

The Impact of Brand Ambassadors, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), And Brand Trust on Consumer Loyalty in Shopee's E-Commerce Platform in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: The rapid growth of e-commerce in Indonesia has driven companies like Shopee to strengthen consumer loyalty through various digital marketing strategies. This study aims to analyze the influence of Brand Ambassador, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), and Brand Trust on Consumer Loyalty among Shopee users in Indonesia. A quantitative approach was employed by distributing questionnaires to 240 respondents who are active Shopee users. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of AMOS software. The results show that Brand Ambassador, E-WOM, and Brand Trust have a significant positive effect on Consumer Loyalty. Furthermore, Brand Trust is proven to mediate the effect of Brand Ambassador and E-WOM on Consumer Loyalty. These findings suggest that strengthening brand trust through public figure endorsements and positive electronic word of mouth can enhance consumer loyalty. The practical implication of this study highlights the importance of integrated digital marketing strategies in maintaining and enhancing long-term consumer relationships on e-commerce platforms.

KEYWORDS: Brand Ambassador, Brand Trust, Consumer Loyalty, E-Commerce, E-WOM

I. INTRODUCTION

In the current digital era, technological advancements have been maximally utilized by society to fulfill various daily needs. Previously, technologies such as smartphones or gadgets were primarily used for long-distance communication. However, the evolution of digital technology has transformed these devices into multifunctional tools that support activities such as social networking, financial management, online transportation services, remote learning, and online product transactions. This transformation has been driven by a significant increase in the number of active users of information and communication technologies via the internet. As reported by Farmania, Elsyah, and Tuori (2021) in Digital Around the World 2020 from www.datareportal.com, there are more than 4.57 billion internet users globally, with 3.81 billion active on social media, and 132.7 million users originating from Indonesia. These figures indicate the enormous potential of the digital economy, particularly through e-commerce platforms.

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) has now become one of the most rapidly growing forms of digital business in response to shifting consumer behavior driven by digitalization. According to Farmania, Elsyah, and Tuori (2021), e-commerce represents a form of business adaptation to meet consumer demands for convenience and speed in shopping without the need for physical store visits. E-commerce not only transforms the way people shop but also opens up new economic opportunities and expands the job market. This aligns with data from Statistika Databoks Indonesia (2024), which recorded a rapid increase in e-commerce retail sales from \$8.6 billion in 2018 to \$19.4 billion in 2023.

This growth has also been accelerated by the emergence of Generation Z, who have grown up in the digital age and regard online shopping as an integral part of their lifestyle. The presence of e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, Blibli, Lazada, and Bukalapak has led to intense competition within the industry. According to Jih (2011), consumer loyalty is a key factor in the success of e-commerce, which can be measured through repeat purchase behavior and the frequency of user visits to digital platforms.

Data from Databox Katadata (2024) show that Shopee was the most visited e-commerce platform in Indonesia throughout 2023, with a total of 2.35 billion monthly visits. This highlights Shopee's dominance as the leading e-commerce platform in the country, supported by consistent promotional strategies and appealing features such as ShopeePay and ShopeeMall. Shopee's

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increasing quarterly revenues throughout 2023 further confirm the platform's success in maintaining user loyalty and enhancing purchasing decisions, as reflected in the revenue charts for Q1 to Q4 of 2023 (Databox Katadata, 2024).

One of Shopee's most notable marketing strategies is the use of brand ambassadors as the public face of the company. According to Poghosyan (2015), a brand ambassador is an individual selected by a company to publicly represent the brand, usually a prominent public figure with substantial influence. Shopee has adopted this strategy by collaborating with various well-known celebrities, both local (e.g., Joe Taslim) and international (e.g., Jackie Chan, Cristiano Ronaldo, and popular K-pop groups such as Blackpink, Red Velvet, and Stray Kids). This strategy has proven highly effective in shaping a strong brand image and attracting consumer interest. As noted by Gultom and Sari (2019), the selection of Blackpink as Shopee's brand ambassador successfully built a brand image that is young, passionate, and very happy.

