

The Influence of Brand Ambassador and Brand Image on Purchase Intention of Wardah Products (*A Study on Students of Business Management Study Program, Politeknik Negeri Kupang*)

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the purchase intention of students from the Business Management Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Kupang toward Wardah products and examines the influence of brand ambassador and brand image. The research is motivated by the growing competition in Indonesia's cosmetics industry. Wardah, a local halal cosmetic brand, employs marketing strategies such as brand ambassadors and a strong brand image to attract customers, particularly the younger generation. Using an explanatory quantitative approach, this study employed multiple linear regression and distributed questionnaires to 55 respondents. The data were analyzed using t-test, F-test, and the coefficient of determination (R^2). The findings reveal that both brand ambassador and brand image have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.448, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.201, indicating that 20.1% of the variation in purchase intention is explained by brand ambassador and brand image, with the remaining 79.9% influenced by other factors. The t-test results show that brand ambassador ($t = 4.937$, $sig. = 0.000$) and brand image ($t = 9.603$, $sig. = 0.000$) both significantly affect purchase intention. The F-test ($F = 71.719 > 3.18$, $sig. = 0.000$) further confirms their simultaneous influence.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of Indonesia's cosmetic industry reflects an increasing societal focus on self-care, wellness, and appearance management. Beyond fulfilling aesthetic desires, cosmetics, particularly skincare products, contribute to the maintenance of skin health, aligning with broader trends in preventive health and lifestyle awareness. This dual function elevates the role of marketing strategies, as companies must address both functional and emotional consumer needs to achieve competitive advantage.

Purchase intention serves as a critical predictor of consumer behavior, capturing the willingness to evaluate, consider, and ultimately acquire a product (Kotler & Keller, 2014). It encompasses both cognitive appraisal of product attributes and affective responses, which together guide decision-making processes. Understanding the determinants of purchase intention is essential for marketers seeking to optimize brand positioning in a competitive market.

Personal attitudes significantly influence purchase intention, as they mediate the relationship between information exposure and consumer decision-making (Simora, 2014). Consumers assess products

not only on perceived quality but also on alignment with personal values, social identity, and lifestyle preferences. Similarly, Stevina & Brahmana (2015) suggest that curiosity and exploratory behavior drive consumers to compare alternatives, indicating that purchase intention emerges from a dynamic interplay between internal predispositions and external market stimuli.

Brand ambassadors are instrumental in shaping consumer perception and behavior. Varley et al. (2019) conceptualize them as intermediaries who personify brand values, enhancing relatability and trustworthiness. By embodying the brand's identity, ambassadors facilitate emotional connection, which can translate into higher engagement and consideration among target consumers.

Beyond symbolic representation, brand ambassadors function as strategic communicators, effectively transmitting brand messages to diverse audiences (Greenwood, 2012). They amplify marketing campaigns, create persuasive narratives, and enhance memorability of promotional content, thereby influencing both awareness and purchase intention. The selection of ambassadors with strong social presence is particularly relevant in digital-savvy markets.

Complementing ambassador strategies, brand image represents the collective perceptions held by consumers about a brand, derived from prior experiences, word-of-mouth, and media exposure (Kotler & Keller, 2014; Setiadi, 2016). A coherent and positive brand image reduces perceived risk, fosters loyalty, and differentiates a brand in saturated markets. The synergy between brand ambassadors and brand image strengthens credibility and aligns consumer expectations with brand promises.

Wardah, as a local halal cosmetic brand, strategically leverages brand ambassadors such as Amanda Rawles to reinforce its image of natural beauty and ethical authenticity. This approach resonates with young consumers, particularly students, who are highly active on social media, responsive to peer influence, and sensitive to trends. The combination of relatable ambassadors and consistent brand messaging enhances the brand's visibility, credibility, and aspirational value.

Despite extensive research on brand influence in cosmetics, empirical studies focusing on Indonesian students remain limited. Students of the Business Management Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Kupang constitute a unique segment characterized by high digital literacy, social media engagement, and trend-oriented consumption behavior. Their patterns may diverge significantly from general populations, indicating the need for targeted investigation to capture context-specific consumer insights.

