The Role of Brand Trust in Mediating Effect of Brand Image on Purchasing Decision at Unilever Products

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze how Brand Trust acts as a link between Brand Image and purchasing decisions for Unilever products in Bandar Lampung City. The method used is quantitative, with data collected through questionnaires. This study involved consumers of Unilever products in Bandar Lampung City as a population. Because exact data on population size was not available, respondents were selected using non-probability sampling method and purposive sampling technique, focusing on Gen Z consumers who have purchased Unilever products in Bandar Lampung. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Square (PLS). The results of this study reveal that Brand Image has a significant effect on purchasing decisions through Brand Trust on Unilever products. Brand Image has a positive effect on Purchasing Decisions, Brand Trust affects Purchasing Decisions. Brand Trust mediates the influence of Brand Image on purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Brand Image, Brand Trust, Purchase Decision

1. Introduction

According to (Putri & Nilowardono, 2021) Human life today is greatly influenced by technological and industrial advances, which have a significant impact, especially in the modern business world. Therefore, companies must have the ability to adapt to new trends in order to remain competitive and relevant in increasingly intense business competition. This adaptation includes not only the application of the latest technology, but also a deep understanding of changing consumer behavior and evolving market dynamics. According to (Tamadi & Lorensia, 2019) Companies must have the ability to implement business strategies that can influence customers. One of their strategies is to build and maintain a positive brand image and increase brand trust. According to (Ngabiso et al., 2021) Maintaining Brand Image and growing Brand Trust are some of the various ways that can be used to make customers loyal to brands. For example, PT Unilever Indonesia, which has been operating in this industry for a long time, shows how large companies must continue to adapt and maintain relationships with customers through a strong brand image and consumer trust.

This study focuses on PT Unilever, according to (Verianty, 2022) PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk is a leading Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) company in

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Indonesia. Since its establishment in 1933 Unilever Indonesia has more than 40 brands and has entered into everyday life with products such as Pepsodent, Lifebuoy, and Rinso. In 1982, the company was opened to the public and its shares were listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange. Unilever Indonesia employs more than 4,100 people and has nine halal-certified by MUI factories in Cikarang and Rungkut. Their business strategy, "The Unilever Compass," focuses on sustainable growth and social responsibility, which includes improving the health of people and the planet, and creating a fairer world. But currently according to (Dwi, 2023) the boycott of products allegedly affiliated with Israel is targeting domestic products. One of them is PT Unilever's product, which has been discussed by the public lately after being hit by the issue of its products allegedly affiliated with Israel.

The boycott of PT Unilever Indonesia showed a significant impact on the company's financial performance. Reporting from (idx.co.id, 2024) PT Unilever's Annual Report recorded total revenue of IDR 38.6 trillion, a decrease of 6.8% compared to the previous year which reached IDR 41.2 trillion. According to (Ahdiat, 2024) PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk achieved net sales of IDR38.6 trillion in 2023, down 6.3% from 2022. The profit of the issuer coded UNVR also decreased by 10.5% yoy to IDR 4.8 trillion in the same year. According to (Nurhayati, 2024) In the third quarter, Unilever recorded a 3.3% increase in domestic sales. Driven by positive underlying volume growth of 4.3%, this momentum continued through October 2023. However, in November and December 2023, the impact of a change in sentiment caused by the geopolitical situation, namely boycotts, caused domestic sales to decline by 5.2%.

According to (Annur, 2024) Jakpat's survey results show that Generation Z is the age group most aware of boycotting Israeli products, and they are also the group that does it the most, with 73% of all people who answered the survey. This survey, which was taken online via the Jakpat app on February 19-20, 2024, was participated in by 1,153 people across the country. Therefore, it is important to understand how brand image and brand trust influence consumer purchasing decisions, especially amidst the dynamic situation that Unilever is currently facing.

According to (Aurellia & Sidharta, 2023) Purchasing decisions are about how consumers make decisions about which brands they will buy. According to (Yahya & Ambarwati, 2024) Purchasing decisions show that consumer behavior is influenced not only by individual characteristics, but also by elements of the marketing mix such as product, price, distribution, and promotion. Consumer purchasing decisions are a complicated process that is influenced by various internal and external factors. These factors include perceived quality, price, information availability, brand image and brand trust. For example, the boycott issue on PT Unilever Products according to (Kurniawan et al., 2024) consumer purchasing decisions are influenced by social media campaigns calling for boycotts in response to regulations. This indicates that in addition to factors such as promotion, price, and product quality, social and ethical aspects also have an important role in influencing consumer decisions regarding the products they choose to buy.

