

Harnessing the Power of NCT 127: Examining the Role of Brand Ambassadors in Shaping Brand Image and Brand Awareness on Blibli E-commerce

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Abstract: The high number of e-commerce users also creates intense competition for companies to develop their creative and innovative strategies to differentiate themselves in the market. This research aims to analyze the role of NCT 127 brand ambassadors in supporting brand image and brand awareness in Blibli e-commerce. The research approach used is descriptive quantitative with data collection methods through questionnaires distributed online. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with purposive sampling. The sample taken was a group of people who knew about NCT 127 and Blibli, and knew that NCT 127 was the brand ambassador of Blibli e-commerce. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis using SmartPLS software. 3.0 The research results show that the NCT 127 brand ambassador has a positive and significant influence in supporting the brand image in Blibli e-commerce. In line with brand image, NCT 127 brand ambassadors also have a positive and significant influence in supporting brand awareness in Blibli e-commerce. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the presence of the NCT 127 brand ambassador can boost the level of brand awareness and strengthen the brand image of Blibli e-commerce.

Keywords: Brand Ambassador, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, E-commerce.

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1. Introduction

The e-commerce industry in Indonesia has grown rapidly in recent years, driven by increasingly widespread internet penetration and changes in consumer behavior. E-commerce is defined as a forum for carrying out transactions or exchanging information between sellers and buyers in cyberspace (Rerung, 2018). Indonesia is the country with the largest e-commerce market in Southeast Asia (Statista, 2023). This leads to intense competition between e-commerce platforms to attract customers. The pandemic, which encouraged people to stay at home, has also caused this use to increase. Post-pandemic economic activities are further analyzed regarding changes in consumer behavior in the digital realm (Databoks, 2023) This then has an impact on increasing public consumption which is marked by transaction activities in online shops. It is estimated that in 2024 there will be around 46.7 million people shopping online in Indonesia and this will continue to increase quite significantly until 2029 (Arif, 2024). The high level of e-commerce usage has also given rise to e-commerce competition in order to win the Indonesian market.

In the midst of intense competition, e-commerce platforms need to implement creative and innovative marketing strategies to stand out from competitors. The innovation development in question includes programs and features that can provide security and comfort for consumers in line with the expectations given to the company (Antara, 2023). One strategy that is commonly used is to collaborate with brand ambassadors, namely public figures who

have a big influence on the target market. Brand ambassadors themselves play an important role in connecting companies with potential customers, building stronger customer relationships (Rahmawati, 2022). In 2022, the e-commerce platform Blibli will collaborate with the South Korean boy band, NCT 127, as their brand ambassador. NCT 127 has a large and loyal fan base, especially among the younger generation in Indonesia. The use of brand ambassadors by attracting artists from South Korea has previously been implemented by several e-commerce companies. It was revealed that there are big advantages and influence in promoting Indonesian products in the global market (Agustiyanti, 2021).

This is based on the Korean wave phenomenon which has emerged throughout Indonesia. According to Simbar and Shim in Simanjuntak et al. (2022). The term "Korean Wave" or "hallyu" refers to a phenomenon in Korean pop culture that includes various aspects, such as music, films, television dramas, and fashion. This phenomenon has made many Indonesian people more interested in Korean culture in various aspects, including drama, food, clothing style, cosmetics, etc. (Simanjuntak, 2020). The Korean wave in Indonesia spread quite significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic, thereby increasing the number of KPopers/KLovers in Indonesia. It was recorded that in 2023, a survey was conducted in 26 countries in the world and data was obtained that consumption of Korean culture in Indonesia reached 35%, where this percentage is 10% higher than the average in other countries (Tashandra, 2023). This is an opportunity for many companies to market their products to

the target market of teenagers or early adults who in fact dominate the KPopers/KLovers circle.

