GOLDEN RATIO OF MARKETING AND APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY OF BUSINESS
VOLUME 6, ISSUE. 2 (2026)
Website: https://goldenratio.id/index.php/grmapb/index

GOLDEN RATIO
ISSN [Online]: 2776-6349

MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Brand Ambassador, Social Media Marketing, and Product Innovation Effects on Purchase Decisions: The Mediating Role of Brand Image in the Indonesian Dairy Industry

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: October 27, 2025
Revised: January 10, 2026
Accepted: February 21, 2026

DOI
https://doi.org/10.52970/grmapb.v6i2.1812

ABSTRACT
This study aims to comprehensively analyze the influence of Brand Ambassador, Social Media Marketing, and Product Innovation on Purchase Decision, with Brand Image positioned as a mediating variable. In an increasingly competitive market, companies must implement effective marketing strategies that not only attract consumer attention but also strengthen brand perception and drive actual purchasing behavior. Brand ambassadors are expected to enhance credibility and emotional attachment, while social media marketing plays a strategic role in delivering interactive and persuasive promotional content. Meanwhile, product innovation helps maintain relevance and competitive advantage in the marketplace. This research adopts a quantitative explanatory approach to examine the causal relationships among variables. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 250 consumers aged 18–40 years who are familiar with the brand ambassador representing the product. The sample was selected to represent active consumers who are frequently exposed to digital marketing. The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is suitable for assessing complex models involving mediation effects. The findings indicate that Brand Ambassador, Social Media Marketing, and Product Innovation have a significant positive effect on Purchase Decision. Furthermore, the results confirm that Brand Image plays a mediating role, strengthening both the direct and indirect relationships between the independent variables and Purchase Decision. These findings suggest that an integrated marketing strategy focusing on credible ambassadors, engaging digital promotion, and continuous innovation can effectively enhance brand image and ultimately drive consumer purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Brand Ambassador, Social Media Marketing, Product Innovation, Purchase Decision.
JEL Code: M31, M37, O31, D12.

I. Introduction

Globalization and rapid advancements in digital technology have significantly transformed market dynamics worldwide, including in Indonesia. Easier access to information has reshaped how consumers interact with brands and products, particularly in the food and beverage industry. In this sector, Ultra-High

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Temperature (UHT) milk products have experienced notable growth, driven by lifestyle changes and increasing consumer awareness of health and nutrition. As a result, modern consumers no longer evaluate products solely based on price and quality; instead, they increasingly consider brand image, consumption experience, product innovation, and emotional value when making purchase decisions (Labrie et al., 2020). Consequently, companies are required to adopt adaptive marketing strategies that align with evolving consumer preferences in order to remain competitive in a dynamic market environment.

In line with these changes, consumer behavior has become a central factor in shaping effective marketing strategies. Kotler et al. (2021) explain that purchase decisions are influenced by how consumers think about a product and how they feel about it before, during, and after the buying process. Within the dairy industry, this shift has intensified competition, as consumers increasingly demand products that combine nutritional benefits with strong brand identities and continuous innovation. Indonesia's dairy market reflects this trend, with numerous milk brands competing for consumer attention, including Indomilk. Against this competitive backdrop, brand performance indicators provide important insights into market challenges. Based on Top Brand Award data from 2021 to 2025, Indomilk saw its Top Brand Index decline from 14.3% in 2021 to 8.7% in 2024, then rise to 9.1% in 2025. This trend suggests difficulties in maintaining brand strength amid intense competition in the ready-to-drink milk segment. Furthermore, Kompasiana (2023) reported that Indomilk's UHT milk market share remains at 12%, underscoring the need for more effective, integrated marketing strategies to enhance competitiveness. To address these challenges, companies such as Indomilk have increasingly relied on marketing approaches such as brand ambassadors, social media marketing, and product innovation. Brand ambassadors, particularly celebrities, are often used to build emotional connections with consumers and enhance brand appeal (Maulida et al., 2025). The growing influence of K-pop culture in Indonesia has further encouraged brands to collaborate with popular figures to shape consumer perceptions. However, empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of brand ambassadors remain inconclusive. While some studies report a significant positive influence on purchase decisions (Hariyanto & Wijaya, 2022), others reveal weak or insignificant effects (Amalia et al., 2022), highlighting inconsistencies that warrant further investigation.

