



## The impact of brand ambassadors and brand personality on brand image through brand trust mediation: evidence from Indonesian Cosmetics industry

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### ABSTRACT

The current investigation aims to explore the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty of Aqua mineral water in Padang City, with brand trust positioned as the mediating variable. This research employs quantitative methods with hypothesis testing at the 5% significance level. The results showed that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty, which is strengthened by consumer brand trust. The study confirms that brand trust serves as a mediator in the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty. This research recommends the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of social media content using digital metrics and invites further research to explore other factors that influence brand loyalty. The findings contribute to both academics and practitioners in understanding effective marketing strategies in the digital age, particularly in building brand loyalty through social media marketing and brand trust enhancement.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's cosmetics industry demonstrates significant growth potential, supported by abundant natural resources and traditional knowledge of botanical ingredients. This growth trajectory is further reinforced by increasing consumer awareness of personal care and wellness. According to the National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM), the Indonesian cosmetics industry has experienced substantial expansion, with registered businesses increasing from 819 in 2021 to 1,010 in 2023. Export performance has similarly strengthened, with cosmetics and essential oils generating USD 770.8 million in revenue between January and November 2023 (Ministry of Industry, 2024). The Indonesian women's cosmetics market has undergone rapid expansion, creating a highly competitive environment for both domestic and international beauty brands. This market evolution has been characterized by product diversification, strategic positioning, and targeted marketing approaches designed to capture specific consumer segments.

Within this competitive landscape, established local brands have employed various strategies to maintain market position. Wardah, founded in 1995 as part of Paragon Technology and Innovation, represents a notable case study in strategic brand positioning within the halal cosmetics segment. The brand's approach to market penetration has involved targeting Muslim consumers through halal-certified product formulations designed for Indonesian skin types and climate conditions.

The brand's marketing strategy has incorporated celebrity endorsement programs, utilizing public figures to establish consumer connections and brand recognition. Strategic ambassador selections, such as the appointment of Ayana Moon in 2018, reflect contemporary marketing approaches that

align brand values with social responsibility messaging and modern consumer preferences.

Despite established market presence and comprehensive product portfolios spanning foundation to mascara categories, certain brands have experienced performance fluctuations in recent years. Analysis of Top Brand Index data reveals declining performance across multiple product categories between 2020 and 2023, as illustrated in the following performance metrics:

**Table 1: Top Brand Index of Wardah Cosmetic Products**

Year	Product Name			
	Lipstick	Compact Powder	Blush on	Mascara
2020	33.50 %	27.60 %	32.20 %	12.80 %
2021	31.90 %	26.70 %	28.60 %	12.60 %
2022	27.20 %	24.70 %	26.60 %	12.50 %
2023	26.00 %	23.60 %	14.20 %	11.60 %

Source: Top Brand Award, 2023 ([www.topbrand-award.com](http://www.topbrand-award.com))

This trend highlights a pressing need to address the underlying issues to preserve Wardah's brand image and maintain consumer trust. Declining brand indexes can affect customer loyalty and sales growth, especially in a highly competitive market. In this context, brand ambassadors and brand personality are vital for strengthening brand image. According to Kharisma (2022), brand ambassadors significantly influence brand image, while Putri and Nugrahani (2022) suggest that prominent brand ambassadors can enhance brand appeal. Meanwhile, a distinct brand personality differentiates a brand from competitors, making it memorable to consumers (Aeni & Ekhsan, 2020).

Additionally, brand trust is essential for consumer loyalty, as it encourages repeat purchases and positive recommendations. When trust is compromised, consumer loyalty tends to wane, impacting brand sustainability (Aeni & Ekhsan, 2020). Therefore, evaluating the impact of brand ambassadors and brand personality on brand image and trust is critical for addressing the decline in Wardah's brand index and ensuring sustainable growth.

This study aims to explore "The Influence of Brand Ambassadors and Brand Personality on Brand Image with Brand Trust as a Mediating Variable for Wardah Cosmetic Products in Tanah Datar Regency." By analyzing these relationships, this research seeks to provide insights into effective strategies for enhancing brand image and fostering customer loyalty in the Indonesian cosmetics market.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Brand Image

Brand image represents a fundamental construct in marketing theory, encompassing consumer perceptions and associations related to a specific brand. According to Aaker (1991, as cited in Alzate et al., 2022), brand associations constitute valuable assets that include all elements connected to consumers' brand memories. These associations enable organizations to develop more strategic marketing decisions through comprehensive understanding of consumer perceptions.

