

## The Brand Ambassador Effectiveness on Brand Image and Purchasing Decision For Oppo F Series Smartphone

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**ABSTRACT:** In order to introduce its F Series products, OPPO used brand ambassadors. As a middle end and for the middle class, OPPO built a brand image by using brand ambassadors, namely Rio Haryanto, Isyana Sarasvati, Raisa, and Chelsea Islan for its F Series products. This study aimed to determine the role of brand ambassadors in the promotion of OPPO F Series products and analyze their influence on brand image and customer purchasing decision. The type of research used was explanatory research, while the research data was obtained using questionnaires involving 85 respondents. The results of this study showed that Brand Ambassador had a direct influence on Brand Image but had an indirect influence on Purchasing Decision.

**KEY WORD:** Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, Purchasing Decision, Smartphone

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### I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology develops along with the changing times. It, nowadays, has penetrated almost all aspects and lines of human life. It makes human activities easier to be more practical and concise. The use of smartphones is a clear proof of the closeness of technology to modern life. Smartphone's features offer convenience in communication and information that can be easily accessed by consumers. Communication in the forms of phone calls and short messages can be done at any time, likewise with access to information such as news and entertainment and social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These social media's users encourage smartphone manufacturers to be more creative in their innovation. The manufacturers then start a competition in creating advanced features to capture Indonesian market share by targeting social media users.

Indonesia, as the country with the fourth largest population in the world and included in countries with active social media users, is a challenging market for smartphone manufacturers to market their products. The table below shows the market share of the five smartphone manufacturers dominating in Indonesia.

**Table 1.** Smartphones Market Share in Indonesia

Manufacturer	Market Share (percentage)
Samsung	30.0%
OPPO	25.5%
Advan	8.3%
Vivo	7.5%
Xiaomi	6.2%
Others	22.5%
Total	100%

Source: IDC 2017 (<https://infokomputer.grid.id/tag/idc>)

The table shows some Chinese producers began to emerge and slowly take control of the market. One of these producers is OPPO, at the second position. According to a research by CounterPoint in 2017, one of popular products at that year was the F Series, where many of these devices were sold in cities that have many young people who are actively socializing media such as Jakarta, Bandung and Surabaya. In addition, from observations in several shops in the Jakarta and Bogor regions, it appeared that OPPO F Series was the target of the smartphone community as this series offered advanced front camera to support consumer selfie activities.

OPPO's market share which was quite competitive in Indonesia was closely related to the marketing strategy used. Given that effective and innovative marketing strategies determined the victory of a company in the market, OPPO was actively promoting their products through events, bazaars and advertisements.

Advertising, as an important part of a company's marketing strategy in introducing its products, is useful to attract consumers to buy and use products or services offered. Effective promotional activities must focus on consumers in which the goal is to know the extent to which the effectiveness of promotions in influencing consumers to make purchases of these products or services. Promotion through advertising must be

supported by the presence of brand ambassadors as messengers. Advertising can affect the popularity of a brand with the support of brand ambassadors as a component of advertising. The popularity of a brand ambassador is like a magnet that can attract consumers' curiosity about a product, especially a new product. The use of celebrities as brand ambassadors is a popular formula in promotion (Mukherjee, 2009). The process of marketing a new product or a new brand requires consumer awareness that the brand exists. Here, the task of a brand ambassador is to grow and increase consumer awareness of a brand he/she promotes. There are many product categories and many brands are flooding the market, so that attributes such as quality and value of goods cannot be automatically calculated. There must be effective media to make products reach customers. The media here can be celebrities who act as brand ambassadors.

A product that is supported by famous celebrities will get its brand awareness and positive impression. Therefore, in many ways, companies may take advantage of celebrity support. That's the reason why companies pay millions to promote their products with the help of celebrities (Goutam, 2013).