Similarly, social media marketing has emerged as a crucial tool for establishing two-way communication between companies and consumers through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X. Prior studies indicate that social media marketing can positively influence purchase decisions by enhancing engagement and brand awareness (Ratnaningsih & Nurlinda, 2024). Nevertheless, contrasting findings suggest that its impact is not always significant (Daniel & Yoestini, 2023). In addition to digital promotion, product innovation plays a vital role in maintaining customer interest and loyalty by enhancing packaging, flavor variety, and nutritional content. Although several studies confirm a positive relationship between product innovation and purchase decisions (Adriati & Mugiono, 2022), others argue that not all innovations lead to increased consumer purchases (Ma'ruf et al., 2024). These mixed results emphasize the importance of considering contextual factors and mediating variables. Amid these diverse marketing efforts, brand image emerges as a key element that integrates and strengthens overall marketing effectiveness. A strong brand image fosters positive consumer perceptions, builds trust, and ultimately encourages purchase decisions. Kotler et al. (2023) state that brand image is formed through a combination of consumer experiences, communication messages, and consistent delivery of brand values. As part of PT Indolakto under Indofood CBP, Indomilk must therefore reinforce its brand image through a coherent and integrated marketing strategy to remain relevant in an increasingly competitive dairy market.

To understand how brand ambassadors, social media marketing, and product innovation affect purchase decisions, this study extends previous research by introducing Brand Image as a mediating variable and by moving beyond direct interactions. This research is conducted in the Indonesian dairy market, which entails particular consumer considerations related to health and daily use, in contrast to previous studies that primarily focus on the cosmetic, fashion, or e-commerce sectors. Furthermore, this study offers theoretical and contextual originality in understanding consumer purchase behavior by using the Theory of Planned Behavior.

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Based on the aforementioned conditions and research gaps, this study aims to examine the effects of Brand Ambassador, Social Media Marketing, and Product Innovation on Purchase Decisions, with Brand Image serving as a mediating variable in the Indonesian dairy industry. This research is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on consumer purchase behavior in the digital era and practically by providing companies with insights for designing more effective, integrated marketing strategies. By clarifying the role of brand image as a mediating factor, this study seeks to complement and update previous findings that have produced inconsistent results within similar research contexts.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991) explains that individual behavior is influenced by three main components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which together form intentions and drive actual behavior. In this study, TPB is used to understand the consumer purchasing decision process for Indomilk products. Consumer attitudes are influenced by brand image, and subjective norms arise from social influences such as community and social media trends. In contrast, perceived behavioral control is influenced by ease of access to information and product availability. Thus, TPB is relevant in explaining how psychological and social factors mediate the influence of research variables on purchasing decisions.

2.2. Purchase Decision

Purchase decisions are a process by which consumers select and purchase products from among the various options available. According to Kotler et al. (2023), this decision is influenced by internal factors such as motivation and preferences, as well as external factors such as promotion and social conditions. Solomon (2021) emphasizes that perceptions of products and attitudes toward brands also influence consumer behavior, while Pebriana et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of price, quality, and brand image in driving purchase decisions. According to experts, purchase decisions result from a complex social and psychological process in which consumers assess various factors before making a final decision. The indicators of purchase decisions, according to Thompson et al. (2016) and Kotler et al. (2023), include customer needs, product selection, brand selection, and repeat purchases.

2.3. Brand Ambassador

According to Agustini (2022), a brand ambassador is an individual who represents a company in promoting products or services through their appearance, behavior, and values that reflect the brand identity. Salsabiela et al. (2022) argue that brand ambassadors are an innovative strategy for enhancing brand image, introducing products, and attracting consumer interest. Meanwhile, Selfiana & Susanti (2024) reveal that credibility towards brand ambassadors has a direct effect on consumer perceptions of brand quality and loyalty. From this perspective, brand ambassadors are brand representatives who help create a positive image and build trust in consumers' eyes. The indicators of brand ambassadors, according to Hendayana & Afifah (2021), Rossister & Percy (2018), and Schouten et al. (2020), include credibility, attractiveness, popularity, and expertise.

2.4. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a marketing strategy that uses social media platforms to promote products or brands, aiming to increase awareness, build connections, and influence purchase decisions (Nugroho et al.,

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2024). Setyowati et al. (2025) state that social media enables dynamic two-way interactions between companies and consumers, thereby strengthening brand image and increasing loyalty. Faisal and Ekawanto (2022) also state that social media marketing helps create closer relationships with consumers, while Nurhasna et al. (2022) add that active consumer participation on social media can strengthen a positive image and increase purchase intent. Based on these views, social media marketing can be considered an effective strategy for building personal, relevant interactions with consumers. According to Hidayatullah et al. (2021) and Fahmi et al. (2019), social media marketing indicators include interaction, attractiveness, activity, posts, and content.

2.5. Product Innovation

Product innovation is an important strategy for companies to increase their market competitiveness. According to Litta & Prasetiyo (2025), product innovation involves developing or launching new products that provide added value through improvements in quality, features, or technology. Herlinda et al. (2023) found that consumers tend to choose products considered innovative and that offer functional advantages over competing products. Asnawati and Indrihastuti (2022) also emphasized that product innovation is a key strategy for competing, while Kotler et al. (2023) stated that innovation focused on solving consumer problems can accelerate the purchase decision-making process. Therefore, product innovation plays an important role in attracting consumer interest and creating competitive advantages. The indicators of product innovation, according to Bambang (2020), Kotler & Armstrong (2016), and Restiyani et al. (2019), include new products, product quality, product design, and product variety.