Based on these phenomena, it can be concluded that Shopee's brand ambassador strategy is one of the key factors influencing consumer loyalty and purchasing decisions. Therefore, this study specifically aims to examine how marketing management strategies—particularly the use of brand ambassadors—contribute to Shopee's success as the leading e-commerce platform in Indonesia.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

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A. Brand Ambassador

A brand ambassador is an individual entrusted to represent a brand and promote its products or services to consumers. According to Keller (2003), brand ambassadors exert a strong influence on consumer perceptions of a brand. These ambassadors may include celebrities, influencers, or individuals with significant sway over a target audience. Their influence can enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the brand being promoted. Brand ambassadors are considered effective in fostering an emotional connection between the brand and its consumers. In this study, brand ambassadors are expected to have a significant impact on consumer loyalty toward e-commerce platforms such as Shopee.

The primary objective of marketing strategies implemented by companies is to enhance consumer loyalty. Among these strategies, the use of brand ambassadors is one of the most commonly adopted, particularly by technology-based companies such as those in the e-commerce sector. This is largely due to the perception among many consumers that influencers represent the identity of a particular brand. A study by Maulida and Kamila (2021) revealed that the use of K-Pop celebrities as brand ambassadors has a significant effect on increasing consumer loyalty.

Similarly, research conducted by Nilawati Nasti (2021) also found that brand ambassadors have a significant and positive influence on consumer loyalty. The relationship between brand ambassadors and loyalty is further supported by findings from Singh, Nagpal, and Mundi (2020), who concluded that a company's strategy of using celebrities or popular figures as brand representatives—referred to as brand ambassadors—can positively influence consumer behavior and brand loyalty.

B. E-WOM & Brand Trust

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) is a form of informal consumer communication through digital media regarding specific products or services (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The dimensions of E-WOM include intensity, content, and opinion valence. Brand trust refers to consumers' belief in the reliability and integrity of a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The dimensions of brand trust comprise trust, reliance, honesty, and safety.

The E-WOM strategy, as previously described, is a widely used marketing communication approach among digital-based companies such as e-commerce platforms. Prior studies have demonstrated the influence of E-WOM on consumer loyalty. For instance, research by Wei et al. (2021) on CSR communication via social media through E-WOM revealed a positive impact on consumer loyalty.

Similarly, a study by Mim, Jai, and Lee (2022) found that E-WOM and brand loyalty are positively correlated. Previous research suggests that positive E-WOM about a brand can influence consumer behavior and lead to increased purchases, which are indicative of loyalty. This is further supported by Serra-Cantalops, Ramon-Cardona, and Salvi (2018), who found that positive consumer experiences with a brand can generate positive E-WOM, which in turn affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty toward the brand.

C. Consumer Loyalty

Loyalty is defined as the customer's commitment to consistently repurchase a product. Marketing strategies implemented by companies aim to increase consumer brand awareness, with the ultimate goal of enhancing consumer loyalty to the brand.

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According to Farmania, Elsyah, and Tuori (2021), loyalty refers to consumer behavior characterized by repeated purchases or use of a product or service associated with a particular brand.

Customer loyalty is a top priority for companies because it reflects the firm's credibility and positive brand image. The greater the number of loyal customers, the higher the potential revenue and profitability of the company (Griffin, 2005; Salah Uddin & Yesmin Akhi, 2014).

The next variable analyzed in this study relates to an intrinsic factor, namely consumer trust in a brand. Trust is a fundamental factor that consumers must possess before deciding to purchase or use a particular product or service. Previous studies have explored the relationship between brand trust and consumer loyalty. For instance, a study by Mim, Jai, and Lee (2022) found that brand trust has a positive effect on the level of customer loyalty in the retail sector.

Similarly, Bennur and Jin (2017) also reported a positive relationship between brand trust and consumer loyalty in the apparel industry in the United States and India. A comparable finding was reported by Jibril et al. (2019), who found that consumer brand trust positively influences consumer–brand loyalty through participation in brand communities. Furthermore, Cardoso et al. (2022), in their study of the retail industry in Brazil, found that consumer trust enhances both satisfaction and loyalty. Another study focusing on social media usage by Althuwaini (2022) also confirmed that brand trust positively impacts brand loyalty