Brand ambassadors in the standard sense are users who are satisfied with the product and then give a positive impression and even recommendations to others to use the product. However, this definition has shifted and mixed with the definition of a brand endorser which means someone, who does not have to be a genuine consumer, who delivers good news about a product to the wider community. Generally, companies use celebrities, public figures that they reward. A brand ambassador is someone who is well connected with a product or a celebrity or public figure who is used to promote and advertise a product. The popularity of a celebrity or public figure who is a brand ambassador is expected to boost brand awareness and brand image of a product, and capture or maintain market share. In addition, brand ambassadors can strengthen consumer bonds with the product itself (consumer engagement).

The presence of brand ambassadors can overcome the information gap between companies and target consumers, so that consumers get sufficient information about the product. In marketing activities, brand ambassadors have the obligations to answer questions, involve viewers, and increase brand awareness. Brand ambassadors are very instrumental in helping smooth marketing activities both locally and globally (Greenwood, 2012). In addition to these obligations, brand ambassadors also have the role of communicating their brands smartly and accordingly to the characteristics of the company, attracting attention, boosting consumer awareness of the brand, increasing product use, and instilling a positive image in the minds of consumers.

Brand ambassador's personality is an important part because it affects the image of the brand ambassador itself, including the image of the product. Brand ambassadors shape the image of consumers towards brands and companies which convey their message to consumers. In addition, popularity, physical attractiveness, and professional suitability are also other considerations in choosing brand ambassadors. These make it easier for companies to get recognition from consumers and to convey value of product to them. Brand and brand ambassadors jointly develop and increase brand value in certain groups of audiences or specific target consumers. Because the red thread of brands and celebrities is popularity.

The compatibility between brand and brand ambassador is very important to support the communication of brands which in the end is able to form a good brand image. Brand image that is in accordance with the brand ambassador character automatically creates chemistry which creates attachment between the brand ambassador and brand image of a product so that when the name of the brand ambassador is called, the product will automatically appear in the minds of consumers. Brand ambassadors, in addition to being a brand representative, must be able to communicate the advantages and benefits of the product to the target consumers.

In order to introduce F Series products, OPPO used brand ambassadors. OPPO, as the middle end and for the middle class, built a brand image by using brand ambassadors for its F Series products, namely Rio Haryanto, Isyana Sarasvati, Raisa, and Chelsea Islan. How did OPPO as a new player in the world of cellphones win the hearts and attention of consumers through public figures or rising celebrities and become Indonesia's sweet heart? OPPO chose celebrities since the use of celebrities as brand ambassadors would be more effective to lift a very low brand awareness level in a short time and to, eventually, increase the public's desire to try the product.

## **Promotion**

Promotion is a substantial thing in marketing. Promotion is one of the marketing mix that has a function as an activity that can communicate the company's products to the target market desired by the company.

Promotion is an activity, either directly or indirectly, to introduce a product or service in a certain way and as a form of offering a product or service to the intended customer.

In an effective promotion process, according to Kotler (2002), there are eight steps that must be cured by marketers so that good communication can be established, namely:

1. Identifying the intended audiences
2. Determining communication objectives
3. Designing messages
4. Choosing communication channels
5. Determining the total promotional budget
6. Making a decision on the promotion mix
7. Measuring the results of the promotion
8. Managing and coordinating the communication process in an integrated manner.

The promotional activities cover five main communication ways, namely: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal sales, and direct marketing (Belch & Belch, 2004).

### **Advertising**

Advertising is part of the promotion mix. It is directed at motivating someone to buy (Jenkins 1982). This needs to be known given the difference in scope between marketing and promotion. Promotion is part of marketing activities. Marketing covers the entire process, starting from the planning strategy in the form of identifying consumer needs to successful sales of a product/service.

### **Brand Ambassador**

According to Greenwood (2012), the use of brand ambassadors is done by companies to influence or invite consumers to make purchases. This is so that consumers are interested in using the product, especially because the use of brand ambassadors is usually based on imaging by celebrities.

