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Does Brand Ambassadors Drive Repurchase Intention? The Mediating Role of Brand Image and the Moderating Effect of Customer Engagement in the Skincare Industry

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Abstract

In the midst of increasingly dynamic digital marketing competition, brand ambassadors are a widely used strategy to build brand image and increase consumer loyalty. This study aims to analyze the effect of brand ambassadors on repurchase intention of Somethinc skincare consumers in Bekasi City, with brand image as a mediating variable and customer engagement as a moderating variable. The research method used is quantitative with a descriptive-verification approach. Data were obtained through questionnaires from 100 respondents and analyzed using SEM-PLS through SmartPLS 3 software. The results showed that brand ambassadors have a significant influence on brand image, but have no direct effect on repurchase intention. Brand image act as mediator in this association, Meanwhile, customer engagement did not moderating relationship between brand ambassador on repurchase intention in this model. This finding indicates that positive perceptions of the brand and active consumer engagement are key in driving repurchase decisions. On the other hand, the interaction between brand ambassadors and customer engagement did not show a significant moderating effect. In conclusion, marketing strategies through brand ambassadors will be more effective if supported by a strong brand image and high customer engagement. The practical implication of this study is the need to select brand ambassadors that are aligned with brand identity and strengthen brand communication to build customer engagement.

Keywords: Brand Ambassador, Repurchase Intention, Brand Image, Customer Engagement, Skincare Industry

Introduction

Today's business developments promise many opportunities and challenges for a company. Companies compete with each other to meet consumer needs. A company has to compete with other companies in order for that company to survive and on the other hand the company has to understand what consumers want in order for consumers to feel satisfied. Basically, the more competitors, the more choices there are for consumers to choose products that meet their expectations. Beauty products, especially skin care, have experienced very rapid development by formulating various needs needed by the skin of the Indonesian people. Skin care has now become a necessity that must be met to support appearance. In Indonesia itself, there are various kinds of beauty products that have developed in such a way over time.

In an effort to increase competitiveness, many local skincare brands have adopted marketing strategies that involve brand ambassadors, especially from celebrities and social media influencers. This strategy aims to build a positive brand image and increase consumer engagement. Research by Wulandari et al. (2022) shows that brand ambassadors have an influence on brand image and brand awareness, which in turn affects consumer purchase intention.

The beauty industry is growing year by year. The development of the beauty industry goes hand in hand with the development of existing technology, making products more accessible to consumers. Various types and brands of cosmetics are silent witnesses to the progress of the cosmetics industry. Skincare products also support this development. Skincare is a series of skin care that includes special products to maintain healthy skin and take care of it. Skin care is a secondary need besides beauty and maintaining appearance is the most important thing.
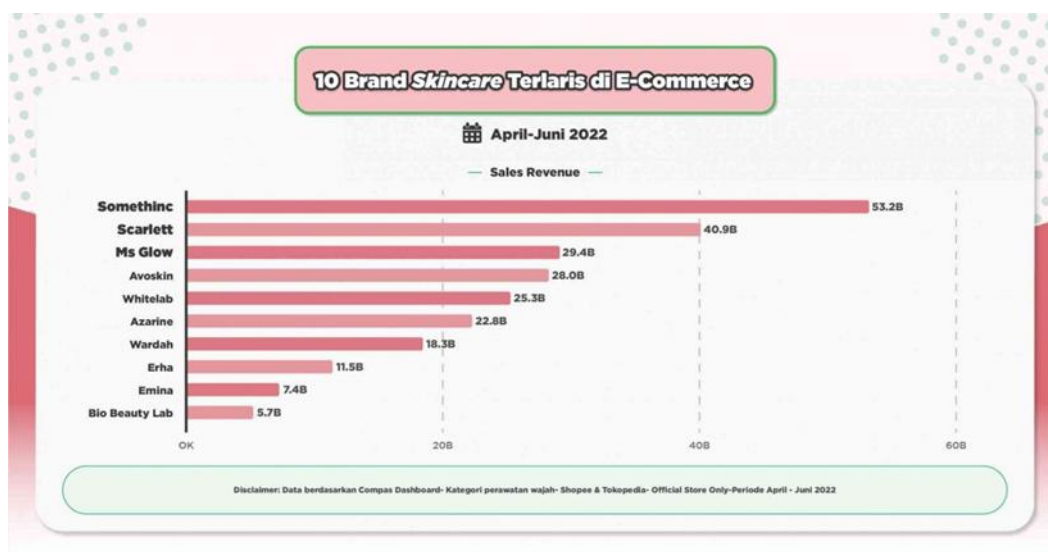