Jung et al. (2020) identified four critical dimensions of brand image measurement: positive brand impression formation, favorable brand image retention, comparative brand superiority perception, and continued usage intention. These dimensions collectively capture the multifaceted nature of consumer brand perception and provide a framework for assessing brand image effectiveness in competitive markets.

### Brand Ambassador

Brand ambassadors function as strategic communication intermediaries between organizations and target consumers. Murti et al. (2024) conceptualize brand ambassadors as individuals formally employed by companies to represent and advocate for brand interests in public settings. These

representatives facilitate emotional connections between brands and consumers while reinforcing brand image perceptions that subsequently influence purchasing behavior.

The effectiveness of brand ambassador strategies can be evaluated through the VISCAP model developed by Rossiter and Percy (as cited in Murti et al., 2024), which encompasses four essential components:

1. Visibility: The degree of public recognition and awareness associated with the ambassador
2. Credibility: The perceived competence, expertise, and trustworthiness of the ambassador
3. Attraction: The physical and personality appeal that generates consumer interest
4. Power: The persuasive influence capacity to modify consumer attitudes and behaviors

### **Brand Personality**

Brand personality represents a theoretical framework that attributes human characteristics to brand entities, enabling consumers to form emotional connections with products and services. Calderón-Fajardo et al. (2023) define this construct as a marketing concept that encompasses human traits associated with specific brands. Brand personality functions as a core component of overall brand image, complementing physical product attributes and functional benefits.

Aaker's (1997) seminal framework, as referenced in António Cardoso (2022), established five fundamental dimensions of brand personality:

1. Sincerity: Characterized by honesty, reliability, and authentic communication
2. Excitement: Encompassing innovation, uniqueness, and contemporary appeal
3. Competence: Reflecting leadership, confidence, and success orientation
4. Sophistication: Associated with elegance, prestige, and exclusivity
5. Ruggedness: Representing durability, masculinity, and resilience

### **Brand Trust**

Brand trust constitutes a critical relational construct that mediates the connection between brands and consumers. Juhaidi et al. (2024) emphasize that brand trust serves as a foundational element in sustainable brand-consumer relationships. This construct emerges from positive interactions characterized by organizational reliability, consistent performance, and demonstrated goodwill toward consumer interests. Konuk (2021) identifies key dimensions of brand trust that encompass consumer confidence in brand reliability, dependability in brand performance, perception of brand honesty in communications, and assessment of brand safety in product delivery. These dimensions collectively contribute to the formation of trust-based relationships that influence consumer loyalty and repurchase intentions.

### **Hypothesis**

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Brand ambassadors have a significant positive impact on the brand image of Wardah cosmetic products in Tanah Datar Regency.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Brand ambassadors have a significant positive impact on brand trust towards Wardah cosmetic products in Tanah Datar Regency.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Brand personality has a significant positive impact on the brand image of Wardah cosmetic products in Tanah Datar Regency.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Brand personality has a significant positive impact on brand trust towards Wardah cosmetic products in Tanah Datar Regency.

**H<sub>5</sub>:** Brand trust has a significant positive impact on the brand image of Wardah cosmetic products in Tanah Datar Regency.