According to (Santoso et al., 2020) one of the factors that influence purchasing decisions is Brand Trust. According to (Chandra et al., 2023) Brand Trust is defined as the sense of security provided to customers, but also as the level of security they feel when the brand meets the characteristics mentioned by customers in each product. According to (Salhab et al., 2023) To build long-term relationships with customers, it is very important to build trust. Effective interactive communication, knowledge of brand history, product customization, a variety of product options, and price transparency can help maintain this relationship. The loss of consumer trust in PT Unilever due to the boycott action shows how vital the role of Brand Trust is in purchasing decisions. As explained by (Chandra et al., 2023) Brand Trust not only provides a sense of security to customers, but also ensures that the product consistently meets consumer expectations. According to (Miati, 2020) consumers will not only choose high-quality goods, but also famous brands or have a strong Brand Image. Therefore, to recover and maintain revenue, PT Unilever must focus on rebuilding Brand Trust through an increase in the strategy of a more responsive marketing strategy.

According to (Asnani, 2021) Brand Image is a representation that shows the quality or badness of a product based on consumer responses from various products. According to (Marlius & Anwar, 2023) Brand Image refers to a collection of associations and perceptions related to the brand stored in the minds of consumers. Although Brand Image is generally created by positive perceptions from consumers, along with the times, according to (Edeline & Praptiningsih, 2022) Image can also be created through comments and reviews on a brand's social media. Reporting from PT Unilever's instagram.com, until now PT Unilever is still closing its comment column because it contains many negative comments due to the boycott by the public. PT Unilever closed the comments column on its social media as a step to avoid the spread of negative comments that increased due to the boycott by the public. By closing the comments column, PT Unilever is trying to avoid the negative impact of public feedback that can influence consumer perceptions and destroy the brand image that has been built.

Previous study (Yahya & Ambarwati, 2024) found that brand image significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions. Another study(Rosanti et al., 2021) found that brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions. In another study written (Na et al., 2023) "The Mediating Role of Brand Trust and Brand Love between Brand Experience and Loyalty: A Study on Smartphones in China" found that brand trust serves as a mediator between brand experience with attitude loyalty and behavioral loyalty. This study shows that brand trust affects both types of loyalty and emphasizes how important it is to build brand trust to increase customer loyalty. However, the study (Asnani, 2021) found that Brand Image has good value and has a big impact on purchasing decisions. Brand Trust, on a different hand, has a bad value and does not have any impact on purchasing decisions.

This study is important to help companies develop more effective marketing strategies in the local market to increase sales. Identify factors that can strengthen PT Unilever's

competitive advantage in the face of changing consumer preferences and market dynamics. By knowing how Brand Image and Brand Trust influence purchasing decisions, PT Unilever can be more effective in designing marketing messages that match the values and expectations of local consumers. This study aims to examine the effect of Brand Image on purchasing decisions for Unilever Products in Bandar Lampung with Brand Trust as a Mediating variable.

2. Theoretical Background

Brand Image: According to (Rosmayanti, 2022) In marketing, brands play a very crucial role. Without a strong brand, a business will find it difficult to grow. Brand is one of the key factors that make it easier for customers to accept products. According to (Kotler & Keller, 2016) Brand Image includes the extrinsic nature of the product or service, including the ways in which the brand tries to meet the social and psychological needs of consumers. According to (Prayogo et al., 2023) Brand Image is similar to the consumer's self-image as the consumer relates himself to the brand. In this highly competitive area, brand image is very meaningful in order to produce a good positioning brand industry always plays a useful position. The indicators of Brand Image according to (Ferdiana Fasha et al., 2022) are: 1)Trusted as a famous brand. Brands that are well known by consumers have higher trust. 2) Attract buyers' interest. Brands that are capable of attracting the buyers usually have a certain appeal, both in terms of visuals, image, and the value offered. 3) Has an interesting variant. Brands that offer a variety of interesting product variants provide choices to consumers. 4) Quality brand. Brand quality is measured by how well a product or service meets consumer expectations in terms of performance, durability and reliability. 5) Competitive price. A competitive price means that products from the brand are selling at a competitive price compared to similar products from other brands. 6) Has unique packaging. Unique packaging refers to the design and shape of product packaging that is attractive and different from similar products on the market. 7) Has a unique aroma. A unique scent is a special characteristic that distinguishes the products of the brand based on the odor produced.