Figure1. 10 Most Popular Skincare Brands in E-commerce 2022
Source: kompasiana.com

Figure 1 Data from the Compas Dashboard for the facial care category (official stores Shopee and Tokopedia, April-June 2022) shows ten local skincare brands that dominate sales on digital platforms, with revenue values reflecting people's popularity and purchasing power. Somethinc emerged as the market leader with total revenue reaching IDR 53.2 billion in the period. In second place, Scarlett with a revenue of IDR 40.9 billion showed a very kompetitif.MS performance Glow and Avoskin occupy the third and fourth positions with revenues of IDR 29.4 billion and IDR 28.0 billion, respectively. Whitelab (IDR 25.3 billion), Azarine (IDR 22.8 billion), and Wardah (IDR 18.3 billion) show their respective strengths in presenting affordable but still quality skincare products. The other three brands that are included in the top 10 are Erha (IDR 11.5 billion), Emina (IDR 7.4 billion), and Bio Beauty Lab (IDR 5.7 billion). Erha relies on its reputation as a dermatologist brand, while Emina targets teenagers with a youthful and playful approach. Overall, this data shows that the success of skincare brands in the e-commerce ecosystem is largely determined by a combination of brand image strength, the right brand ambassador selection, and the level of

customer engagement. Changes in increasingly digital-savvy consumer behavior encourage brands to not only be present in the online realm, but also actively interact, build authentic narratives, and respond to consumer needs quickly and relevantly.

With the dominance of Somethinc and the emergence of digitally aggressive new brands, the competitive landscape in the Indonesian skincare industry has become increasingly dynamic. Brands that are able to understand consumer behavior, utilize technology, and build emotional connections through brand experience will have a better chance of maintaining consumer loyalty and increasing repurchase intent amid increasingly fierce competition.

In today's era of globalization, the needs of every individual in various aspects of life are increasing. Skincare is becoming a trend among young people. This is due to the development of technology that encourages people to control their appearance, which is an important factor in various aspects of life such as work and lifestyle. Cosmetics themselves are an important need in various fields that can help support a person's appearance and increase confidence. The skincare industry has experienced significant growth, driven by increasing consumer demand and technological advancements.

One of the strategies used by companies to attract the attention of consumers and maintain their loyalty is to use brand ambassadors. Brand ambassadors not only serve as the face of the brand, but also as a representation of the brand's values and identity. In this context, the role of brand ambassadors is becoming increasingly crucial, given the high social influence they have on consumer perception and behavior (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). They are able to build an emotional connection between consumers and brands through authenticity, credibility, and a personal communication style.

However, the effectiveness of brand ambassadors in influencing repurchase intention does not occur directly. There are other variables that also mediate and moderate the relationship, such as brand image and customer engagement. Brand image is the consumer's perception of a brand, which is formed through experience, communication, and associations attached to the brand. As stated by Suhaily & Soelasih (2017), a strong and positive brand image can increase consumer loyalty and encourage repurchase intentions.

On the other hand, customer engagement is an important aspect in creating a long-term relationship between consumers and brands. This engagement includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of consumers in interacting with brands. According to Brodie et al. (2011), customer engagement can strengthen emotional relationships with brands, strengthen brand ambassador influence, and increase the effectiveness of brand communication with consumers.

An interesting phenomenon can be observed in the local skincare brand Somethinc which has been on the rise in recent years. Somethinc has successfully attracted the attention of the younger generation through an aggressive digital marketing strategy, including the use of popular brand ambassadors such as celebrities and social media influencers. In Bekasi City, which is part of an urban area with a significant young population, Somethinc products have received a positive response and market share continues to increase. However, there has not been much research that specifically examines how Somethinc's brand ambassador strategy influences repurchase intent, and the extent to which brand image mediates and customer engagement moderates the relationship.