Brand awareness is an important factor in building a brand image and increasing sales. Through brand awareness, the products offered have an easier opportunity to enter the market. Various strategies are deployed to increase product brand awareness, one way is by using social media. The effectiveness of a brand ambassador can influence the level of consumer awareness of an associated brand (Guelzim, 2024). Consumers who have high brand awareness are more likely to consider and buy products from that brand. Furthermore, a strong and positive brand image in the eyes of consumers can also have a good influence on businesses to gain consumer loyalty. Maintaining a good image can create a perception in the minds of the public (Baalbaki & Zizka, 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Ambassador

People who volunteer to provide information about brands or products and help introduce company products are called Brand Ambassadors (Doucett, 2008). The goal is to ensure that the business has customers who are interested in and influenced by the results produced by the brand ambassador. Someone who loves a brand and has a role in influencing and/or inviting customers to buy the goods offered is a representative of a brand ambassador (Firmansyah, 2023). With the presence of this brand ambassador, the target market can more easily interact with the product. In this case, the role of the brand ambassador is the person who acts as a brand representative to instill a strong brand impression in the minds of customers, foster interest and encourage them to make purchases (Fasha et al., 2022). In line with Ahmad and Azizah's (2021) statement, the use of an ambassador brand is not only aimed at introducing goods or services to potential customers, but also to make them interested in buying goods or services promoted by the ambassador brand.

People who voluntarily collaborate with a brand or company to represent and promote that brand in society are known as brand ambassadors. They can do this either voluntarily or through contracts (Zaelani et al., 2023). They act as representatives of the company with the goal of increasing brand awareness, improving its image, and creating opinions and perspectives that benefit the company. A brand ambassador's duties may include promoting the market, informing others about the benefits and advantages of e-commerce features, and cultivating credibility and trust in the platform (Zaelani et al., 2023). According to Royan (2005), brand ambassadors must have three characteristics: attractiveness, confidence, and expertise.

2.2 Brand Image

Susanto and Wijarnako (2004) explain in the book "Power Branding" that brand image is used to differentiate the goods and services of a product from competitors. As for Pandiangan et al. (2021), concluded that brand image is a perception formed in the minds of consumers or the general public towards a brand, which reflects their assessment. Brand advantages include the brand's ability to be easily pronounced and remembered by consumers, which allows the brand to become famous or liked by the public (Rosita & Novitaningtyas, 2021). In line with Sawlani (2021) Forming a brand image takes time, and the brand image must be clear and have unique features. Rangkuti (2008) also explains how

the dimensions of brand image itself can be measured, including the strength of brand associations, the benefits of brand associations, and the uniqueness of trademark associations. The study by Manap et al. (2023) shows that brand image is influenced by brand ambassadors, mediators in supporting consumers in purchasing decisions. They found that brand ambassadors have a significant influence on brand image. In creating a strong image in society, good communication and delivery strategies are needed to increase brand awareness (Redina et al. 2024).

2.3 Brand Awareness

The strength of a brand or item that can be linked to customer perception is called brand knowledge. Kevin L. Keller (2008) In his book, he states that brand knowledge influences customers to remember every transaction. According to Rangkuti (2008), brand awareness is the ability of consumers to remember certain brands or see certain advertisements spontaneously, with key words that stimulate the brand. According to Kertamukti in Manik and Siregar (2022), brand awareness also includes the buyer's ability to recognize or remember that a brand belongs to a certain product category. Thus, brand awareness can be interpreted as the ability of buyers to remember certain product brands. To build brand awareness, buyers are increasingly exposed to brands through their experiences of seeing, hearing, and thinking about the brand, as well as through direct interactions with the product.

Therefore, anything that involves consumers in their experience with a brand, from brand components such as names, symbols, logos, characters, packaging, or slogans, to various forms of promotion such as advertising, sponsorship, marketing events, publicity, and activities in outdoors, can help consumers become more familiar and better recognize the brand elements (Medhiatika, 2023). In measuring the level of brand awareness of a brand by consumers or customers, indicators are needed, as stated by Trott and Sople (2016), including association attached, familiarity & liking, and consideration set. The existence of a brand ambassador that is highly sought after by the public can increase brand awareness. The more popular an ambassador is in society, the greater the impact on consumer awareness of a brand (Novelia & Yeodtadi, 2023). Brand ambassadors increase consumer awareness and instill strong brand values in their minds (Saputri et. al., 2024).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Based on the theory described previously, the researcher tried to create a conceptual framework for thinking. The framework in this research will explain the dimensions of the variables that have been determined to support and simplify the research process. The following is a picture of the framework of this research.