Brand Trust: According to (Tarabieh et al., 2024) Brand trust is a customer's belief in a brand and its capacity to deliver what it promises under pressure. According to (Damanik, 2024) in a business environment full of intense competition, brands that succeed in building and maintaining a high level of trust have a significant advantage. According to (Sitohang et al., 2024) the indicators of Brand Trust are as follows: 1) Trust. Refers to the extent to which consumers believe that a brand is able to fulfill its promises. 2) Reliability. Consumer confidence that the products or services offered by the brand are reliable. 3) Honesty. Indicates the extent to which consumers believe that the brand is honest and transparent. 4) Safety. Refers to consumer confidence that the brand provides a sense of security.

Purchase Decision: According to (Soim et al., 2018) consumers prefer to choose the most popular or best-known brand when buying a product. Meanwhile, (Darmansah & Yosepha, 2020) explain that purchasing decisions are the step in the decision-

making process where consumers finally decide to buy an item. According (Nur Rahma et al., 2024)there are several factors that influence purchasing decisions, namely: 1) Problem Recognition. Consumers realize that they have an unfulfilled need or desire, and they want to find a way to fulfill it. 2) Information Search. Consumers begin to gather information about the products or services they need, whether from friends, family, advertisements, the internet, or other sources. 3) Evaluation of Alternatives. Consumers compare various product or service options based on criteria such as quality, price, features, and brand. From here, they make the final choice of what to buy. 4) Post-Purchase Behavior After purchase. Consumers evaluate whether the product fulfilled their expectations. This experience influences future purchasing decisions and recommendations given to others.

Research Framework

According to the theory described above, the relationship between these variables can be described as follows.
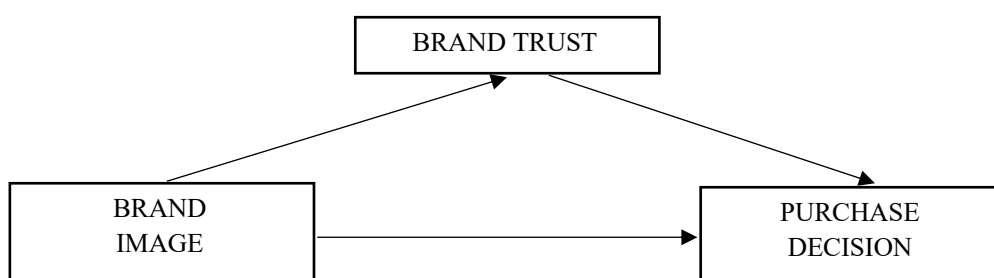

Figure 1. Research Framework

Based on the framework above, the hypothesis that can be proposed is as follows:

H1   : Brand Image has a positive and significant influence on Brand Trust.

H2   : Brand Trust has a positive and significant influence on Purchasing Decisions.

H3   : Brand Image has a positive and significant influence on Purchasing Decisions.

H4   : Brand Trust mediates the influence of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions.

3. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal method to identify the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent variable (Brand Image) and the dependent variable (Purchase Decision), with Brand Trust as the mediating variable. The research population is consumers of Unilever products in Bandar Lampung, especially Generation Z. However, until now there is no accurate data available regarding the number of Generation Z who use PT Unilever products in this region,

so the population of this study cannot be known with certainty. Then a non-probability sampling technique was used with a purposive sampling method that targets consumers who meet certain criteria. Consumers must meet the following criteria: a) aged between 12 to 27 years old, b) domiciled in Bandar Lampung, and c) have purchased Unilever products.This research targets Generation Z in Bandar Lampung City who have purchased Unilever products. Based on data from BPS (2020), the population of Generation Z in the city reached 296,828 people. The sample taken was 160 respondents, calculated based on the formula of at least 10 times the number of indicators in the study.