Therefore, this study aims to answer an important question about how much influence brand ambassadors have on the repurchase intention of consumers of Somethinc skincare

products in Bekasi City, by considering the role of brand image as a mediating variable and customer engagement as a moderation variable. This research is relevant to enrich the academic literature and make a practical contribution to local cosmetics industry players in designing marketing communication strategies that are more effective and oriented towards long-term relationships with consumers.

Method

The research method used in this study is a quantitative method with a descriptive and verifiable approach. This method was chosen because of its ability to analyze complex structural models, particularly those involving mediation and moderation relationships, and is suitable for use on data that are not normally distributed and relatively small sample sizes. This study aims to determine the influence of Brand Ambassador on Repurchase Intention with Brand Image as a mediating variable and Customer Engagement as a moderation variable in Somethinc skincare consumers in Bekasi City. The population in this study is all Somethinc consumers in Bekasi City who have purchased the product and meet specific inclusion criteria, namely consumers who have made at least one repeat purchase and are familiar with the brand ambassador used in Somethinc marketing campaigns, while consumers who have never repurchased or did not recognize the brand ambassador were excluded from the study. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling with the purposive sampling method, which is the selection of respondents based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. The number of samples used was 100 respondents. The data collection technique was carried out through the distribution of online questionnaires using the Likert scale as a measuring tool. The data obtained were then analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis techniques based on Partial Least Square (PLS) with the help of SmartPLS software version 3, to test the direct and indirect relationships between variables as well as the role of mediation and moderation in the research model. This study aims to test the influence of brand ambassadors on repurchase intention with brand image as a mediation variable and customer engagement as a moderation variable.

Results and Discussion
Respondent Profile

Table 1. Respondent Profile Result

Items	Type	Respondent	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	22	21,80%
	Female	79	78,20%
Age	< 15 years	7	6,90%
	16 - 25 years	74	73,30%
	26-30 years	9	8,90%
	31 - 35 years	11	10,90%
Work	Student	71	70,30%
	Entrepreneur	9	8,90%
	Employee	21	20,80%

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	6 - 12 months	50	49,50%
Product usage time	1 - 2 years	22	21,80%
	2 - 3 years	29	28,70%

The profile of the respondents in this study shows a fairly rich diversity of demographic characteristics, reflecting the relevant and representative background of the subject studied. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were women, which was 78.20%, while male respondents amounted to 21.80%. This shows the dominance of women's participation in filling out surveys, which can reflect their level of concern or involvement in the topic being studied.

In terms of age, respondents were dominated by the young productive age group, namely 16-25 years, which reached 73.30%. Followed by the age group of 31-35 years old as 10.90%, the age group of 26-30 years old as much as 8.90%, and the age under 15 years old as much as 6.90%. The dominance of 16–25 years old indicates that this group is the most active user or party in interacting with the product being studied. The involvement of the younger generation can be an indication that the product has its own appeal for the young age segment who are generally more adaptive to change and innovation.

In terms of employment, the majority of respondents are students or students with a percentage of 70.30%. This strengthens the findings on the age aspect, considering that most of the respondents are in the college or high school age range. Meanwhile, respondents who work as employees account for 20.80%, and self-employed as much as 8.90%. This composition indicates that the majority of respondents are still in the education stage, but there are also groups that have entered the world of work, providing a more diverse view of the experience of using products.

In terms of the duration of product use, respondents who have used the product for 6–12 months dominate with 49.50%. Meanwhile, 28.70% of respondents have used the product for 2–3 years, and another 21.80% for 1–2 years. This distribution shows that most users have a fairly long experience with the product, which can support the accuracy of their perception in providing ratings and feedback. The duration of this use is important to understand the level of loyalty and user satisfaction with the product.

Overall, the respondents' profiles show that the majority of product users are young women with an educational background as college students or students, who have been using the product for more than half a year. This gives an idea that the main market segment of this product is young, educated, and digitally active people, which can be used as a strategic foothold in product development and marketing approaches in the future.