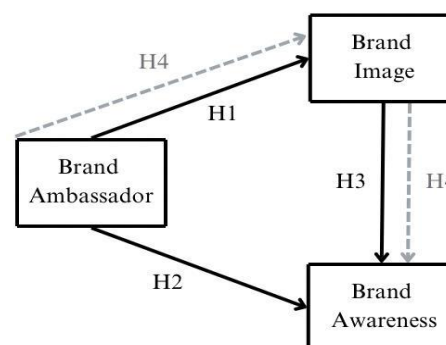


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Based on the framework that has been put forward, the hypothesis in this research is described as follows:

H1: NCT 127 brand ambassador supports Blibli's e-commerce brand image.

H2: NCT 127 brand ambassador supports Blibli's e-commerce brand awareness.

H3: Brand Image supports brand awareness on Blibli's e-commerce.

H4: NCT 127 brand ambassadors support brand awareness in increasing Blibli's e-commerce brand image.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This research aims to analyze the role of the NCT 127 Brand Ambassador in supporting brand image and brand awareness on Blibli e-commerce using a quantitative descriptive research approach. According to Duli (2019), quantitative methods are data collection methods which are then analyzed using data presentation in the form of numerical and mathematical systems that are adjusted to the number of objects studied. Sugiyono (2013) states that quantitative descriptive research is a type of research that applies a correlational or correlational approach. It is further analyzed how strong and significant the relationship is in the research context if the results of the analysis show that there is a relationship. Therefore, this research will discuss the interactive or reciprocal relationships that exist between the variables to be studied, as well as how the levels of these relationships influence each other. This study uses exogenous and endogenous variables. Exogenous variables are independent variables that influence the dependent variable, while endogenous variables are dependent variables that are influenced by the independent variable (Santoso, 2015). NCT 127 is the exogenous variable of this study. However, the endogenous variables in this research consist of brand image and brand awareness on the Blibli e-commerce platform. This research uses a Likert scale, where each statement is given a score ranging from 1 to 5, with scores ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

This research applies a non-probability sampling technique. According to Sugiyono (2019), the non-probability sampling

method is a type of purposive sampling because it aims to determine research samples that meet certain criteria. The non-probability sampling technique chosen was purposive sampling, because it aims to determine the sample for a study using several criteria so that the sample taken is in accordance with the research objectives. The collection method used is a questionnaire distributed online which is filtered using predetermined sample criteria.

This research uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which was carried out with SmartPLS 3.0 software. The goal of this analysis is to examine how the variables in the model relate to each other; this includes the relationship between the construct and its indicators (Santoso, 2015). Validity tests are carried out to ensure that the questions given to respondents do not produce data that deviates from the description of the requested variables. Convergent validity, which has a value >0.7 , is considered valid, and discriminant validity, which has an adequate discriminant value when compared with other constructs, is indicated as validity. Composite reliability is used to measure construct reliability, a reliability value greater than 0.6 indicates high reliability. Overall, this variable or structure is able to explain more than 50% of the variation in relevant indicators if the AVE value is 0.5 or more. In addition, the composite reliability results must have a minimum value of 0.6 from Cronbach alpha. This research uses a model in R square and model fit. The Z value must be more than 1.96 in significance testing using the bootstrapping method with a confidence level of 95% (5% significance). Apart from that, in hypothesis testing, the hypothesis will be accepted if the p value is <0.05 , and vice versa.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Measurement (Outer) Model

To determine the influence of NCT 127's presence as brand ambassadors in supporting brand image and brand awareness on the Blibli e-commerce platform, this research uses a survey via Gform which is designed to measure brand ambassadors, brand image and brand awareness.