Examining this segment provides an opportunity to understand how localized marketing strategies impact purchase intention within a youthful and socially connected demographic. Insights derived from this study can guide brand managers in optimizing ambassador selection, brand messaging, and campaign strategies to maximize engagement, loyalty, and ultimately purchase behavior in similar contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the research gap by analyzing the influence of brand ambassadors and brand image on purchase intention, specifically among Business Management students at Politeknik Negeri Kupang. The objective of this research is to provide empirical evidence on how these marketing elements interact to shape the purchase intention of Wardah products, offering implications for both theory and practice in the context of local halal cosmetics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand ambassador

According to Kotler & Keller (2014), a brand ambassador is an individual who acts as a promoter or spokesperson for a product, either from the circle of public figures or ordinary people chosen for their visual appeal and attractive appearance to capture consumers' attention and memory. Greenwood (2012) defines a brand ambassador as a cultural symbol or representation used as a marketing tool by companies to build relationships with people around them and increase sales.

Putra (2014) states that a brand ambassador is someone appointed to represent a product or brand. A brand ambassador serves as an identity and functions as a marketing tool by leveraging the success of others to promote products. Based on these expert opinions, it can be concluded that a brand ambassador is an individual who represents and promotes a brand to increase sales. They may consist of artists, public figures, or influential individuals, and they serve as a medium to connect people with the brand and enhance brand image. According to Rossiter & Percy (2018:265), these are the indicators of a brand ambassador:

1. Visibility

Visibility refers to the extent of the celebrity's popularity as a brand ambassador among the public. If the celebrity is widely recognized, the advertisement is more likely to gain deeper attention. This reflects the level of popularity of the celebrity serving as a brand ambassador. In terms of popularity, it is determined by how many fans the ambassador has and how frequently they appear in public.

2. Credibility

Credibility is related to the product knowledge understood by the brand ambassador. The level of credibility consists of two aspects: expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise relates to the ambassador's skills, experience, and knowledge of the brand or product they represent, while trustworthiness refers to the reliability and integrity of the brand ambassador.

3. Attraction

To attract customers or a company's target market, a brand ambassador must have the ability to capture consumer attention. In other words, a brand ambassador should possess an appealing appearance, intelligence, personality, and a good lifestyle.

4. Power

This indicator evaluates whether a celebrity is capable of drawing attention and influencing consumers who have the intention to use the product or brand being promoted through the brand ambassador.

Brand Image

According to Shimp (2013), brand image is a form of association that is continuously embedded in people's memory when they think about a particular brand. This branding element consists of consumers' understanding and trust in a brand, and consumers who have a positive attitude toward the brand demonstrate that the brand delivers its message more strongly than its competitors.

Kotler & Keller (2014) state that brand image is the perception that results from consumers' understanding and choices toward a brand. This image can be identified by measuring consumers' memory of an existing brand. Furthermore, Tjiptono (2014) explains that brand image is the impression that arises in the minds of buyers when they recall a particular product brand. Supranto (2017) adds that brand image reflects the perception or view held by consumers when they see or hear the name of a brand, as well as the information they have previously known about it. The indicators of brand image are as follows (Sangadji, 2013):

1. PerceivedValue

Perceived value is defined as perceived quality divided by price. It reflects consumers' perceptions of product quality, service efficiency, and the extent to which the product is able to meet their needs and expectations. If consumers feel that the product or the associated brand provides greater benefits compared to competitors at the same or even higher price, then its perceived value is considered high.

2. BrandPersonality

Brand personality relates to the emotional relationship between the brand and the company that creates it. This personality is formed through the company's communication style, product design, marketing approach, and even the appointment of a brand ambassador. Customers tend to be more attracted to brands whose personality aligns with or reflects their own identity and lifestyle. Thus, brand character can create an emotional bond between consumers and the brand, as well as strengthen long-term customer loyalty.

3. Association

A product in a consumer association is linked to the company that produces it. This association may consist of product attributes (such as packaging, logo, color, and slogan), benefits (such as efficiency, convenience, or social status), and even symbols or certain values attached to the brand (such as religiosity, simplicity, or modernity). The stronger and more positive the bond between customers and the brand, the better the brand image will be. In marketing situations, these associations are crucial as they help differentiate a brand from its competitors and make it easier for consumers to recall and recognize the brand in a competitive market.