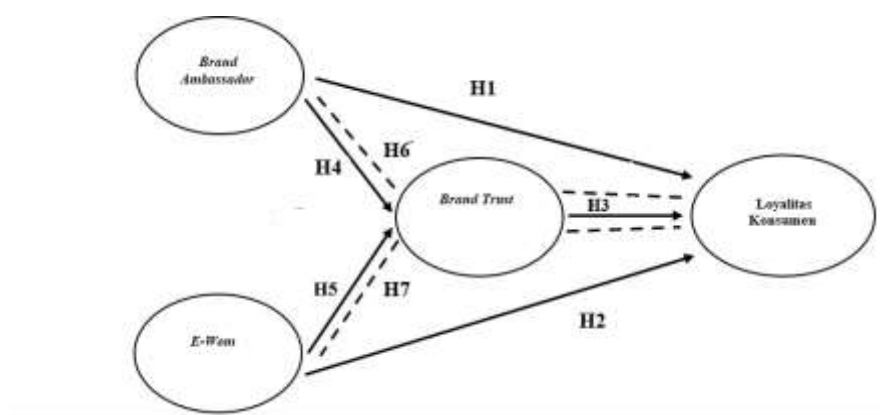


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

H1: Brand Ambassador has a positive effect on Consumer Loyalty.

H2: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) has a positive effect on Consumer Loyalty.

H3: Brand Trust has a positive effect on Consumer Loyalty.

H4: Brand Ambassador has a positive effect on Brand Trust.

H5: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) has a positive effect on Brand Trust.

H6: Brand Trust mediates the effect of Brand Ambassador on Consumer Loyalty.

H7: Brand Trust mediates the effect of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) on Consumer Loyalty.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships between variables statistically. The population of this research consists of active users of the Shopee e-commerce platform in Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the study objectives, with a total sample size of 240 respondents.

Data were collected using an online questionnaire, measured using a five-point Likert scale. The data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of AMOS version 24.0. Validity was assessed through the loading factor, with a threshold value of greater than 0.7, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, also with a threshold of greater than 0.7.

The operational definitions of the variables used in this study are presented in the following table.

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TABLE 1. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

No	Variable	Definition	Dimensions	Indicators
1	Brand Ambassador (Rossiter & Percy, 1985; Lovis-Schmidt et al., 2022)	A product spokesperson or advertisement supporter, either a public figure or an unknown individual with an attractive appearance, aimed at drawing consumers' attention and enhancing brand recall.	Visibility	1. Shopee's brand ambassador is widely recognized in Indonesian society. 2. Shopee's brand ambassador frequently appears in public. 3. Shopee's brand ambassador has a large fan base. 4. Shopee's brand ambassador has significant influence on the public.
			Credibility	1. The brand ambassador of Shopee has strong knowledge about the Shopee brand. 2. Shopee's brand ambassador is trustworthy. 3. Shopee's brand ambassador is honest. 4. Shopee's brand ambassador is convincing to users. 5. Shopee's brand ambassador is confident.
			Attraction	1. Shopee's brand ambassador is charming. 2. Shopee's brand ambassador has an attractive appearance. 3. Shopee's brand ambassador has a pleasant personality. 4. The personality of Shopee's brand

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				ambassador aligns with the brand image. 5. Shopee's brand ambassador has a humble personality.
			Power	1. The character of Shopee's brand ambassador can attract users. 2. The brand ambassador's character plays a significant role in promoting Shopee. 3. The brand ambassador's popularity influences users' interest in Shopee.
2	Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) (Goyette, 2010; Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018)	A form of marketing communication conveyed verbally, in writing, or via electronic means to share experiences of purchasing or using a brand's product.	Intensity	1. I talk about Shopee more often than other online stores. 2. I frequently access product information on Shopee. 3. I often talk about my online shopping experience on Shopee with others.
			Opinion Valence	1. I recommend Shopee to others. 2. I feel proud to tell others that I shop at Shopee. 3. I share positive things about Shopee with others. 4. I speak positively about products sold on Shopee.

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			Content	1. I talk about seller friendliness on Shopee with others. 2. I talk about transaction security on Shopee. 3. I discuss the variety of products offered by Shopee. 4. I talk about the product quality on Shopee. 5. I discuss the ease of accessing Shopee. 6. Shopee provides attractive information such as free shipping and discounts. 7. I talk about Shopee's popularity with others.
3	Brand Trust (Althuaini, 2022)	The consumer's confidence in a particular brand.	Trust	1. I trust Shopee as my preferred e-commerce platform.
			Reliability	2. I rely on Shopee for online transactions.
			Honesty	3. Shopee is an honest e-commerce brand.
			Safety	4. Shopee is safe to use for online transactions.
4	Consumer Loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994; Bennur & Jin, 2017)	The consumer's behavior of repeatedly purchasing or using a product or service from a specific brand.	Repeat Purchase	1. I am willing to shop again at Shopee.
			Cross-Product Purchase	1. I am willing to buy various types