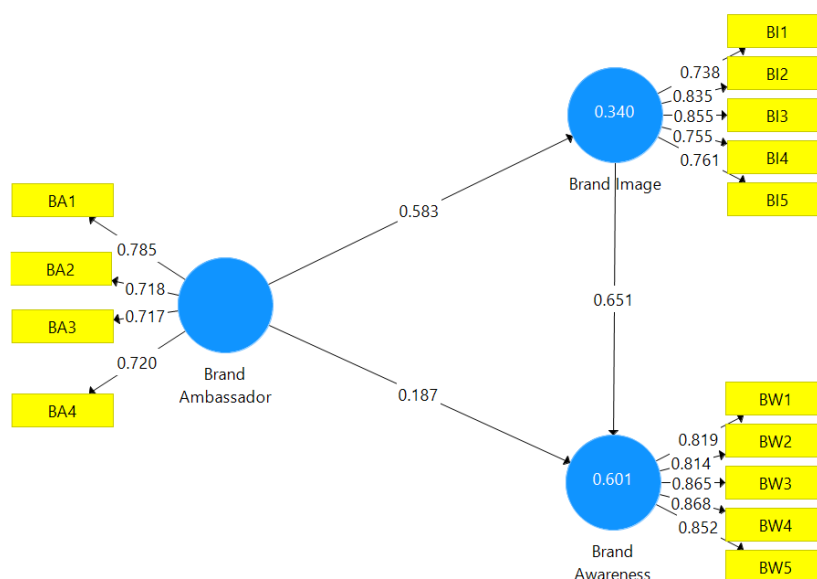


Figure 2: PLS Algorithm

Table 1: Convergent Validity Test

Construct	Average Variance Extracted	Critical Value	Result
Brand Ambassador	0.541	≥ 0.5	Valid
Brand Image	0.624		Valid
Brand Awareness	0.712		Valid

Since the obtained values are above the critical value of 0.5, the average variance extracted (AVE) for the studied variables indicates that the results are valid. Therefore, it can be concluded that the final results show that the variables brand ambassador, brand image, and brand awareness have good convergent validity.

Table 2: Cross-Loading Test

Items	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Brand Awareness
BA1	0.785	0.495	0.502
BA2	0.718	0.442	0.393
BA3	0.717	0.386	0.439
BA4	0.720	0.317	0.362
BI1	0.415	0.738	0.521
BI2	0.457	0.835	0.720
BI3	0.455	0.855	0.635
BI4	0.468	0.755	0.494
BI5	0.510	0.761	0.602
BW1	0.437	0.606	0.819
BW2	0.451	0.532	0.814
BW3	0.538	0.704	0.865
BW4	0.509	0.673	0.868
BW5	0.449	0.670	0.852

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Test

	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Brand Awareness
Brand Ambassador	0.735		
Brand Image	0.567	0.790	
Brand Awareness	0.583	0.760	0.844

In testing discriminant validity, the results of the cross-loading test show that compared to other constructs, each indicator on each measured variable shows a greater correlation with the construct. Thus, all indicators can be considered to have good discriminant validity. The results of this research's discriminant validity test were strengthened by the Fornell-Larcker test. The research results show that each variable measured has a higher value than other constructs. Therefore, each variable can be considered to have high discriminant validity.

Table 4: Reliability Test

	AVE (≥ 0.5)	Composite Reliability (> 0.60)	Cronbach Alpha (> 0.60)
Brand Ambassador	0.541	0.825	0.719
Brand Image	0.624	0.892	0.849
Brand Awareness	0.712	0.925	0.899

The data shows that the average variance extracted (AVE) in the variables studied has valid results because the values obtained are above the critical value of 0.5 and the composite reliability and Cronbach alpha values are also above the critical value of 0.60. Therefore, all variables can be stated to have high reliability.

4.2 Structural (Inner Model)

Tabel 5: R Square Test

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Image	0.340	0.337
Brand Awareness	0.601	0.597

The research results show that the R square value for the brand image variable is 0.337, followed by the brand awareness variable with an r square value of 0.597. From the data obtained, the brand ambassador variable contributed 33.7 % in explaining the brand image variable, the remaining 66.3 % was explained by other variables not studied. Then in the brand awareness variable, the brand ambassador variable contributed 59.7 % in explaining brand awareness, while the other 40.3 % was explained by other variables not studied. So, it can be concluded that brand ambassadors have the biggest contribution in explaining the endogenous variable in the brand awareness variable.

Tabel 6: Model Fit Test

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
SRMR	0.075	0.075
NFI	0.823	0.823

The data shows that the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) indicator has a value of 0.075, this value is below 0.08 so it can be stated that the model fits well. The normed fit index (NFI) indicator is 0.823 so it is included in the marginal fit model category.