2.6. Brand Image

Brand image is the perception or impression formed in consumers' minds based on their experiences, information, and interactions with a brand (Pratama & Maskan, 2021). According to Kotler et al. (2023), brand image encompasses perceptions of quality, trust, and emotional experiences, and a strong brand image can increase trust and influence purchase decisions. Thus, brand image plays an important role in differentiating products in a competitive market. According to Lahus et al. (2023) and Kotler et al. (2023), indicators of brand image include product identity, brand reputation, brand uniqueness, and brand appeal.

2.7. Hypothesis Development

This study analyzes how brand ambassadors, social media marketing, product innovation, and brand image influence purchasing decisions, both directly and through mediating variables. Based on the theoretical framework and previous research results, the hypotheses are as follows: Brand ambassadors play an important role in shaping consumer perceptions of a brand. The more attractive and credible a brand ambassador is, the greater their influence on consumer interest and purchase decisions regarding the promoted product.

H1: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on Purchase Decisions.

Social media marketing strategies enable companies to interact directly with consumers. Engaging, relevant, and informative content can increase participation and trust, and encourage consumers to make purchases.

H2: Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decisions.

Product innovation creates added value and different products from competitors. Innovative products tend to be more attractive to consumers because they are perceived as higher quality and offer greater benefits, thereby influencing purchase decisions.

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H3: Product innovation has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

A strong brand image creates a positive perception of quality and brand trust among consumers. The better the brand image, the more likely consumers are to choose that brand's products.

H4: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

Brand ambassadors can enhance brand image through their character, popularity, and credibility. A positive brand image then encourages increased consumer purchase decisions.

H5: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions through brand image

Practical marketing activities on social media platforms can enhance brand image by building consumer closeness and positive perceptions of the product. The resulting brand image then influences purchase decisions.

H6: Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions through brand image.

Innovative products can strengthen a brand's image in consumers' eyes. When brand image improves due to innovation, consumers become more confident and motivated to make purchases.

H7: Product innovation has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions through brand image.

2.8. Conceptual Framework

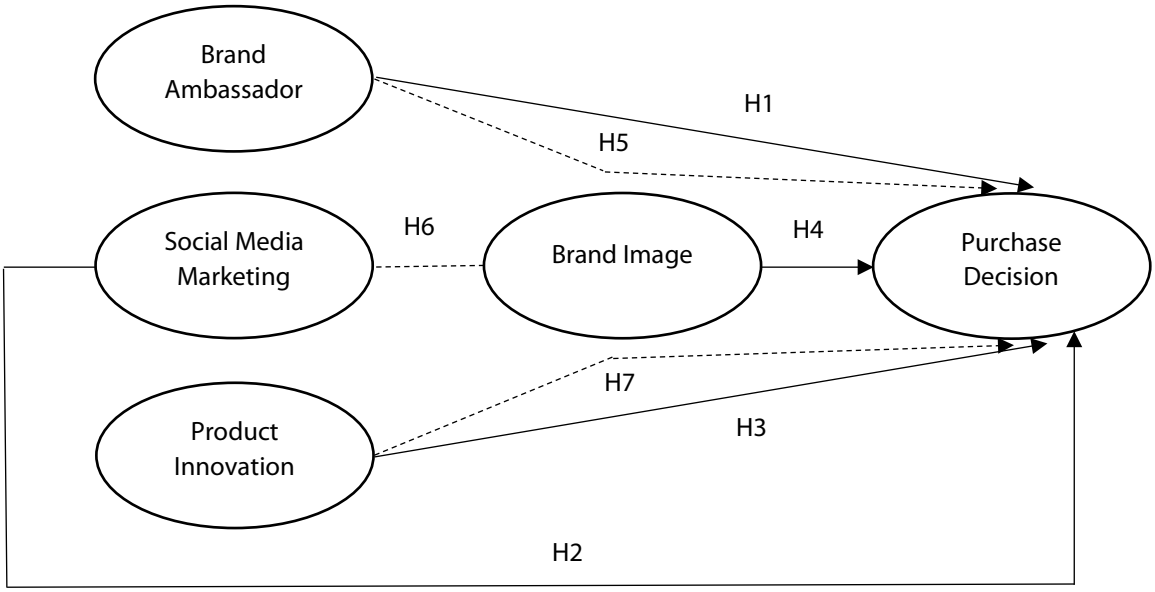

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

III. Research Method

This study uses a quantitative, explanatory research design to examine the effects of Brand Ambassadors, Social Media Marketing, and Product Innovation on Purchase Decisions, with Brand Image as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach was used because it focuses on testing hypotheses through structured numerical data analysis. An explanatory research design was used to examine the causal