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				of products on Shopee. 2. I am willing to buy newly offered products on Shopee.
			Recommendation to Others	1. I am willing to recommend Shopee to others. 2. I am willing to promote Shopee to others. 3. I am willing to introduce Shopee to others.
			Attraction Compared to Competitors	1. I am not easily tempted to shop on other e-commerce platforms. 2. I am not interested in buying products from other e-commerce platforms. 3. I trust Shopee more than other e-commerce platforms.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Respondent Characteristic

The majority of respondents were female (58%), with the dominant age group ranging from 26 to 34 years (74%). Most respondents held a bachelor's degree and were employed as private sector employees or university students. All indicators demonstrated loading factor values greater than 0.7 and Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.7, indicating that the research instrument is both valid and reliable.

TABLE 2. MODEL FIT TEST

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut off Value	Estimated Result	Interpretation
Probability	≤ 0.05	0.000	Good Fit
Chi Square (χ^2)	194,88	231.693	Marginal Fit
RMSEA	£ 0,80	0,46	Good Fit
GFI	³ 0,90	0,904	Good Fit
AGFI	³ 0,90	0,878	Marginal Fit
RMSR	£ 0,50	0,35	Good Fit

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<i>TLI</i>	³ 0,90	0,971	Good Fit
<i>NFI</i>	³ 0,90	0,921	Good Fit
<i>CFI</i>	³ 0,90	0,975	Good Fit

The results of the model fit test indicate that the model used in this study falls into the Good Fit category, as evidenced by the values of GFI = 0.904, CFI = 0.975, and RMSEA = 0.046.

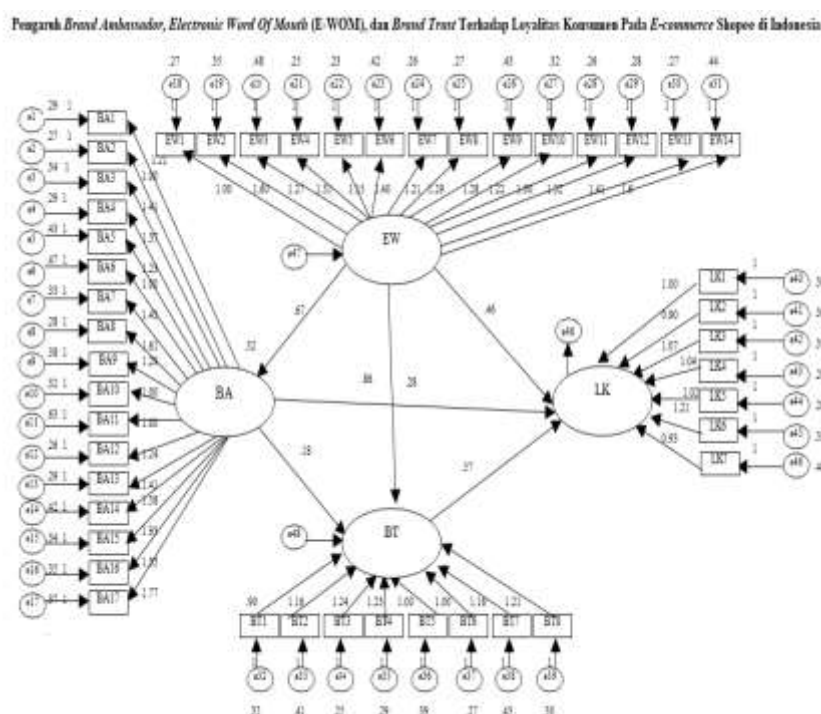


Figure 2. The research model has met the criteria for goodness of fit.

Based on the diagram above, it can be observed that the standardized regression weights, or factor loadings, indicate that each indicator of the latent variables meets the recommended threshold of ≥ 0.7 . Therefore, it can be concluded that all observed variables in the model are valid.

B. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis 1 : Brand ambassador has a positive effect on the loyalty of Shopee e-commerce users in Indonesia. Based on data analysis, the Critical Ratio (CR) value for the relationship between the Brand Ambassador variable and Shopee User Loyalty is 7.215, with a p-value of 0.000. This result meets the significance criteria, as $CR > 1.96$ and $p < 0.05$. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted, indicating that the Brand Ambassador positively influences the loyalty of Shopee users in Indonesia.