Outer Model

Table 2. Outer Model

	BA	BI	CE	Moderating Effect 1	RI	Composite Reliability	(AVE)
BA * CE				1,242		0,894	0,550
BA2	0,697					0,943	0,704
BA3	0,801					0,914	0,604

BA4	0,761			1,000	1,000
BA5	0,628			0,917	0,615
BA6	0,663				
BA7	0,839				
BI1		0,837			
BI2		0,848			
BI3		0,772			
BI4		0,856			
BI5		0,832			
BI6		0,867			
BI7		0,856			
CE1			0,748		
CE2			0,845		
CE3			0,849		
CE4			0,786		
CE5			0,770		
CE6			0,804		
CE7			0,613		
RI1				0,805	
RI2				0,834	
RI3				0,783	
RI4				0,800	
RI5				0,672	
RI6				0,861	
RI7				0,719	
BA1	0,776				

The results of the outer model or measurement model analysis indicate that all constructs used in this study, namely Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, Customer Engagement, and Repurchase Intention, meet the required standards of validity and reliability. Convergent validity, as assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), shows satisfactory values for all constructs, with AVE scores exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.5, indicating that each construct is able to explain a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators. Specifically, Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, Customer Engagement, and Repurchase Intention demonstrate strong convergent validity, confirming that the indicators appropriately represent their respective latent variables. Construct reliability, evaluated using Composite Reliability, also reveals excellent results, as all constructs exhibit values well above the minimum criterion of 0.7, reflecting high internal consistency among indicators.

Further evaluation of indicator loadings shows that most indicators load strongly on their respective constructs, with values generally above 0.7, while several indicators with loadings between 0.6 and 0.7 remain acceptable due to the strong AVE and Composite Reliability values. Although indicators such as BA5, CE7, and RI5 show relatively lower

loadings, they do not undermine the overall quality of the measurement model and may be considered for refinement in future studies. In addition, the moderation analysis demonstrates a strong interaction effect between Brand Ambassador and Customer Engagement on Repurchase Intention, indicating that higher customer engagement enhances the effectiveness of brand ambassadors in driving consumers' intention to repurchase. Overall, these findings confirm that the measurement model is robust, valid, and reliable, providing a solid foundation for further structural model analysis.

R Square

Table 3. R Square Result

	R Square
BI	0,494
RI	0,812

R Square Analysis (Coefficient of Determination)

In the context of the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) structural model, the R Square value is used to measure the extent to which independent variables are able to explain dependent variables. R Square denotes the proportion of the variance of the endogenous construct described by the exogenous construct that affects it.

Brand Image (BI)

The R-Square value = 0.494, that is, 49.4% variation in the Brand Image (BI) can be explained by the constructs that are predictors in this model (possibly including Brand Ambassador and/or other relevant variables). While the rest, which is 50.6%, is explained by other factors outside the model. The R Square value of 0.494 is quite strong according to the general guidelines in PLS-SEM (0.25 = weak, 0.50 = medium, 0.75 = strong). This shows that the model has a moderate ability to explain the formation of the perception of the Brand Image.

Repurchase Intention (RI)

The value of R Square = 0.812, this value indicates that 81.2% of the variation in the Repurchase Intention (RI) variable can be explained by other constructs in the model, such as Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, Customer Engagement, or interactions in between. Only 18.8% of the remaining 18.8% were influenced by factors outside the model. This value falls into the very strong category, reflecting that structural models have an excellent ability to explain the factors that influence consumer repurchase intentions.

Overall, the R Square results on this model show excellent quality. The Brand Image variable is adequately explained by the exogenous construct with a value of 0.494, while the Repurchase Intention is described very strongly with a value of 0.812. This indicates that the variables in the model have been well designed and relevant in explaining consumer behavior, especially in forming the intention to make a repurchase. These findings underscore the importance of the influence of elements such as Brand Ambassador, Customer Engagement, and brand perception in building consumer loyalty to a product or service.

Path Coefficients

Table 4. Path Coefficients Result

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
BA -> BI	0,703	0,720	0,108	6,501	**0,000**
BA -> RI	0,208	0,257	0,147	1,418	**0,157**
BI -> RI	0,414	0,371	0,142	2,909	**0,004**
CE -> RI	0,361	0,353	0,090	4,004	**0,000**
Moderating Effect 1 -> RI	-0,003	-0,031	0,065	0,048	**0,962**

Based on the results of the path coefficients analysis in this study, it was found that the Brand Ambassador (BA) variable has a positive and significant influence on Brand Image (BI), with a coefficient value of 0.703 and a p value of 0.000. This shows that the stronger the role of brand ambassadors in representing the brand, the more image.