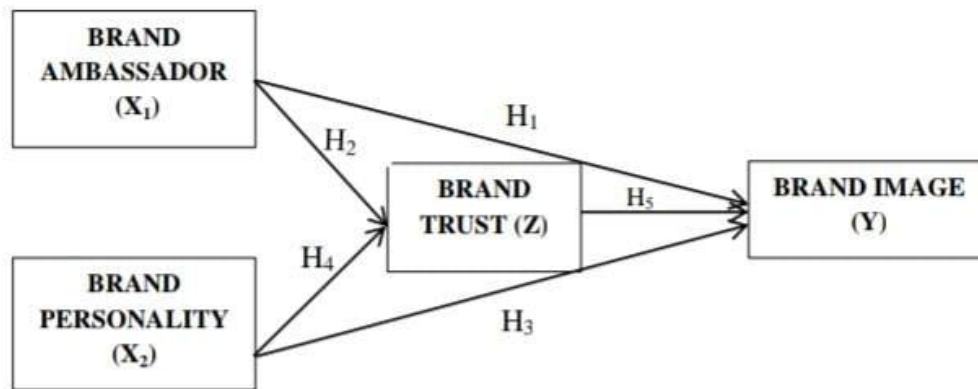


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

## METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach, as defined by Sugiyono (2017), where research is based on the philosophy of positivism, focusing on specific populations or samples, utilizing research tools to gather data, and applying quantitative methods to analyze statistical data. The research was conducted in Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra, from September 2024. The data sources for this study consist of primary data collected through questionnaires completed by selected research samples from a predetermined population, as well as secondary data obtained from various literature related to brand ambassadors, brand personality, brand trust, and brand image. Secondary data was gathered from resources discussing these topics in the context of the cosmetics industry. The study involved a sample of 250 respondents, determined using the Hair formula for sample size calculation. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, based on specific criteria such as age, gender, and purchasing behavior. Data collection was conducted through an online survey using a Likert scale. The data analysis in this research was performed using SmartPLS 4 to test the relationships between the variables and examine the model’s validity and reliability.

Table 2. Definition Operational

Variable	Definisi Operasional	Indicator
Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> )	A brand ambassador is an individual who acts as a liaison between a brand and consumers, with the goal of increasing consumer awareness and preference for the brand.	<p><b>Visibility:</b> The recognizability of the brand ambassador.</p> <p><b>Credibility:</b> The ambassador’s competence and trustworthiness.</p> <p><b>Attraction:</b> The appeal of the brand ambassador’s appearance.</p> <p><b>Power:</b> The ambassador’s ability to persuade or influence consumers.</p>
Brand Personality (X <sub>2</sub> )	Brand personality is a set of human-like characteristics given to a brand to create an emotional connection between the brand and consumers.	<p><b>Excitement:</b> Trendy/popular, Unique, Exciting</p> <p><b>Sincerity:</b> Sincere, Reliable, Honest</p> <p><b>Ruggedness:</b> Masculine, Durable, Tough</p> <p><b>Sophistication:</b> Glamorous, High-class, Attractive</p> <p><b>Competence:</b> Leader, Confident, Successful</p>

Brand Image (Y)	Wardah has cultivated a strong brand image through consistently delivering high-quality products, positive user experiences, and upholding strong brand values, which have collectively attracted a large customer base.	Having a positive impression of the brand. Having a good brand image in mind Having a better image compared to other brands Planning to continue using the brand consistently.
Brand Trust (Z)	Wardah has cultivated consumer trust through its consistent delivery of high-quality products and its unwavering dedication to natural skincare.	I trust this brand I rely on this brand This is an honest brand This brand is safe

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire data that has been collected and filled in completely by respondents is then processed using PLS-SEM with smartPLS 4.1.0.8 software.

### Outer model

Outer model testing is conducted to reveal how each indicator relates to the latent variable. Because the indicators in this study are reflective.

**Table 3. Reliability and Validity (Cronbach's Alpha, AVE, CR)**

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Ambassador	0,792	0,792	0,865	0,615
Brand Image	0,723	0,723	0,828	0,546
Brand Personality	0,869	0,871	0,897	0,522
Brand Trust	0,703	0,704	0,817	0,527

Source: Processed primary data (2024)

### Discriminant Validity

Hair, et al. (2014), explained that discriminant validity has the principle that different construct measurements should not be highly correlated. Where a variable is declared valid if the value of Fornell Larcker and cross loading with its latent variable is greater than the indicator for other variables.

**Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell Larcker)**

	Brand Ambassador	Brand Image	Brand Personality	Brand Trust
Brand Ambassador	<b>0,784</b>			
Brand Image	0,625	<b>0,739</b>		
Brand Personality	0,651	0,719	<b>0,722</b>	
Brand Trust	0,631	0,644	0,671	<b>0,726</b>

Source: Processed primary data (2024)

## Hypothesis Test

### Direct Hypothesis

**Table 5. Direct Hypothesis**

	<b>T-Statistics</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
Brand Ambassador -> Brand Image	3,492	0,000
Brand Ambassador -> Brand Trust	5,470	0,000
Brand Personality -> Brand Image	6,736	0,000
Brand Personality -> Brand Trust	7,411	0,000
Brand Trust -> Brand Image	3,731	0,000

*Source: Processed primary data (2024)*

This study shows that Brand Ambassador has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image and Brand Trust of Wardah Cosmetics products in Tanah Datar Regency. The results show a t-statistic that is greater than the t-table and a p-value that is smaller than 0.05, which indicates a positive and significant effect on both variables. In addition, Brand Personality is also proven to have a positive and significant effect on Brand Image and Brand Trust.