Purchase Intention

According to Kotler & Keller (2014), purchase intention is the tendency of consumers to buy a particular product or brand as a result of evaluating the information they receive, which includes advertising, brand image, and recommendations from public figures. On the other hand, Schiffman & Kanuk (2015) state that purchase intention is consumer behavior that arises as a response to a specific product or brand, resulting in a desire to make a purchase.

Ferdinand (2014:128) further explains that purchase intention is the desire that emerges in customers after they obtain information and form their perceptions about the product. Based on the definitions of these experts, it can be concluded that purchase intention is the consumer's tendency to buy a certain product or brand. It arises as the result of an evaluation process and interest in the product, influenced by information, brand image, and recommendations. There are several signs that consumers are interested in making a purchase (Ferdinand, 2014:8):

1. Transactional Intention

This refers to a person's tendency to buy a product. This indicator shows the extent of an individual's drive or readiness to carry out a purchase transaction in the near future.

2. Referential Intention

This refers to a person's tendency to recommend a product to others. When someone feels satisfied or trusts the quality of a product, they are likely to suggest it to friends, family, or their surrounding environment. Referential intention develops from positive beliefs and trust in a brand and can serve as an effective form of word-of-mouth promotion.

3. Preferential Intention

This type of intention reflects the behavior of individuals who have a primary preference for a certain product. If something happens to their preferred product, this preference can only be replaced reluctantly. Even though there are many alternatives in the market, consumers with preferential intention will demonstrate loyalty or strong attraction to a specific brand. This indicates that customers have developed a positive attitude toward the product and are willing to prioritize it when making purchasing decisions.

4. Explorative Intention

This intention describes the behavior of individuals who actively seek information about a product they are interested in and look for supporting details about its positive features. For example, customers may read product reviews, watch advertisements, ask friends, or visit the company's official social media pages. Explorative intention often appears before the actual purchase decision and is important because it shows curiosity and early interest that can lead to a purchase.

The Relationship Between Brand Ambassador and Purchase Intention

There is a significant relationship between brand ambassadors and purchase intention. According to Shimp (2013), brand ambassadors, whether as public figures or influencers who represent a brand, play an important role in influencing consumers' perceptions and interest in a product. Kotler & Keller (2014:367) emphasize that an effective brand ambassador can strengthen brand image through their personal identity, thereby attracting consumers' purchase intention. Companies can enhance product appeal and brand awareness through effective promotion, which in turn encourages consumers to make purchasing decisions.

When a brand ambassador is well-known and trusted by the audience, they can influence consumer purchase intention. First, brand ambassadors often have a strong impact on brand image, reinforcing positive consumer perceptions. Second, recommendations and testimonials from brand ambassadors provide additional encouragement that increases consumer interest in buying the product. Overall, brand ambassadors can drive purchase intention by building closeness between consumers and the brand, as well as reinforcing marketing messages, which ultimately increases customers' desire to choose and purchase the products promoted by the ambassador.

Brand Image and Purchase Intention

The relationship that customers have with a brand is crucial in attracting their interest in purchasing a product. A strong and positive brand image can create a favorable impression, build customer trust, and provide added value that encourages consumers to be interested in making a purchase.

A good brand image reflects quality, value, and reliability, which can enhance purchase intention. Consumers tend to feel more confident and motivated to purchase products from brands with a positive image. Conversely, negative perceptions of a brand may hinder purchasing decisions, as consumers might doubt the product's quality or value. Keller (2014) emphasizes that negative perceptions of a brand can quickly erode consumers' purchase intentions.

Research findings indicate that a strong and positive brand image generally increases brand awareness and attracts consumers to buy the product. In other words, a strong and positive brand image can enhance brand appeal and influence consumers' decisions to purchase the product.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative explanatory approach to examine the causal relationship between brand ambassador (X1) and brand image (X2) on purchase intention (Y) of Wardah products. The research was conducted among students of the Business Management Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Kupang. Quantitative data were collected through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained from theories, journals, and relevant literature. Primary data were derived directly from student responses, and secondary data were gathered from books, journals, and other references. Data collection methods included questionnaires, observation, and literature review.