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relationship between variables through hypothesis testing. The research data was collected using a closed questionnaire distributed online to Indomilk consumers aged 18-40 who were familiar with the Seventeen group as brand ambassadors. The research instrument was compiled based on previous research indicators and had been tested beforehand to ensure the clarity of each statement. This study employed a non-probability sampling method, specifically accidental sampling, targeting consumers who had experience purchasing Indomilk products. Because the study focused on specific consumer attitudes and behaviors rather than demographic generalizations, this sampling strategy was deemed suitable. Due to the lack of a comprehensive sample frame of Indomilk customers and the exploratory nature of the analysis, incidental sampling enabled the study to gather pertinent data from actual product users effectively. This approach is commonly used in consumer behavior research where respondents are selected based on accessibility and product usage experience.

The questionnaire items were adapted from previous studies to ensure conceptual relevance and measurement accuracy. All constructs, Brand Ambassador, Social Media Marketing, Product Innovation, Brand Image, and Purchase Decisions, were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to analysis, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity of wording and relevance to the Indonesian dairy industry context. This study used SmartPLS software to perform Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) on the data. Measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation were the two phases of the analysis. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability were used to evaluate reliability, while factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used to measure convergent validity. Cross-loading analysis was used to investigate discriminant validity. R-squared values and path coefficients were used to evaluate the structural model, and a bootstrapping process with 5,000 resamples was used to test the hypothesis. If the t-statistic was greater than 1.96 and the p-value was less than 0.05, the link was deemed statistically significant. To assess the quality of the research instrument, validity and reliability tests were conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Convergent validity was evaluated by examining factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where factor loadings above 0.70 and AVE values exceeding 0.50 indicated acceptable validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using cross-loading criteria to ensure that each indicator measured its intended construct more strongly than other constructs. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability; values above 0.70 indicate satisfactory internal consistency. These tests confirmed that the measurement instrument was both valid and reliable for further structural analysis. After confirming the measurement model's adequacy, data analysis was performed using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS. This method was chosen for its suitability for complex models involving multiple latent variables and mediating effects, as well as its robustness to non-normal data distributions.

Tabel 1. Respondent Characteristics

Measurement	Frequency	%
Gender		
Man	34	13.6
Female	216	86.4
Age (years-old)		
18-25	204	81.6
26-32	45	18
33-40	1	0.4
> 45	61	23.8
Have Bought and Know Seventeen		
Yes	250	100
No	0	0

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IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Outer Model

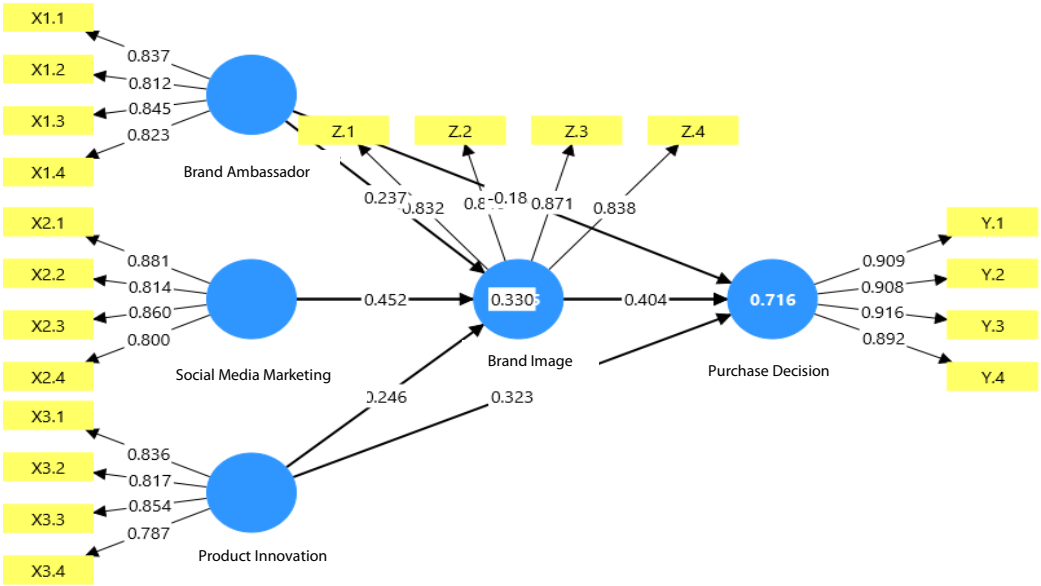

Figure 2. Outer Loading with Factor Loading

4.2. Outer Loading

Based on the results in the outer loading table 2, all reflective indicators of the variables Brand Ambassador (X1), Social Media Marketing (X2), Product Innovation (X3), Brand Image (Z), and Purchase Decision (Y) show factor loading values above 0.70, which means they exceed the minimum limit of 0.50 as recommended by Hair et al., (2017). Therefore, it can be concluded that all these indicators meet the criteria for convergent validity and have a high level of validity.