### Indirect Hypothesis

**Table 6. Indirect Hypothesis**

	<b>T-Statistics</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
Brand Ambassador -> Brand Trust -> Brand Image	3,246	0,001
Brand Personality -> Brand Trust -> Brand Image	3,030	0,002

*Source: Processed primary data (2024)*

This study shows that Brand Ambassador and Brand Personality have a positive and significant effect on the Brand Image of Wardah Cosmetics products in Tanah Datar Regency through Brand Trust as a mediator. The results of the statistical test show that the t-statistic is greater than the t-table and the p-value is smaller than 0.05, which indicates that Brand Ambassador and Brand Personality each influence Brand Image through increasing consumer trust.

## DISCUSSION

### The Influence of Brand Ambassador on Brand Image

The study reveals that Wardah's brand ambassadors significantly and positively impact the brand image of Wardah Cosmetics in Tanah Datar Regency. This positive relationship suggests that Wardah should select brand ambassadors who embody its core values and brand personality, as this strategy has proven effective in enhancing the brand image in consumers' minds. Furthermore, the significant effect indicates that the presence of an appropriate brand ambassador substantially influences Wardah's brand image levels in this region.

This finding is supported by prior research: Karina (2023) reported a significant effect of brand ambassadors on Wardah's brand image, and Ardhiyansyah (2021) confirmed that brand ambassadors significantly impact a product's or company's brand image. Similarly, Intan and Pramitha (2022) observed a positive and significant influence of brand ambassadors on brand image. Therefore, these results collectively suggest that an effective brand ambassador strategy is instrumental in strengthening Wardah's brand image.

### **The Influence of Brand Ambassador on Brand Trust**

The study also indicates a significant positive impact of brand ambassadors on Wardah Cosmetics' brand trust in Tanah Datar Regency. This positive effect highlights the role of a suitable brand ambassador in reinforcing consumer trust in Wardah's brand. Brand trust, crucial for customer loyalty and retention, is significantly influenced by brand ambassadors who reflect Wardah's brand attributes.

Previous studies corroborate these findings. Hera (2023) reported a positive and significant relationship between brand ambassadors and brand trust, while Arabela and Hanifa (2023) also noted a positive influence of brand ambassadors on brand trust. These results affirm that using credible and relevant brand ambassadors can effectively enhance brand trust and ultimately encourage consumers' purchasing decisions.

### **The Influence of Brand Personality on Brand Image**

Brand personality has a significant positive effect on the brand image of Wardah Cosmetics in Tanah Datar Regency. This positive association suggests that maintaining and reinforcing a consistent brand personality is essential for Wardah to project a favorable brand image to consumers. The significant influence indicates that Wardah's brand personality directly affects its brand image in this region.

These findings align with Gita and Imanuddin (2020), who demonstrated that brand personality positively and significantly impacts brand image. Consequently, a strong and relevant brand personality serves as a vital tool to increase brand appeal, influence purchasing decisions, and foster customer loyalty.

### **The Influence of Brand Personality on Brand Trust**

The study also shows that brand personality significantly and positively impacts Wardah Cosmetics' brand trust in Tanah Datar Regency. This positive relationship implies that if Wardah seeks to increase brand trust, it should focus on maintaining a consistent brand personality that resonates with consumers. The significant influence highlights brand personality's crucial role in shaping Wardah's brand trust. Dinata (2023) supports this outcome, showing that brand personality positively influences brand trust. A robust and consistent brand personality differentiates Wardah from its competitors, establishing a competitive advantage and fostering long-term consumer relationships.

### **The Influence of Brand Trust on Brand Image**

Brand trust is found to have a significant positive effect on Wardah Cosmetics' brand image in Tanah Datar Regency. This positive relationship indicates that enhancing consumer trust is critical for Wardah to strengthen its brand image. Furthermore, the significant effect demonstrates that brand trust is a crucial determinant of Wardah's brand image in this region.

Supporting this, Fauzi (2023) found that brand trust positively and significantly mediates brand image. Building consumer trust is a long-term investment that reinforces Wardah's brand image and delivers sustained benefits to the company.

## **CONCLUSION**

Hypothesis testing confirms that both brand ambassadors and brand personality significantly affect Wardah Cosmetics' brand image and brand trust in Tanah Datar Regency. Selecting an appropriate brand ambassador and cultivating a relevant brand personality are effective strategies to build consumer trust, which in turn strengthens Wardah's brand image. Brand trust plays a central role in shaping positive brand perceptions, where increased consumer trust translates to an improved Wardah brand image.

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