The population consisted of all students in the Business Management Study Program, and the sample size was determined following Hair et al. (2019), who recommend a minimum of five times the number of indicators. With 11 indicators in this study, the sample comprised 55 respondents ($11 \times 5 = 55$). Purposive sampling was applied, targeting students who had used or were currently using Wardah products, regardless of gender.

The research instrument was tested for validity, with items considered valid if the correlation coefficient (r) exceeded 0.266, and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha > 0.60 to ensure data consistency. Data analysis began with descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics, followed by classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, all of which met the required assumptions. Multiple linear regression analysis was then conducted to assess the influence of brand ambassador and brand image on purchase intention. Hypotheses were tested using t-tests (partial), F-tests (simultaneous), and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to evaluate the contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RESULTS

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to achieve the objectives of this research. This statistical analysis was used to address the research problem, namely how brand ambassador and brand image influence purchase intention of Wardah products (a study on students of the Business Management Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Kupang).

Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Result

Model	Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.625	1.773	3.737	.000
	brand ambasador	.377	.076	.361	4.937 .000
	brand image	.455	.047	.703	9.603 .000

a. Dependent Variable: y

Source: Primary Data By SPSS, 2025

The Coefficients table above can be used to generate the following regression equation:

$$Y=6,625+0,377X1+0,455X2$$

The constant value (a) of 6.625 represents the condition when the purchase intention variable is not influenced by other variables, namely brand ambassador (X1) and brand image (X2). If the independent variables do not exist, the purchase intention variable will remain unchanged.

The regression coefficient (b1) of 0.377 for brand ambassador (X1) indicates that the brand ambassador variable has a positive effect on purchase intention. This means that for every one-unit increase in the brand ambassador variable, purchase intention increases by 0.377, assuming that other variables are not included in this study.

The regression coefficient (b2) of 0.455 for brand image (X2) shows that the brand image variable has a positive effect on purchase intention. This implies that for every one-unit increase in the brand image variable, purchase intention increases by 0.455, assuming that other variables are not included in this study. In other words, the better consumers' perception of brand image, the higher their purchase intention toward the product.

Results of T-Test (Partial Test)

This test is employed to examine whether variables X1 and X2 have a partial influence on variable Y. The t-test was utilized for this purpose, and the results of the calculations are presented using SPSS. To see the results of the partial test (t-test), refer to Table 1 above. From that table, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the partial test in this study:

1. Brand Ambassador (X1) on Purchase Intention (Y)

Based on the SPSS calculation results, the brand ambassador variable obtained a t-value of 4.937 with a significance level of 0.000. A significance value of 0.000 indicates that the error rate is less than 5% (0.05). Since the t-value of 4.937 is greater than the t-table value of 1.675, it can be concluded that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. In other words, the brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

2. Brand Image (X2) on Purchase Intention(Y)

The SPSS calculation results show that the brand image variable obtained a t-value of 9.603 with a significance level of 0.000. A significance value of 0.000 indicates that the error rate is less than 5% (0.05). Since the t-value of 9.603 is greater than the t-table value of 1.675, it can be concluded that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. In other words, brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

F-Test (Simultaneous Test)

The F-test is employed to determine whether the independent variables and the dependent variable, when considered simultaneously, have a significant relationship or not. The results of the F-test, obtained through SPSS, are presented as follows.

Table 2. Results of F-Test (Simultaneous Test)

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2	46.408	71.719	.000 ^b
	Residual	52	.647		
	Total	54			
a. Dependent Variable: y					
b. Predictors: (Constant), brand image, brand ambassador					

Source: Primary Data By SPSS, 2025

Based on the table above, the calculated F-value is 71.719 with a significance level of 0.000. This significance value indicates that the error rate is less than 5% (0.05). The F-table value is determined using the formula $F(k; n-k-1)$, where n represents the number of samples and k represents the number of independent variables.