Brand ambassadors are cultural icons or identities acting as a tool in marketing to represent the achievements of individual humanity and commodity glory and the commercialization of a product (Bonner & Marshall 2012).

#### **VisCAP Model**

VisCAP is used to assess and evaluate whether or not the figure chosen as a brand ambassador has the qualities desired by both the public and the company.

#### **1. Visibility**

Visibility is the extent to which a brand ambassador is known by the public through various media. The higher the public's attention to the public figure, the higher the level of visibility.

#### **2. Credibility**

This indicator assesses the extent to which a public figure/brand ambassador has the ability and knowledge to provide objective information to consumers

- a. Expertise
- b. Objectivity
3. Attraction

Includes physical attraction and a set of values inherent in a public figure.

There are two characteristics possessed by the attraction namely likability and similarity.

#### **- Likability**

This characteristic looks at the sides of physical appearance and personality. Through attractiveness, a brand ambassador is expected to have a positive influence on the brand that is delivered.

#### **- Similarity**

The similarity of the emotional picture in advertising can be very helpful for the effective purpose of advertising.

#### **4. Power**

This character is usually followed by the significance of influence a public figure has. The high rank or magnitude of the name possessed by public figures is very supportive of this character.

### **Congruency**

Congruency is the concept of a match between the brand ambassador and the product and brand he/she represents. When the image displayed by the brand ambassador is in accordance with the characteristics of a product, it will form an association between the brand ambassador, the brand, and the product. An advertisement with a brand ambassador image that consistently matches the product will induce the effect of advertising directly to consumers (Pritzen, 2012).

**Brand Image**

Brand image means the perception of the brand described by brand associations that exist in consumer memory (Keller, 2012). Brand associations are something that relates to brands in consumer memory (Aaker, 2010). Brand image is also a reflection or identity of a brand. Brand image can also be interpreted as a public perception of a brand’s identity.

**Purchasing Decision**

Consumer purchasing decision is part of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior can be defined as a process and activity that involves people when searching, selecting, buying, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services to meet their needs and desires (Belch and Belch, 2007).

**1.2 Research Objectives**

Advertising has changed as a strategic tool for increasing sales and attracting more consumer attention. The involvement of brand ambassadors in marketing a product will foster a sense of trust and, at the same time, give a touch of glamor to the brand among competing products. Competition between smartphone manufacturers requires manufacturers to implement appropriate and effective promotions to increase the brand image in the minds of consumers towards products and influence consumers to buy and use their products. This research was conducted by analyzing the influence of brand ambassadors on product brand image and to determine whether or not brand ambassadors effectively influence purchasing decisions. The formulation of the problem is as follows:

1. Do brand ambassadors influence the brand image?
2. Do brand ambassadors influence purchasing decisions?

This study focused on OPPO F Series products, namely the influence of its brand ambassadors on brand image and purchasing decisions. The intended F Series products were limited to the F1, F3 and F5 series which featured the power of a clear front camera and various features that make it easy for users to do selfie. OPPO, in its sales campaign, used brand ambassadors, namely artists who were considered able to represent consumers targeted.

**II. METHODOLOGY**

**2.1 Research Methodology**

This study was explanatory research and used quantitative approach. It was categorized in survey research because the research data was obtained using questionnaires. Sampling was done by a non-probability sampling method, namely purposive sampling. Respondents were people who knew about and use the OPPO F-Series smartphones. The number of respondents was 85. Data was processed using SEM-PLS analysis.

**2.2 Data and Variables**

The variables used in this study are exogenous latent variables and endogenous latent variables. Exogenous latent variables are influencing variables, which cause endogenous latent changes. Endogenous latent variables are variables that are influenced by the presence of exogenous latent variables. Variables and indicators can be seen on table below.

