

The Role of Brand Image in Consumer Decision-Making: Evidence from The Body Shop Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose—This study examines the influence of brand image on consumer purchasing decisions for The Body Shop Body Mist products in Bandung, Indonesia. As competition in the cosmetics industry intensifies, companies must establish a strong brand image to differentiate themselves and maintain consumer loyalty. This research seeks to determine how consumers perceive The Body Shop's brand image, the key factors influencing purchasing decisions, and the extent to which brand image affects consumer behavior.

Design/methods/approach – This study employs a quantitative research approach with a descriptive and causal research design. The sample consists of Body Mist consumers from The Body Shop Bandung, selected using non-probability purposive sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using simple linear regression and t-test analysis in SPSS. The analysis measures the statistical significance of the relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions, following the positivist paradigm.

Findings– The results confirm that brand image significantly influences purchasing decisions, with a t-value of 42.583 exceeding the t-table value of 1.660 at a 0.000 significance level. A one-unit increase in brand image raises purchase decisions by 0.344 units. Consumers in Bandung perceive The Body Shop as a high-quality, ethical, and eco-friendly brand, enhancing trust and purchase intent, consistent with studies on brand equity and consumer behavior.

Research implications/limitations—This study offers insights into how brand image shapes consumer purchasing decisions in the cosmetics industry. Strengthening sustainability branding, ethical business practices, and digital marketing can enhance brand perception and engagement. However, findings are limited to The Body Shop's Body Mist category in Bandung, reducing generalizability. Future research should compare competing brands, digital branding strategies, and customer loyalty programs.

Originality/value—This research expands knowledge on brand image and consumer behavior in Indonesia's ethical beauty market. By focusing on The Body Shop's sustainability-driven branding, it provides empirical evidence on brand perception in emerging markets. The findings benefit academics, marketers, and business strategists aiming to refine brand positioning and competitive advantage in the cosmetics industry.

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Introduction

The globalization of markets has intensified competition across industries, requiring companies to develop a competitive advantage to secure their position in both domestic and international markets. Competitive advantage is crucial for ensuring long-term sustainability, increasing profitability, and differentiating a company from its competitors (Porter, 1985). Various industries implement different strategies to maintain competitiveness, particularly in attracting and retaining consumers. One of the fastest-growing and highly competitive sectors is the cosmetics industry, where consumer demand for beauty and personal care products continues to rise due to increasing awareness of self-care and aesthetics (Arifudin et al., 2021).

The cosmetics industry operates within a dynamic market, requiring companies to continuously innovate to meet consumer expectations. Research by Kotler & Keller (2016) suggests that brand positioning plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchasing behavior. To remain competitive, businesses must invest in research and development (R&D) to create products that align with market needs and offer distinctive value propositions. This includes product attributes such as quality, pricing, and brand image, which significantly influence consumer purchasing behavior (Zeithaml, 1988). A strong brand image fosters consumer trust, enhances brand recall, and ultimately strengthens the brand equity of a company (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013). Conversely, a negative brand image can reduce consumer confidence and hinder market performance.

One of the most well-known brands in the global cosmetics and personal care industry is The Body Shop International plc, commonly known as The Body Shop. Founded by Dame Anita Roddick, the company operates more than 2,400 stores across 61 countries and is renowned for its commitment to ethical and sustainable beauty products (Guthrie et al., 2008). The Body Shop differentiates itself through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, advocating for causes such as Against Animal Testing, Support Community Trade, Activate Self-Esteem, Defend Human Rights, and Protect Our Planet (Mason & Simmons, 2014). These initiatives have strengthened The Body Shop's corporate reputation, increasing brand loyalty and consumer engagement.

The company's ethical branding strategy has enabled it to develop a loyal customer base and achieve a competitive edge in the global market. With an extensive product portfolio, including skincare, bath & body, fragrance, and accessories, The Body Shop has successfully positioned itself as a brand that integrates natural ingredients with ethical sourcing practices. Research suggests that ethical consumerism is a growing trend in the beauty industry, where consumers prefer brands that demonstrate environmental and social responsibility (White et al., 2019).

As part of its international expansion strategy, The Body Shop entered the Indonesian market in 1992, adopting a franchise system under PT Monica Hijau Lestari. The first store was established at Pondok Indah Mall, Jakarta, a location chosen for its alignment with the brand's target market. Over the years, The Body Shop has expanded across various regions in Indonesia, including Bandung, which holds the third-largest market share after Jakarta and Surabaya. Bandung, often referred to as Paris van Java, is recognized as Indonesia's fashion and beauty hub. The city's young, trend-conscious population places high importance on personal grooming and skincare, contributing to the increasing demand for beauty and personal care products.