Brands in the eyes of consumers will also be more positive. However, the direct influence of Brand Ambassadors on Repurchase Intention (RI) was not significant, as shown by a p value of 0.157. This means that the existence of brand ambassadors does not directly encourage consumers to make repeat purchases, but rather their main role is more to form a strong brand image first.

Furthermore, the Brand Image variable showed a positive and significant influence on Repurchase Intention, with a coefficient of 0.414 and a p-value of 0.004. This shows that a good brand image can increase consumer trust and loyalty to make a repeat purchase. Likewise, the Customer Engagement (CE) variable has a significant influence on Repurchase Intention, with a coefficient of 0.361 and a p value of 0.000. This shows that the higher the level of customer engagement with the brand, whether through digital interactions, participation in brand activities, or emotional experiences, the more likely they are to make a repeat purchase.

Meanwhile, the results of the analysis of the Moderating Effect 1 showed a not significant effect on Repurchase Intention, with a coefficient of -0.003 and a p value of 0.962. This indicates that the moderation variables tested in this study were not able to strengthen or weaken the relationship between the existing variables statistically. Overall, it can be concluded that an effective marketing strategy in encouraging consumer repurchase intent should focus on improving a strong brand image and active customer engagement, while the role of brand ambassadors should be maximized to build a positive perception of the brand.

Specific Indirect Effect

Table 5. Specific Indirect Result

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
BA -> BI -> RI	0,831	0,740	0,116	6,843	**0,000**

The specific indirect effect results indicate that Brand Image (BI) significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Ambassador (BA) and Repurchase Intention (RI). The estimated indirect path coefficient is 0.831 (Original Sample), with a Sample Mean of 0.740, suggesting a consistently positive mediation effect across the bootstrap samples. The relatively small standard deviation (0.116) reflects good stability of the estimate. Most importantly, the effect is statistically significant, as shown by a high t-statistic of 6.843 (greater than 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$). Substantively, this finding implies that a stronger or more credible brand ambassador contributes to a more favorable brand image, which in turn increases consumers' intention to repurchase. In other words, the influence of the brand ambassador on repurchase intention operates meaningfully through the formation and reinforcement of brand image, highlighting brand image as a key mechanism through which endorsement strategies translate into repeat-purchase behavior.

Discussion
The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Brand Image (BA → BI)

The test results showed that Brand Ambassador had a positive and significant effect on Brand Image, with a coefficient value of 0.703, T-statistic of 6.501, and P-value of 0.000. This value shows that the better the quality or performance of the Brand Ambassador, the stronger the positive perception of consumers towards the brand image. This finding indicates that brand ambassadors function as symbolic representatives who transfer their credibility, popularity, and personal values to the brand, thereby shaping consumers' cognitive and emotional evaluations. In other words, the presence of a brand ambassador who is credible, widely known, and has an emotional connection with the target market can strengthen the brand image in the eyes of consumers by enhancing perceptions of trust, attractiveness, and brand authenticity.

The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Repurchase Intention (BA → RI)

Although the path coefficient indicates a positive direction (0.208), this result is not statistically significant, indicated by a statistical T-value of 1.418 and a P-value of 0.157. This shows that the direct influence of Brand Ambassadors on consumer repurchase intent is not strong enough. This suggests that brand ambassadors alone may attract attention and awareness but are insufficient to directly stimulate repeat purchasing behavior, which typically requires deeper psychological attachment and experiential satisfaction. Most likely, Brand Ambassadors influence Repurchase Intention indirectly through other intermediaries such as brand image or customer engagement. Therefore, simply relying on public figures or brand ambassadors without reinforcing other dimensions is not enough to drive consumer loyalty in a highly competitive and experience-driven market.

The Influence of Brand Image on Repurchase Intention (BI → RI)

This pathway showed a positive and significant influence, with a coefficient value of 0.414, a T-statistic of 2.909, and a P-value of 0.004. This means that a strong brand image has an important role in encouraging consumer intent to make a repeat purchase. A favorable brand image reduces perceived risk and increases emotional reassurance, which are essential factors in repeat purchasing decisions. When consumers have a positive perception of a brand both in terms of quality, reputation, and consistency of experience, they tend to feel more

trusting and loyal to the product and are more likely to repurchase even in the presence of competing alternatives.