Hypothesis 2 : e-WOM has a positive effect on the loyalty of Shopee users in Indonesia. The Critical Ratio (CR) value for the relationship between e-WOM and Shopee User Loyalty is 6.982, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant relationship. Since $CR > 1.96$ and $p < 0.05$, Hypothesis 2 is accepted, meaning that e-WOM positively influences the loyalty of Shopee users in Indonesia.

Hypothesis 3 : Brand trust has a positive effect on the loyalty of Shopee e-commerce users in Indonesia. Based on data analysis, the Critical Ratio (CR) value for the relationship between Brand Trust and User Loyalty is 8.145 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is accepted, meaning that Brand Trust positively influences the loyalty of Shopee users in Indonesia.

Hypothesis 4 : The brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on the brand trust of Shopee e-commerce users in Indonesia. The analysis results show that the Critical Ratio (CR) value for the relationship between Brand Ambassador and Brand Trust is 7.402 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is accepted, meaning that the Brand Ambassador positively influences the Brand Trust of Shopee users.

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Hypothesis 5 : Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) has a positive and significant effect on the brand trust of Shopee e-commerce users in Indonesia. The analysis results show that the Critical Ratio (CR) value for the relationship between e-WOM and Brand Trust is 6.921 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is accepted, meaning that e-WOM positively influences the Brand Trust of Shopee users.

Hypothesis 6 : Brand trust mediates the effect of brand ambassador on consumer loyalty among Shopee e-commerce users in Indonesia. The analysis results indicate that the indirect effect of Brand Ambassador on Consumer Loyalty through Brand Trust is 0.542, with a p-value of 0.001, demonstrating a significant mediation relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 is accepted, meaning that Brand Trust mediates the influence of Brand Ambassador on Shopee consumer loyalty.

Hypothesis 7 : Brand trust mediates the effect of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on consumer loyalty among Shopee e-commerce users in Indonesia. The analysis results show that the indirect effect of e-WOM on Consumer Loyalty through Brand Trust is 0.497, with a p-value of 0.002, indicating a significant mediation relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 7 is accepted, meaning that Brand Trust mediates the influence of e-WOM on Shopee consumer loyalty.

The results of this study indicate that marketing strategies based on Brand Ambassadors and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) are effective in building consumer trust (Brand Trust), which in turn enhances loyalty towards the Shopee platform. The findings reveal significant relationships between Brand Ambassador, e-WOM, and Brand Trust on consumer loyalty among Shopee users in Indonesia.

First, Brand Ambassadors have a positive effect on Consumer Loyalty. The appropriate use of Brand Ambassadors strengthens the emotional connection between consumers and the brand, thereby driving higher loyalty to Shopee. Second, e-WOM also has a positive and significant impact on Consumer Loyalty. Recommendations, reviews, and positive experiences shared by other users on social media serve as crucial factors influencing consumers' decisions to continue using the platform.

Furthermore, Brand Trust positively influences Consumer Loyalty. When consumers possess a high level of trust in Shopee, they tend to exhibit greater loyalty in using the application. Brand Trust is also positively affected by both Brand Ambassadors and e-WOM. The use of credible and relevant Brand Ambassadors tailored to the target market helps build customer trust. Similarly, positive reviews and consumer experiences shared online through e-WOM strengthen the platform's trust image.

In addition, Brand Trust acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between Brand Ambassador and Consumer Loyalty. This indicates that consumer trust formed through the Brand Ambassador's image reinforces its influence on loyalty. The same applies to e-WOM, where Brand Trust mediates and strengthens the effect of e-WOM on Consumer Loyalty. Therefore, Brand Trust plays a critical role in strengthening the relationship between marketing communications (both through Brand Ambassadors and e-WOM) and consumers' loyalty levels toward Shopee.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

The present study provides empirical evidence that Brand Ambassador, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and Brand Trust significantly influence consumer loyalty toward Shopee. Moreover, Brand Trust functions as a critical mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between marketing communication strategies and consumer loyalty.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that Shopee strategically sustain and further develop its Brand Ambassador initiatives to ensure alignment with the brand's core image and values. Simultaneously, Shopee should invest in enhancing the quality and credibility of electronic word of mouth by prioritizing superior customer service and fostering positive consumer interactions. These efforts are expected to reinforce Brand Trust, thereby amplifying customer loyalty and sustaining competitive advantage in the dynamic e-commerce marketplace.

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