Among The Body Shop's product offerings, Body Mist has gained significant consumer interest due to its refreshing scents and natural ingredients. Given the brand's strong positioning in Indonesia and its commitment to ethical beauty, this study aims to analyze the

influence of brand image on consumer purchasing decisions for The Body Shop Body Mist products in Bandung. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do consumers perceive the brand image of The Body Shop Body Mist products in Bandung?
2. What factors influence consumer purchasing decisions for The Body Shop Body Mist products?
3. To what extent does brand image impact consumer purchase decisions in the Body Mist category?

This research builds upon existing studies on brand image and consumer behavior, exploring how The Body Shop's brand identity, ethical values, and product quality contribute to purchase decisions. Studies by Tjiptono (2015) and Han et al. (2020) suggest that brand image, consumer trust, and perceived product quality are significant determinants of consumer buying behavior. Understanding these factors will provide insights for cosmetic brands seeking to enhance their market positioning and consumer engagement strategies in Indonesia's evolving beauty industry.

Methods

This study employs a descriptive and causal research design using a quantitative approach. According to Sugiyono (2018), descriptive research aims to identify the existence of independent variables, either individually or collectively, without making comparisons or establishing causal relationships with other variables. Independent variables in descriptive research function independently and are not necessarily paired with dependent variables.

In contrast, causal research is designed to analyze cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Sugiyono (2017:8) states that causal research is conducted on a specific population or sample to test predetermined hypotheses and determine the extent to which one or more independent variables influence a dependent variable.

This study follows a quantitative research methodology, which, according to Sugiyono (2018:8), is based on the positivist paradigm. The quantitative approach is used to study specific populations and samples, employing structured data collection instruments and statistical analysis techniques to test hypotheses objectively.

To achieve research objectives, data collection was conducted using survey questionnaires, ensuring structured responses for statistical analysis. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistical methods, including regression analysis to examine the relationships between brand image and consumer purchasing decisions for The Body Shop's Body Mist products in Bandung.

Result

The findings of this study indicate that brand image significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions for The Body Shop Body Mist products in Bandung. Based on the t-test analysis, the computed t-value (42.583) exceeds the critical t-table value (1.660), with a significance level of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. This result suggests that brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumer purchase behavior, reinforcing the notion that a strong brand identity fosters consumer trust and purchase intent.

Table 2. T-Test Results (Partial Test)

Purchase Decision Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Significance
(Constant)	2.165	0.493	5.465	0.000
Brand Image	0.344	0.195	2.583	0.000

Source: Processed Data (SPSS Output)

The Simple Linear Regression Analysis was employed to examine the causal relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions. The regression equation derived from the analysis is as follows:

$$Y = 2.165 + 0.344X$$

where:

- Y represents consumer purchasing decision,
- X represents brand image,
- 2.165 is the constant value, indicating that when brand image is at zero (0.000) or does not change, the average purchase decision remains at 2.165.
- The regression coefficient (0.344) is positive, meaning that for every one-unit increase in brand image, the purchase decision increases by 0.344 units.

The results clearly indicate that a strong brand image enhances consumer purchasing decisions. The findings align with Zeithaml (1988), who emphasized that perceived brand value significantly influences consumer preferences, and Kotler & Keller (2016), who stated that brand perception plays a fundamental role in shaping purchase behavior. The positive influence of brand image observed in this study is consistent with Aaker (1991), who highlighted that brand image contributes to emotional attachment and consumer loyalty.

Analysis of the Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decisions

The results of this study suggest that brand image is a key determinant of consumer purchasing behavior, particularly in the cosmetics industry, where consumer trust and perceived quality strongly impact purchase decisions. The Body Shop, as a brand, has positioned itself as a leader in sustainable and ethical beauty, emphasizing values such as cruelty-free products, eco-friendly ingredients, and fair trade sourcing. These brand attributes contribute to positive consumer perceptions, ultimately increasing purchase likelihood.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that brand image serves as a competitive advantage, distinguishing The Body Shop from other beauty brands in Bandung. Consumers perceive The Body Shop as an ethical, high-quality brand, leading to increased brand credibility and stronger consumer loyalty. The company's commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) reinforces its brand equity, making it more attractive to environmentally conscious consumers. This finding is in line with Keller (2013), who found that strong brand resonance and perceived brand quality significantly enhance consumer engagement and purchase intent.

Implications for Marketing and Business Strategy

Given the significant impact of brand image on purchase decisions, strategic brand management and marketing efforts should focus on further strengthening brand identity. Several key implications emerge from these findings:

1. Enhancing Digital Marketing Strategies

To maintain and strengthen its brand image, The Body Shop should leverage social media engagement, influencer collaborations, and storytelling about its ethical values. Digital marketing campaigns that emphasize sustainability and cruelty-free commitments can further enhance consumer perception and drive brand loyalty.