The Effect of Customer Engagement on Repurchase Intention (CE → RI)

Customer Engagement also has a positive and significant influence on Repurchase Intention, with a coefficient of 0.361, a T-statistic of 4.004, and a P-value of 0.000. These results confirm that the level of customer engagement—whether in the form of interactions, emotional experiences, or participation in the brand—contributes significantly to the decision to buy back. Customers who feel personally engaged with a brand tend to have an emotional attachment that drives long-term loyalty.

Moderating Effect (BA*CE → RI)

The test of the moderation effect showed insignificant results, with a coefficient value of -0.003, a T-statistic of 0.048, and a P-value of 0.962. These results show that the moderation variable tested does not have an important role in strengthening or weakening the relationship between other variables and Repurchase Intention. This implies that customer engagement does not significantly amplify the direct influence of brand ambassadors on repurchase intention, possibly because engagement itself already exerts a strong independent effect. Thus, in the context of this model, the interaction effect does not make a significant contribution to the consumer's repurchase intention.

So from the results of this analysis, it can be concluded that Brand Ambassadors play an important role in shaping brand image, but do not have a significant direct influence on repurchase intentions. In contrast, Brand Image and Customer Engagement are proven to be key determinants that significantly drive Repurchase Intent. Therefore, companies are advised to not only focus on selecting popular brand ambassadors, but also need to strengthen brand image and build meaningful relationships with consumers through consistent brand communication, experiential marketing, and interactive engagement strategies, as these efforts will significantly increase customer loyalty and encourage consistent repeat purchases.

The Effect Brand Ambassador on Repurchase Intention Mediated by Brand Image

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the mediating role of brand image in explaining how brand ambassadors influence consumers' repurchase intention. The significant and positive indirect effect indicates that the impact of a brand ambassador does not operate merely through direct persuasion, but rather through the ambassador's ability to shape and reinforce a favorable brand image in consumers' minds. When consumers perceive a brand ambassador as credible, attractive, and congruent with the brand's values, this perception is transferred to the brand itself, strengthening associations related to quality, trustworthiness, and emotional appeal. These enhanced brand perceptions subsequently increase consumers' confidence and willingness to repurchase the product. This result aligns with marketing communication theory, which emphasizes that endorsement effectiveness is largely determined by symbolic meaning transfer and image congruence rather than short-term promotional appeal. The strong magnitude of the indirect effect also suggests that brand image functions as a critical psychological mechanism that transforms endorsement messages into sustainable behavioral intentions. From a managerial perspective, the findings imply that investments in brand ambassadors should be strategically aligned with long-term brand positioning objectives rather than focusing solely on visibility or popularity.

Firms that successfully leverage brand ambassadors to consistently communicate brand values are more likely to build a strong brand image, which in turn fosters customer loyalty and repeat purchasing behavior.

Conclusion

This study shows that Brand Ambassador has a significant effect on Brand Image, but does not directly affect Repurchase Intention , confirming that the role of brand ambassadors is more effective in shaping consumers' perceptions of the brand rather than directly stimulating repeat purchase behavior. On the other hand, Brand Image and Customer Engagement have an important role in encouraging the repurchase intention of Somethinc skincare consumers in Bekasi City , as both variables act as primary drivers of loyalty-oriented consumer responses. A strong brand image bridges the influence of brand ambassadors on consumer loyalty by functioning as a mediating mechanism that transfers the credibility, attractiveness, and symbolic meaning of brand ambassadors into positive brand evaluations, while active customer engagement contributes positively to repurchase decisions through emotional attachment and ongoing consumer–brand interactions. The practical implications of these results emphasize the importance of choosing brand ambassadors who are not only popular, but also value match to brand identity so that endorsement activities consistently reinforce brand image rather than merely generating short-term attention.

Companies are also advised to strengthen their brand image through consistent brand communication, maintained product quality, and responsive service as these elements were empirically shown to play a decisive role in converting brand perceptions into repurchase intention. In addition, customer engagement strategies need to be developed through more interaction, such as through digital content, online communities, and campaigns that involve consumer participation to sustain long-term relational bonds with consumers, independent of endorsement effects. Further research is suggested to involve a larger sample, a wider area, and additional variables such as brand trust or customer satisfaction to enrich understanding of consumer loyalty , as well as to explicitly examine the indirect mechanisms through longitudinal designs or cross-city comparative studies to better capture the dynamic role of brand image in endorsement-based marketing strategies.

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