers with favorable perceptions of Mie Sukses are more willing to purchase the product, consistent with previous studies (Firdaus & Budiman, 2021; Sari & Hidayat, 2023).

The findings indicate that brand image is the primary driver of purchase decisions, both directly and indirectly. While brand ambassador was expected to strengthen consumer behavior, the negative result highlights the importance of carefully aligning ambassador selection with consumer perceptions. These results enrich the literature by showing that brand ambassador effects are context-dependent and may not always be positive.

Indirect Effect (Mediation Analysis)

The mediation test was conducted to examine whether brand ambassador mediates the relationship between brand image and purchase decision. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.
Indirect Effect Results

| Path Relationship | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics | P Values | Result |
|--|---------------------|--------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| Brand Image → Brand Ambassador → Purchase Decision | -0.574 | 1.969 | 0.049 | Significant (negative mediation) |

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

Interpretation

The indirect effect of *brand image* on *purchase decision* through *brand ambassador* is negative (-0.574) and significant ($p = 0.049 < 0.05$). This result indicates that although *brand image* has a strong positive effect on *brand ambassador*, the ambassador's influence on purchase decision is negative. Consequently, the overall mediating effect is also negative.

This finding contrasts with much of the prior research which generally supports the positive mediating role of brand ambassadors (Rahmawati & Santoso, 2021; Prasetyo, 2022; Wibowo & Arifin, 2022). In the case of Mie Sukses, it may suggest that while consumers recognize and value the brand image, the ambassador chosen does not resonate with their expectations or cultural values, thereby reducing their intention to purchase.

Theoretical Implications

The result provides evidence that *brand ambassador* does not always strengthen the relationship between *brand image* and *purchase decision*. Instead, in certain contexts, it can serve as a barrier, especially when there is a mismatch between consumer perception of the brand and the credibility of the ambassador. This finding supports the idea that the effectiveness of brand ambassadors is highly context-dependent and must be aligned with the brand's positioning strategy (Sari & Hidayat, 2023; Firdaus & Budiman, 2021).

Practical Implications

For Mie Sukses, management should reconsider the selection of brand ambassadors, ensuring they match the target market's cultural, social, and aspirational preferences.

Building a stronger independent *brand image* may yield better results than relying heavily on an ambassador who might not align with consumer perceptions.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the impact of brand image and brand ambassador on purchase decisions of Mie Sukses in Semarang. The research sought to answer four key questions: (1) Does brand image directly influence purchase decisions? (2) Does brand ambassador directly influence purchase decisions? (3) Does brand image affect brand ambassador? and (4) Does brand ambassador mediate the relationship between

brand image and purchase decisions? The findings from the PLS-SEM analysis provide comprehensive answers to these questions.

The results demonstrated that brand image exerts a strong and significant positive influence on purchase decisions. This finding confirms that a favorable brand perception is central to consumer decision-making. The strength of this effect suggests that for Mie Sukses, consumers rely more heavily on their overall impression of the brand than on external promotional tools. The evidence was obtained from significant path coefficients ($\beta = 1.415$; $p < 0.001$) and strong reliability and validity indicators from the outer model, confirming that the measurement of brand image was accurate and consistent.

Interestingly, brand ambassador showed a significant but negative effect on purchase decisions ($\beta = -0.584$; $p = 0.049$). This contrasts with conventional studies which emphasize the positive role of celebrity endorsers in increasing consumer trust and purchase intention (Rahmawati & Santoso, 2021; Wibowo & Arifin, 2022). The negative sign in this study implies that the chosen ambassador for Mie Sukses may not align with consumer expectations or cultural preferences, leading to reduced purchase intention. This highlights the importance of contextual factors in determining the effectiveness of brand ambassadors. The findings also revealed that brand image strongly and positively influences brand ambassador ($\beta = 0.983$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that when consumers already perceive a brand positively, they are more receptive to the ambassador's endorsement. However, the mediation test showed that the indirect effect of brand image on purchase decision through brand ambassador was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.574$; $p = 0.049$). This suggests that although brand image strengthens ambassador credibility, the ambassador's negative effect on purchase decisions offsets the benefits.

These findings contribute to established knowledge in several ways. First, they reaffirm the critical role of brand image as the strongest predictor of purchase decisions in the food industry, consistent with prior studies (Firdaus & Budiman, 2021; Putri, Nurhayati, & Firdaus, 2024; Sari & Hidayat, 2023). Second, they challenge the conventional assumption that brand ambassador always provides a positive contribution. This study demonstrates that ambassador effectiveness is not universal but context-dependent, requiring alignment with consumer perceptions and market culture.

From a theoretical perspective, this research extends branding literature by suggesting that the mediator role of brand ambassador may vary in sign depending on market fit. It generates a new insight that negative mediation is possible when ambassador credibility and consumer expectations diverge. This modifies existing theory by emphasizing that endorsement effectiveness must be evaluated not only in terms of ambassador attributes but also through compatibility with brand positioning and consumer identity.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of brand image and brand ambassador on purchase decisions of Mie Sukses in Semarang. The results showed that brand image had a strong and significant positive impact on purchase decision, while brand ambassador exerted a significant but negative effect. In addition, brand image positively influenced brand ambassador, yet the indirect effect of brand image on purchase decision through brand ambassador was negative. These findings confirm that what was formulated in the research objectives in the introduction chapter is consistent with the evidence presented in the results and discussion.

The implications of this study highlight that strengthening brand image remains the most effective strategy for enhancing purchase decisions in the instant noodle market. A

credible and consistent brand image helps consumers form trust, reduces perceived risk, and fosters loyalty. However, the findings also emphasize that appointing a brand ambassador must be done with caution, as a mismatch between ambassador identity and consumer expectations can lead to a negative impact on purchasing behavior. For Mie Sukses, practical strategies include investing more in brand-building activities, such as packaging innovation, storytelling, and digital engagement, while carefully selecting ambassadors that align with the target consumer values.

This study, however, is not without limitations. The sample was limited to 144 respondents in Semarang, which may restrict the generalizability of results to broader regions. Moreover, the study focused only on two predictors, brand image and brand ambassador, without considering other possible factors such as price sensitivity, product quality, or distribution reach.

Future research can extend this model by including additional variables that may interact with or moderate the effects of branding strategies, such as digital influencers, customer experience, and cultural values. Longitudinal studies can also be employed to capture changes in consumer behavior over time. The findings of this research open up further avenues for the development of branding strategies in local food industries and provide practical guidelines for businesses seeking to compete in highly competitive markets.

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