2. Improving Consumer Experience

In-store experiences and customer engagement initiatives can reinforce brand identity. Hosting interactive events, workshops on sustainable beauty, and personalized skincare consultations can help consumers feel more connected to the brand.

3. Leveraging Ethical Branding for Competitive Advantage

The Body Shop should continue to expand its corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs to further solidify its brand reputation. Highlighting sustainability reports, fair trade initiatives, and environmentally friendly packaging innovations can appeal to consumers who prioritize ethical consumption.

Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on brand image and consumer behavior. Aaker (1997) emphasized that brand personality traits contribute to consumer-brand relationships, which aligns with the current study's findings that The Body Shop's ethical stance strengthens consumer trust. Similarly, Tjiptono (2015) found that strong brand equity leads to greater consumer willingness to pay premium prices, which is also observed in The Body Shop's ability to maintain a loyal customer base despite higher price points compared to conventional beauty brands.

Future Research Directions

While this study confirms the significant influence of brand image on purchase decisions, future research could explore several areas for deeper analysis:

1. The Role of Digital Marketing in Brand Image Development

Investigating how social media engagement and online brand communities shape consumer perceptions of The Body Shop could provide insights into the effectiveness of digital branding strategies.

2. Comparative Studies with Competing Brands

Comparing The Body Shop's brand image and consumer loyalty with other ethical beauty brands in Indonesia, such as Lush or The Face Shop, could highlight unique competitive advantages.

3. The Impact of Customer Loyalty Programs

Examining how loyalty programs, rewards, and personalized recommendations influence repeat purchases and long-term customer retention would be beneficial in understanding how brand image translates into sustained consumer engagement.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the influence of brand image on consumer purchasing decisions for The Body Shop Body Mist products in Bandung. The findings confirm that brand image significantly affects consumer purchase behavior, as demonstrated by the t-test analysis, where the computed t-value (42.583) exceeded the t-table value (1.660) with a significance level of 0.000. The regression equation further indicates that a one-unit increase

in brand image results in a 0.344-unit increase in purchasing decisions, reinforcing the notion that a strong brand identity fosters consumer trust and enhances purchase intent.

The first research question addressed consumer perceptions of The Body Shop's brand image. The findings suggest that consumers in Bandung perceive The Body Shop as a high-quality, ethical, and environmentally responsible brand. The company's commitment to sustainability, cruelty-free production, and fair trade sourcing enhances brand credibility and consumer trust, making it a preferred choice for beauty-conscious and environmentally aware consumers. This aligns with previous research by Aaker (1991) and Keller (2013), which highlights the role of brand equity in shaping consumer perceptions and engagement.

The second research question explored factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions. The study reveals that brand image, perceived quality, ethical commitments, and corporate social responsibility initiatives are key drivers of purchasing behavior. Consumers are increasingly drawn to brands that align with their values, making sustainability-driven branding a critical competitive advantage. In addition, digital marketing strategies, in-store experiences, and brand reputation play a crucial role in reinforcing purchase decisions.

The third research question examined the extent to which brand image impacts consumer purchase decisions. The findings confirm that brand image has a statistically significant and positive influence on purchasing behavior, as indicated by the regression coefficient (0.344). This underscores the importance of brand positioning in enhancing consumer trust, emotional connection, and brand loyalty, further supporting Zeithaml (1988) and Kotler & Keller (2016) in their assertions that perceived brand value is a fundamental determinant of consumer decision-making.

From a managerial perspective, the findings highlight the need for strategic brand management and marketing initiatives to sustain brand credibility and consumer engagement. The Body Shop should focus on strengthening its digital marketing presence, enhancing customer experiences, and expanding its corporate social responsibility initiatives. Leveraging sustainability messaging, influencer collaborations, and personalized marketing approaches can further enhance brand loyalty and consumer advocacy.

Despite these significant findings, the study has certain limitations. It focuses solely on The Body Shop's Body Mist product category in Bandung, limiting its generalizability to other product lines or geographic markets. Future research could explore comparative studies between The Body Shop and its competitors, investigate the role of digital branding in shaping consumer perceptions, or examine how customer loyalty programs influence long-term purchasing decisions.

In conclusion, this study confirms the significant role of brand image in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. A well-managed brand image not only enhances brand trust and consumer engagement but also strengthens competitive advantage in the beauty industry. As consumer preferences continue to evolve, companies must prioritize authenticity, sustainability, and strategic marketing to maintain their relevance and success in the market.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

The lead author participated in the study's conceptualization and design, analysis, interpretation of data, and initial drafting of the paper. Each author contributed to the critical revision of the content for intellectual rigor and provided final approval for the published version. All authors are responsible for every aspect of the work.

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Data availability statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. However, due to privacy and ethical considerations, the data are not publicly accessible.

Declaration of Interests Statement

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