4.3 Hypothesis Results

Table 7: Hypothesis Test Result

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Statistic	P Value	Result
H1	Brand ambassador -> Brand image	0.583	12.353	0,000	Accepted
H2	Brand ambassador -> Brand Awareness	0.187	3.140	0,002	Accepted
H3	Brand Image -> Brand awareness	0.651	12.009	0.000	Accepted
H4	Brand ambassador -> Brand image -> Brand awareness	0.380	8.463	0.000	Accepted

The data shows that the relationship between brand ambassadors and brand image is 12.583, which is greater than the value of 1.96, and the p-value is 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. This shows that the relationship between brand ambassador and brand image is statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. This is in line with similar research that has been carried out previously explaining that there is a relationship between Brand Ambassador and Brand Image which has a very significant influence (Priscillia et al., 2024). Mauludi et al. (2023) also stated that if a brand ambassador has good credibility, then this will improve his brand image. NCT 127 as brand ambassador is the face of Bilibli, so the attitude shown to the public will also influence the image that Bilibli will carry in the future.

The t-statistic value obtained from brand ambassadors on brand awareness is statistically significant at a significance level of 0.05, with a t-statistic value of 3,140 greater than 1.96 and a p-value of 0.002 less than 0.05. These results are in line with previous research which shows that the relationship between brand ambassadors and brand awareness is very significant (Ghadani et al., 2022). Theresa et. al. (2024) also found that there is a relationship between the perceived presence of a brand ambassador and the level of brand awareness. Therefore, the more promotions NCT 127 carries out, the more likely it is to increase public awareness of the brand.

Next, on the relationship between brand image and brand awareness. The t-statistic value obtained has statistically significant results, with a significance level of 0.05, with a t-statistic value of 12,009 greater than 1.96 and a p-value of 0.000 less than 0.05. These results are in line with previous research which shows that the relationship between brand ambassadors and brand awareness is strong. Redina et al. (2024) also found that there is a relationship between the perceived presence of a brand ambassador and the level of brand awareness. Therefore, the more promotions NCT 127 carries out, the more likely it is to increase public awareness of the brand.

Then, the final results of the relationship between brand ambassadors and brand awareness through brand image obtained a statistically significant t-statistic value at a significance level of 0.05, with a t-statistic value of 8,463 greater than 1.96 and a p-value of 0.000 less than 0.05. These results are in line with previous research which shows that the relationship between brand ambassadors and brand awareness has a positive and very significant influence (Lestari & Nurhadi, 2023). They also stated that there was an influence of the perception of the presence of brand ambassadors on the level of brand awareness. Therefore, the more promotions NCT 127 carries out, the more it can have a huge impact in increasing brand awareness in society.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This research aims to determine the influence of the NCT 127 brand ambassador on purchasing interest in Bilibli e-commerce through brand awareness, brand image and brand trust. The research results show that.

H1: There is a positive and significant influence between the NCT 127 brand ambassadors in supporting the brand image. Having NCT 127 as brand ambassador has proven to be able to strengthen the brand image of Bilibli e-commerce.

H2: There is a positive and significant influence between NCT 127 brand ambassadors in supporting brand awareness. The use of NCT 127 as brand ambassadors has proven to be able to increase the level of brand awareness in Bilibli e-commerce.

H3: There is a positive and significant influence between NCT 127's brand image in supporting brand image. A strong brand image also has an impact on increasing the level of positive awareness of the Bilibli e-commerce brand in society.

H4: There is a positive and significant influence between NCT 127 brand ambassadors in supporting brand awareness through brand image. The presence of an effective brand ambassador can strengthen a positive image in society, so that it will also have an impact on awareness in society.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the results of the research analysis that has been carried out, Bilibli e-commerce is expected to increase the intensity and variety of brand ambassador activities to help maintain positive effects and increase consumer loyalty. Bilibli e-commerce is also expected to expand its social media reach by utilizing various social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X to increase public awareness. The suggestion to future researchers is that the research reflects more comprehensive results. It is hoped that future researchers can correct the shortcomings of this research. Where the fit model is still in the marginal category, so the research model can be created using many other variables such as consumer loyalty.

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