**Table 2.** Definition of Variable and Indicators

Variable	Definition of Variable	Indicators
Brand Ambassador (X)	Public figure who play a role in marketing activities and become good communicators to bridge between companies and consumers.	X1 Visibility X2 Credibility X3 Attraction X4 Power X5 Congruency
Brand Image (Y)	A consumer's subconscious thinking about the brand.	Y1 Strength Y2 Uniqueness Y3 Favorability
Purchasing Decision (Z)	The decision to buy or not the product.	Z1 Attractiveness Z2 Trust Z3 Need

**2.3 Structural Equation Modeling**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to analyze the effect of brand ambassador relationships with brand image and product purchase decisions. In this study, building a research model with SEM and analyzing each variable and indicator using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method.

The hypotheses were as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: Brand ambassadors have a significant effect on the brand image of OPPO F Series

H<sub>2</sub>: Brand ambassadors have a significant effect on OPPO F Series Purchasing Decision  
 H<sub>3</sub>: Brand image has a significant effect on OPPO F Series Purchasing Decision

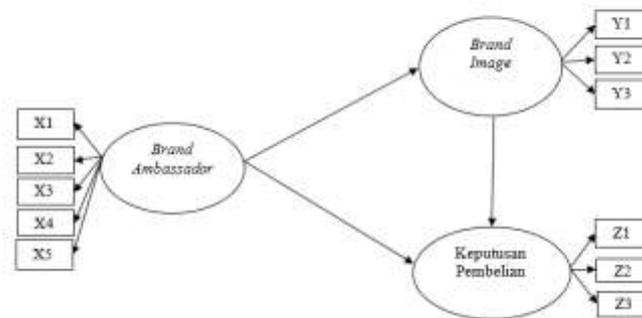


Figure 1. Research Model

### III. FINDING AND INTERPRETATION

#### a. Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

In this study, the validity and reliability of constructs were tested on each latent variable, namely Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, and Purchasing Decision with the help of software. The individual reflexive measure would be said to be valid if it has a loading factor ( $\lambda$ ) with a measured latent variable of  $\geq 0.5$ . If an indicator has a loading value ( $\lambda$ ) of  $<0.5$ , it must be dropped since it is considered not good enough to measure latent variables appropriately. According to Igbaria et al (1997), an indicator is considered valid if it has a loading value ( $\lambda$ ) with a measured latent variable of  $\geq 0.5$ .

Table 3. Outer Model

Latent	Symbols	Indicators	Loading Factor
Brand Ambassador	X1	Visibility	0.690
	X2	Credibility	0.829
	X3	Attraction	0.686
	X4	Power	0.751
	X5	Congruency	0.814
Brand Image	Y1	Strength	0.815
	Y2	Uniqueness	0.816
	Y3	Favorability	0.889
Purchasing Decision	Z1	Attractiveness	0.931
	Z2	Trust	0.946
	Z3	Need	0.913

Brand Ambassador in this study was supported by several indicators namely Visibility, Credibility, Attraction, Power, and Congruency. Based on the table of loading factor, the greatest value was indicated by the indicator Credibility. Credibility is an indicator that refers to the extent to which respondents see a brand ambassador as someone who has knowledge and is trusted to give objective information (Belch and Belch 2009). Brand image, in this study, had three indicators measured. The results of the data showed that the indicator Favorability had the highest loading factor. Purchasing Decision was measured through three indicators namely: Attractiveness, Trust, and Need. The value of the loading factor of trust has the greatest value, namely Trust.

#### b. Evaluation of Structural Model (Inner Model)

The inner model evaluation was done by looking at the R square. R square shows how far the endogenous variable could be explained by exogenous variables. R square of Brand Image of 36.9% indicated that the variable Brand Ambassador was able to explain the variable Brand Image by 36.9%, while the rest 63.1%, was explained by other variables not examined by this study. Meanwhile, R square of Purchasing Decision of 60.1% showed that the variables Brand Ambassador and Brand Image were able to explain Purchasing Decision of 60.08%, and the rest 39.9%, was explained by other variables not examined by this study.

**IV. HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

Hypothesis testing was done to make a decision whether or not the proposed hypothesis is acceptable. A hypothesis would be declared significant if *t*-value is greater than *t*-table which is 1.96. The table below explains the results of testing the hypotheses raised in this study.