Table 2. Outer Loading

Indicator		Brand Ambassador	Social Media Marketing	Product Innovation	Brand Image	Purchase Decision
Brand Ambassador	X1.1	0.837				
	X1.2	0.812				
	X1.3	0.845				
	X1.4	0.823				
Social Media Marketing	X2.1		0.881			
	X2.2		0.814			
	X2.3		0.860			
	X2.4		0.800			
Product Innovation	X3.1			0.836		
	X3.2			0.817		
	X3.3			0.854		
	X3.4			0.787		
Brand Image	Z.1				0.832	
	Z.2				0.819	
	Z.3				0.871	

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Indicator		Brand Ambassador	Social Media Marketing	Product Innovation	Brand Image	Purchase Decision
	Z.4				0.838	
Purchase Decision	Y.1					0.909
	Y.2					0.908
	Y.3					0.916
	Y.3					0.892

4.3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Based on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test results shown in Table 3, the AVE value for the Brand Ambassador (X1) variable is 0.696, the Social Media Marketing (X2) variable is 0.712, Product Innovation (X3) is 0.685, Brand Image (Z) is 0.701, and Purchase Decision (Y) is 0.732. All AVE values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.50, indicating that each variable in this study has good convergent validity.

Table 3. AVE

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Ambassador (X1)	0.688
Social Media Marketing (X2)	0.705
Product Innovation (X3)	0.679
Brand Image (Z)	0.706
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.821

4.4. Reliability Test

Reliability tests were conducted to assess the extent to which the indicators in each construct demonstrated internal consistency, using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. A construct is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value exceeds 0.60 and the Composite Reliability value is greater than 0.70.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Brand Ambassador	0.849	0.898
Social Media Marketing	0.860	0.905
Product Innovation	0.842	0.894
Brand Image	0.861	0.906
Purchase Decision	0.928	0.948

Based on Table 4, all constructions have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 and Composite Reliability values above 0.90. This indicates that all talent variables in this study meet the reliability criteria, earning an outstanding rating. The highest value is observed in the Purchase Decision variable, which shows strong internal consistency among its indicators. Furthermore, structural model testing (Inner Model) and hypothesis testing were conducted to analyze the relationships between variables in this study.

4.5. Discriminant Validity

The results of the cross-loading data analysis show that all variables, namely Brand Ambassador (X1), Social Media Marketing (X2), Product Innovation (X3), Brand Image (Z), and Purchase Decision (Y), have values above 0.60 and are higher than the correlations with other variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that all indicators in this study are valid. Thus, all indicators used in this study are valid.

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Table 5. Cross Loading

Indicator	Brand Ambassador (X1)	Social Media Marketing (X2)	Product Innovation (X3)	Brand Image (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)
X1.1	0.837	0.617	0.611	0.613	0.521
X1.2	0.812	0.602	0.624	0.626	0.484
X1.3	0.845	0.630	0.652	0.604	0.511
X1.4	0.823	0.616	0.619	0.669	0.520
X2.1	0.635	0.881	0.713	0.693	0.707
X2.2	0.587	0.814	0.602	0.684	0.592
X2.3	0.683	0.860	0.713	0.733	0.696
X2.4	0.585	0.800	0.648	0.655	0.639
X3.1	0.613	0.639	0.836	0.616	0.631
X3.2	0.555	0.660	0.817	0.626	0.654
X3.3	0.728	0.751	0.854	0.744	0.655
X3.4	0.585	0.571	0.787	0.594	0.586
Z.1	0.702	0.813	0.781	0.822	0.909
Z.2	0.465	0.645	0.664	0.650	0.908
Z.3	0.502	0.679	0.672	0.689	0.916
Z.4	0.530	0.696	0.649	0.693	0.892
Y.1	0.680	0.723	0.694	0.832	0.702
Y.2	0.593	0.618	0.584	0.819	0.578
Y.3	0.673	0.743	0.721	0.871	0.731
Y.4	0.592	0.674	0.629	0.838	0.635

Based on the test results shown in Table 5, each indicator shows a higher correlation with its own variable construct than with other variables. For example, indicator X1.1 in the Brand Ambassador variable has a cross-loading value of 0.837, which is higher than its correlations with other variables, such as Brand Image (0.613), Product Innovation (0.611), Purchase Decision (0.521), and Social Media Marketing (0.617). A similar pattern was also found in other indicators across all research variables. Thus, the results show that each indicator represents its construct well and accurately, and that the measurement model meets the criteria for discriminant validity.