Thus, $F\text{-table} = F(2; 55-2-1) = F(2; 52)$, which yields an F -table value of 3.18. Since the calculated F -value of 71.719 is greater than the F -table value of 3.18, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. This finding indicates that brand ambassador and brand image simultaneously have a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase intention among students of the Business Management Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Kupang.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

To determine the extent to which the variables Brand Ambassador and Brand Image influence Purchase Intention, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is used. The calculation of the coefficient of determination (R^2) is presented in the following table:

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Result

Model	Model Summary ^b			
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.448 ^a	.201	.170	2.664
a. Predictors: (Constant), brand image, brand ambassador				
b. Dependent Variable: minat beli				

Source: Primary Data By SPSS, 2025

According to the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) table, the R^2 value is 0.201 or 20.1%, which indicates that brand ambassador and brand image collectively are able to explain 20.1% of the variation in purchase intention. Meanwhile, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.170 suggests that the actual contribution of the independent variables is more limited after being adjusted for the number of variables and the sample size

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Brand Ambassador (X1) on Purchase Intention (Y)

The analysis results indicate that the brand ambassador variable yielded a t -value of 4.937 with a significance level of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. Additionally, the t -value exceeds the t -table value of 1.675, leading to the rejection of H_0 and the acceptance of H_1 . This indicates that Wardah's brand ambassadors significantly affect the purchase intention of students in the Business Management Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Kupang. The regression coefficient of 0.377 suggests that for every one-unit increase in the brand ambassador variable, purchase intention increases by 0.377 units, assuming other variables remain constant. This finding confirms the effectiveness of using public figures such as Amanda Rawles, Yasmin Napper, and Dinda Hauw in enhancing appeal, building consumer trust, and stimulating purchase interest.

These results are consistent with the theories proposed by Shimp (2013) and Kotler & Keller (2014), which emphasize that brand ambassadors influence consumer perceptions through popularity, credibility, attractiveness, and persuasive power. Previous research by Immaculata & Utami (2021) similarly demonstrated that widely recognized and trusted brand ambassadors significantly increase purchase intention, reporting a regression coefficient of 0.35, which aligns closely with the findings of this study. Therefore, selecting appropriate brand ambassadors not only strengthens the brand image but also effectively increases purchase intention, particularly among students who are active on social media and frequently exposed to digital marketing campaigns.

The Influence of Brand Image (X2) on Purchase Intention (Y)

The brand image variable produced a t -value of 9.603 with a significance level of 0.000, also far below the 0.05 threshold and exceeding the t -table value of 1.675. Hence, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, indicating that brand image significantly affects purchase intention. The regression coefficient of 0.455 implies that a one-unit increase in brand image results in a 0.455-unit increase in purchase intention, assuming other variables remain constant.

This result supports Keller's (2014) argument that a strong brand image reflects product quality, reliability, and perceived value, which in turn fosters higher purchase intention. Additionally, findings from

Aulia et al. (2023) corroborate this result, demonstrating a positive and significant impact of brand image on purchase intention, especially among young consumers who actively follow beauty trends.

The Influence of Brand Ambassador (X1) and Brand Image (X2) on Purchase Intention (Y)

The F-test results indicate an F-value of 71.719 with a significance level of 0.000, far below the 0.05 threshold and exceeding the F-table value of 3.18. This confirms that brand ambassador and brand image simultaneously exert a positive and significant effect on students' purchase intention. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.201, or 20.1%, indicates that these two variables explain 20.1% of the variance in purchase intention, while the remaining 79.9% is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study. Such factors may include product pricing, product quality, social media promotional strategies, prior consumer experience, and recommendations from peers or other influencers. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.170 reflects the actual contribution of the independent variables after accounting for the number of variables and sample size.

These findings align with Kotler & Keller (2014), suggesting that consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions can be significantly shaped by marketing strategies involving brand image and the use of public figures as brand ambassadors. As a halal cosmetic brand, Wardah effectively leverages brand ambassadors and reinforces its brand image to capture consumer attention, particularly among students who are active on social media and responsive to beauty trends. While these variables demonstrate significant influence, the study highlights the importance of integrated marketing strategies that consider additional factors to maximize purchase intention.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that both brand ambassador and brand image, individually and jointly, have a positive and significant effect on students' purchase intention toward Wardah products. However, their combined contribution is relatively modest (20.1%), suggesting that other factors beyond the scope of this study exert a more dominant influence on purchase intention.

Based on these findings, several practical implications can be drawn for Wardah's management. First, the company is advised to strengthen digital marketing campaigns through social media and platforms frequently used by students. Second, the selection of brand ambassadors should consider their relevance and closeness to the student segment to maximize influence. Third, continuous improvement in product quality and innovation is recommended to reinforce positive brand perceptions and further encourage purchasing decisions.

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