**Table 4.** Hypothesis

Path	Path coefficient	Standard Error (STERR)	t-value	Conclusion
Brand Ambassador → Brand Image	0.607	0.0590	10.2982	Significant
Brand Ambassador → Purchasing Decision	0.122	0.0853	1.4300	Not significant
Brand Image → Purchasing Decision	0.695	0.0718	9.6775	Significant
<b>Indirect Effects</b>				
Brand Ambassador → Purchasing Decision	0.4617	0.0651	7.0941	-

H<sub>1</sub>. Brand Ambassador had a positive direct relationship to Brand Image. *t*-test results on PLS output showed *t*-value (10.2982) > *t*-table (1.96), meaning the hypothesis was rejected. Brand Ambassador influenced Brand Image.

**The Influence of Brand Ambassador on Brand Image**

Respondents in this study indicated that the variable Brand Ambassador had a significant effect on the variable Brand Image with values of path coefficient and *t*-value of 0.607 and 10.298, respectively. This shows that the better the brand ambassador in the view of society, the better the perception of brand image. OPPO F Series brand ambassadors were able to boost its brand image, based on this research.

H<sub>2</sub>. Brand Ambassador had a positive direct relationship to Purchasing Decision. *t*-test results on PLS output showed *t*-value (1.4300) < *t*-table (1.96), meaning the hypothesis was accepted. Brand Ambassador did not influence Purchasing Decision.

**The Influence of Brand Ambassador on Purchasing Decision**

Brand Ambassador had no significant effect on Purchasing Decision based on the results of this study. The path coefficient was 0.122 and *t*-value was 1.430, less than *t*-table (1.96). So it was concluded that the effect was not significant on Purchasing Decision.

H<sub>3</sub>. Brand Image has a direct positive relationship to the Purchase Decision. *t*-test results on PLS output showed that *t*-value (9.6775) > *t*-table (1.96), meaning the hypothesis was rejected. Brand Image influenced Purchasing Decision.

**The Influence of Brand Image on Purchasing Decision**

The relationship between variables Brand Image and Purchasing Decision in this study had path coefficient and *t*-value of 0.695 and 9.677, respectively. So it could be stated that both had a positive and significant direct relationship. The better the consumer perception of Brand Image of a product the more increased Purchasing Decision.

H<sub>4</sub>. Brand Ambassador had a positive indirect relationship to Purchasing Decisions. *t*-test results on PLS output showed that *t*-value (7.0941) > *t*-table (1.96), meaning the hypothesis was rejected. Brand Ambassador did not influenced Purchasing Decision.

**Brand Ambassador’s indirect influence on Purchasing Decision**

The relationship between the variables Brand Ambassador and Purchasing Decision in this study had path coefficient and *t*-value of 0.462 and 7.094, respectively. So that it could be stated that they had significant indirect relationship. A good impression on the Brand Ambassador would enhance consumers' good perceptions of Brand Image. This would cause an increase in purchasing decision for OPPO F Series products.

Based on the results of this study, OPPO was considered to have a good brand image due to the influence of its brand ambassadors, so the Brand Ambassador here is an indirect variable that can influence Purchasing Decisions. OPPO has succeeded in increasing its brand image by placing brand ambassadors that are acceptable to the public.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis from this study, it can be concluded as follows:

1. OPPO F Series brand ambassadors had a direct influence on its brand image. Those chosen as Brand Ambassadors by OPPO were able to create OPPO's Brand Image in the minds of consumers. Through the indicator Favorability, OPPO F Series is considered to have an image that is able to meet consumer needs for smartphones with the advanced front camera.
2. OPPO F Series brand ambassadors have an indirect influence on consumer purchasing decision for OPPO F Series products. But through its brand image, consumers will decide to buy OPPO F Series after knowing OPPO's image as a good smartphone manufacturer.

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