4.6. Inner Model

The R2 value measures the extent to which independent variables explain variation in the dependent variable. If the R2 value is >0.50, the research model is considered to be of good quality. The closer the value is to 1, the stronger the model's ability to explain the variable being studied.

Table 6. R-Square

	R-square	R-Square Adjusted
Brand Image	0.745	0.742
Purchase Decision	0.716	0.711

Based on the R-square test results, the R2 value for the Brand Image variable is 0.745, which is considered high. This shows that the variables in the research model explain 74.5% of the variation in Brand Image, while other factors outside the model account for the remaining 25.5%. Furthermore, the R2 value for the Purchase Decision variable is 0.716, which is also categorized as high. This means that 71.6% of the variation in Purchase Decision can be explained by other external factors not included in the research model. Overall, these results indicate that the research mode has strong predictive power for the Brand Image and Purchase Decision variables. By using path coefficients and explained variance values to report the degree of influence among variables explicitly, the conclusions become more understandable. Brand ambassadors,

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social media marketing, product innovation, and brand image account for 71.6% of customers' purchase decisions, according to the R-square value for buy decisions, which is 0.716. Brand image has the most impact on purchase decisions among the direct effects (β = 0.404), followed by social media marketing (β = 0.330) and product innovation (β = 0.323). Brand Ambassador, on the other hand, has an adverse direct effect (β = –0.182). Additionally, the association between independent factors and purchase decision is highly mediated by brand image, with social media marketing exhibiting the most significant indirect influence (β = 0.183).

4.7. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted through inner model analysis, which included R-square values, path coefficients, and T-statistics. A relationship was deemed significant if the T-statistic value was greater than 1.96 and the p-value was less than 0.05 at a 5% significance level. In addition, a positive, significant beta coefficient indicates a positive influence between the variables tested in this research model.

Table 7. Direct Hypothesis

	Original Sample	T-statistic	P-values	Conclusion
Brand Ambassador → Purchase Decision	-0.182	3.264	0.001	Rejected
Social Media Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.330	3.827	0.000	Accepted
Product Innovation → Purchase Decision	0.323	4.225	0.000	Accepted
Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.404	4.441	0.000	Accepted

1. Hypothesis 1: Brand ambassador hurts Purchase Decision and is rejected, with a path coefficient of -0.182 and a T-statistic value of 3.264 > 1.96, or a P-value of 0.001 < 0.05, indicating a significant (negative) result.
2. Hypothesis 2: Social Media Marketing has a positive effect on Purchase Decision and is accepted, with a path coefficient of 0.330 and a T-statistic value of 3.827 > 1.96, or a P-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a significant (positive) result.
3. Hypothesis 3: Product Innovation has a positive effect on Purchase Decision and is accepted, with a path coefficient of 0.323 and a T-statistic value of 4.225 > 1.96, or a P-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a significant (positive) result.
4. Hypothesis 4: Brand Image has a positive effect on Purchase Decision and is accepted, with a path coefficient of 0.404 and a T-statistic value of 4.441 > 1.96, or a P-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a significant (positive) result.

Table 8. Indirect Hypothesis

	Original Sample	T-statistic	P-values	Conclusion
Brand Ambassador → Brand Image →Purchase Decision	0.096	3.340	0.001	Accepted
Social Media Marketing → Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.183	3.488	0.000	Accepted
Product Innovation → Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.100	2.410	0.016	Accepted

1. Hypothesis 5: Brand Image positively and significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Ambassador and Purchase Decision, with a path coefficient of 0.096, a T-statistic value of 3.340 > 1.96, and a P-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a significant (positive) mediating effect.

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2. Hypothesis 6: Brand Image positively and significantly mediates the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decision, with a path coefficient of 0.183, a T-statistic value of 3.488 > 1.96, and a P-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a significant (positive) mediating effect.
3. Hypothesis 7: Brand Image positively and significantly mediates the relationship between Product Innovation and Purchase Decision, with a path coefficient of 0.100, a T-statistic value of 2.410 > 1.96, and a P-value of 0.016 < 0.05, indicating a significant (positive) mediating effect.

The findings show that purchase decisions are significantly impacted by social media marketing and product innovation, both directly and indirectly through brand image. On the other hand, through brand image, brand ambassadors have a significant indirect influence on purchase decisions rather than a significant direct one. Additionally, brand image serves as a crucial mediating variable, strengthening the model's overall relationships and directly influencing purchase decisions.

4.8. Theoretical Implications: Theory of Planned Behavior

Three factors attitude toward behavior, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control—are used by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explain consumer purchasing behavior. When it comes to Indomilk products, consumer attitudes are influenced by brand image and product innovation. Perceptions of product quality, health advantages, and ongoing innovation foster positive evaluations and increased purchase intentions. This result is in line with recent research that demonstrates how innovation and positive brand perceptions boost consumer attitudes and have a significant impact on decisions to buy in the fashion and FMCG sectors, including dairy-related products (Ajzen, 1991; Juniansyah et al., 2023; Fitriasari et al., 2025; Susanti et al., 2025).

Perceived behavioral control and subjective norms provide additional insight into how marketing tactics affect Indomilk consumer behavior. Subjective norms form through brand ambassador endorsements and social media interactions. In these settings, social acceptance, peer pressure, and credibility, especially from well-known celebrities, shape how people think about a brand indirectly through its image. Product availability, reasonable prices, and easily accessible information offered by digital platforms, on the other hand, improve perceived behavioral control and boost customers' confidence when making purchase decisions. The relevance of TPB in the Indonesian dairy industry is further supported by similar applications of TPB in influencer marketing, service innovation, and digital commerce contexts, which show that attitudes, social influence, and perceived ease work together to translate marketing stimuli into actual purchasing behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Juniansyah et al., 2023; Fitriasari et al., 2025; Susanti et al., 2025).

4.9. Discussion

Brand ambassadors shape consumer perceptions of Indomilk predominantly through the development of brand image rather than by directly influencing purchase decisions. The employment of the K-pop group SEVENTEEN as a brand ambassador conveys symbolic attributes such as modernity, popularity, and international appeal to the brand, thereby strengthening consumers' emotive engagement, perceived credibility, and social endorsement of Indomilk. Consumers who hold the ambassador in high regard are inclined to view the brand more favorably, though this perception does not necessarily lead to immediate purchasing. This clarifies why brand ambassadors exert a more pronounced indirect influence on purchase decisions via brand image, as they shape initial consumer perceptions such as awareness, interest, and emotional connection. However, the success of this strategy depends on alignment between the ambassador's image and the product's functional qualities, as dairy products are predominantly assessed on health and nutritional benefits rather than solely on celebrity appeal. (Ajzen, 1991; Kotler et al., 2023).

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ISSN [Online]: 2776-6349

4.9.1. The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Purchasing Decisions

The study's results indicate that Brand Ambassadors have a significant adverse effect on Purchase Decisions. This means that the presence of brand ambassadors has not increased consumer purchase decisions. In this case, the selection of the K-pop group SEVENTEEN as Indomilk's brand ambassador is considered irrelevant to the image of milk products that emphasize health and nutritional value. The mismatch between the image of public figures and product characteristics prevents promotional messages from being conveyed effectively. These results align with those of Putri & Fitriyah (2025), who found that the influence of brand ambassadors can be harmful when there is a mismatch between the character of the figure and the brand values being promoted. Thus, the effectiveness of brand ambassadors does not only depend on popularity, but also on the alignment of their image with the brand identity.

Brand ambassadors shape consumer perceptions of Indomilk predominantly through the development of brand image rather than by directly influencing purchase decisions. The employment of the K-pop group SEVENTEEN as a brand ambassador conveys symbolic attributes such as modernity, popularity, and international appeal to the brand, thereby strengthening consumers' emotive engagement, perceived credibility, and social endorsement of Indomilk. Consumers who hold the ambassador in high regard are inclined to view the brand more favorably, though this perception does not necessarily lead to immediate purchase behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Kotler et al., 2023).

4.9.2. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchasing Decisions

The study's results indicate that social media marketing has a positive, significant effect on purchasing decisions. This shows that marketing activities through social media can increase consumer interest and purchasing decisions. Implementing effective social media marketing strategies enables companies to reach audiences in an interactive, personalized way, build emotional closeness, and strengthen brand trust. In the context of this study, Indomilk's promotions on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X have proven effective at attracting consumer attention, especially among teenagers and young adults. These findings support the research by Nuraeni et al. (2024), which states that social media marketing has a significant influence on purchasing decisions, especially among digital-native consumers. Therefore, companies need to maintain consistency and relevance in their content so that digital marketing strategies can continue to drive consumer engagement and purchasing decisions.

The influence of social media marketing on consumer purchasing decisions is demonstrated by Indomilk's utilization of platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to convey product advantages, nutritional information, and lifestyle relevance through compelling digital content. Ongoing engagement with informative content, interactive initiatives, and influencer partnerships enhances brand recognition, diminishes consumer ambiguity, and reinforces trust in the brand. Through reciprocal engagements such as likes, comments, and user-generated content, consumers cultivate a deeper relationship with Indomilk, thereby enhancing the brand's image and indirectly influencing their ultimate purchasing decisions. (Faisal & Ekawanto, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2024; Ratnaningsih & Nurlinda, 2024).

4.9.3. The Influence of Product Innovation on Purchasing Decisions

The study's results show that product innovation has a positive, significant effect on purchase decisions. This means that the higher consumers' perception of a company's innovation, the greater their tendency to make a purchase. In the context of this study, Indomilk is considered successful in presenting innovation through special edition packaging designs, new flavor variants, and creative promotional strategies. Indomilk's practical advancements in the dairy business are one way that product innovation influences consumer choices. While single-serve packs and contemporary designs improve convenience and product visibility at the point of purchase, new flavored varieties, low-sugar options, and vitamin-enriched

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UHT milk address consumer lifestyle demands and growing health consciousness. These efforts not only increase the product's appeal but also strengthen the brand image as a company that is adaptive to market needs and trends. These findings are consistent with the research by Litta & Prasetiyo (2025) and Indriani et al. (2023), which states that product innovation has a significant effect on purchasing decisions. Thus, product innovation is an important factor in building consumers' interest, trust, and loyalty to a brand.

4.9.4. The Influence of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions

The study's results indicate that brand image has a positive, significant effect on purchasing decisions. This finding indicates that the more positive the brand image in consumers' minds, the greater their tendency to purchase. A strong brand image reflects consumers' perceptions of a product's quality, trustworthiness, and value. In the context of this study, Indomilk's strategy of maintaining consistency in quality and product appearance, and of collaborating with brand ambassadors, proved effective in strengthening consumers' positive perceptions of the brand, ultimately driving purchasing decisions. These findings support the findings of Puspita & Rahmawan (2021) and Apriany & Gendalasari (2022), which state that brand image has a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Thus, building a positive brand image is a strategic factor for companies to increase consumer trust and loyalty.

4.9.5. The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Purchasing Decisions through Brand Image

The results of the study show that brand image acts as a positive and significant mediator in the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase decision. This means that the presence of a suitable brand ambassador can strengthen brand image, which ultimately increases consumer purchase decisions. This indicates that the effectiveness of brand ambassadors does not only depend on their popularity or appeal, but also on their ability to build positive perceptions of the brand. In this context, brand image serves as a link between the emotional and symbolic influence of brand ambassadors and consumer purchasing behavior. This finding is in line with research by Aisyah et al. (2024), which states that brand ambassadors can indirectly influence purchasing decisions by strengthening brand image. Thus, selecting brand ambassadors should align the figures' images with the brand's values and identity to positively influence purchasing decisions.

4.9.6. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchasing Decisions through Brand Image

The results indicate that brand image acts as a positive, significant mediator in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. This shows that social media marketing can enhance brand image, ultimately encouraging consumers to make purchases. These findings indicate that effective social media marketing strategies not only increase interaction and brand awareness but also foster positive perceptions of the brand among consumers. A strong brand image then strengthens consumer trust and interest in purchasing the promoted product. These results are consistent with Hidayatullah et al. (2021), who found that social media marketing has an indirect influence on purchasing decisions through brand image. Therefore, companies need to ensure that their social media content and activities align with their brand values and identity to strengthen their positive image in consumers' eyes.

4.9.7. The Influence of Product Innovation on Purchasing Decisions through Brand Image

The results of the study show that brand image acts as a positive and significant mediator in the relationship between product innovation and purchase decisions. This means that product innovations by companies can strengthen brand image, which in turn encourages more consumer purchase decisions. These findings indicate that innovation not only updates product features or quality, but also helps build a modern, trustworthy brand perception that is relevant to consumer needs. A brand image formed from positive

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innovation creates added value, which in turn increases consumer trust and loyalty. These results align with Fajar et al. (2024), who found that product innovation indirectly influences purchasing decisions through brand image. Therefore, companies need to continue innovating while maintaining brand image consistency to sustain competitive advantage and strengthen consumer purchasing decisions.

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that social media marketing, product innovation, and brand image have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions for Indomilk products. In contrast, the direct effect of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions is negative and insignificant. However, brand image acts as a significant mediator linking brand ambassador, social media marketing, and product innovation to purchase decisions. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of marketing strategies does not depend solely on celebrity endorsement or promotional intensity, but instead on the consistency and credibility of the brand image built through integrated marketing communication.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in explaining purchasing behavior in the context of digital marketing. It highlights the mediating role of brand image as an attitudinal construct that bridges consumers' perceptions of marketing stimuli with their behavioral intentions. Managerially, the results provide valuable insights for companies, especially in the dairy industry, to strengthen marketing strategies by aligning ambassador selection, digital content, and innovative product development. Building a coherent and trustworthy brand image is key to fostering long-term consumer trust and loyalty.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, companies should select brand ambassadors whose image aligns with product characteristics and brand values to enhance message effectiveness. Second, social media content should focus on storytelling and consumer engagement to maintain emotional connection and trust. Third, continuous innovation in product design and quality is necessary to sustain brand relevance. Future research is encouraged to include additional variables, such as price perception, customer experience, and brand loyalty, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior. Expanding the scope to other product categories or international markets may also strengthen the generalizability of the findings. Ultimately, this study contributes to both academic development and managerial practice by emphasizing the strategic role of brand image in influencing consumer purchase decisions in the digital era.

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