Primary data was collected using an online questionnaire, Googleform, which was distributed to respondents. This questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale with 4 levels: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Secondary data was obtained from various literatures such as articles and books to support the research. The research instrument used is a questionnaire that measures three main variables: Brand Image, Brand Trust, and Purchasing Decisions. Variable measurement is carried out using 16 indicators developed based on previous literature. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Square (PLS) approach. The SmartPLS 4.1 application is used to process data, test the validity and reliability of the instrument, and test the research hypothesis. Validity was tested through convergent validity and discriminant validity, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. The results showed that all variables have good validity and reliability. Brand Image and Brand Trust significantly influence purchasing decisions.

4. Empirical Findings/Result

Outer model Test

Convergent Validity

According to (Hair et al., 2017) Convergent validity refers to the extent to which a set of measurements is positively correlated with alternative measurements of the same construct. This concept is important in reflective measurement models, where indicators are treated as various approaches to measuring the same construct. In this case, convergent validity suggests that indicators measuring a particular construct should have a significant and consistent level of variance.

Table 1. Covergent Validity Test Results

Indicator	*Brand Image* (X)	Purchasing Decision (Y)	*Brand Trust* (Z)
X1	0.840		
X2	0.842		
X3	0.832		
X4	0.853		
X5	0.892		
X6	0.867		
Y1		0.882	
Y2		0.906	
Y3		0.895	
Y4		0.884	

Indicator	*Brand Image* (X)	Purchasing Decision (Y)	*Brand Trust* (Z)
Z1			0.895
Z2			0.874
Z3			0.912
Z4			0.912
Z5			0.917

Source: SmartPLS Processed Data (2024)

Based on Table 1. It can be concluded that each indicator on the variables in this study has met the criteria for convergent validity with a value above 0.70, so the data is declared valid and meets the requirements of convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity

According to (Hair et al., 2017) Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is different from other constructs, which is measured by ensuring that the correlation between constructs is not too high. This validity measures whether concepts that should not be related are actually uncorrelated.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Test Results

	Brand image (X)	Purchasing decision (Y)	Brand Trust (Z)
X1	0.843	0.712	0.714
X2	0.856	0.695	0.702
X3	0.861	0.732	0.729
X4	0.899	0.742	0.745
X5	0.879	0.692	0.749
Y1	0.789	0.895	0.842
Y2	0.721	0.874	0.832
Y3	0.756	0.912	0.784
Y4	0.727	0.912	0.782
Y5	0.718	0.917	0.767
Z1	0.763	0.771	0.882
Z2	0.768	0.807	0.906
Z3	0.742	0.800	0.894
Z4	0.720	0.797	0.885

Source: SmartPLS Processed Data (2024)

In the outer model, we identify Cross Loading as a measure of discriminant validity. Ideally, each indicator has a higher loading on the measured construct compared to other constructs. This cross loading is tested to ensure that the correlation between the construct and its measurement items is greater than the correlation with other constructs. Based on table 2 above, the variable item from X1 has a cross loading value of 0.843. The X1 Cross Loading value has a higher correlation with variable Y of 0.712 and from variable Z, which is 0.714, so it can be concluded that discriminant validity has been met.

Composite Reliability

Table 3. Composite Reliability

Variabel	Composite Reliability	Criteria	Description
Brand Image	0.938	> 0,7	Reliability
Purchasing decision	0.956	> 0,7	Reliability
Brand Trust	0.940	> 0,7	Reliability

Source: SmartPLS Processed Data (2024)

Based on Table 3. It can be concluded that each variable contained in this study has a Composite Reliability value> 0.7 so that all variables can be declared to meet the criteria and are reliable.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test result

Variable	AVE	Criteria	Description
Brand Image	0.753	> 0,5	Valid
Purchasing Decision	0.814	> 0,5	Valid
Brand Trust	0.795	> 0,5	Valid

Source: SmartPLS Processed Data (2024)

Based on table 4. It can be concluded that all variables contained in this study have an AVE value > 0.5 so that all variables are declared to meet the criteria and are valid.

Cronach's Alpha

Table 2. Cronach's Alpha test result

Variable	Cronach's Alpha	Criteria	Description
Brand Image	0.918	> 0,7	Reliability
Purchasing Decision	0.943	> 0,7	Reliability
Brand Trust	0.914	> 0,7	Reliability

Source: SmartPLS Processed Data (2024)

Based on Table 5. It can be concluded that all variables contained in this study have a Cronach's Alpha value > 0.7 so that all variables are declared to meet the Cronach's Alpha criteria and are reliable.

Inner Model Test

According to (Hair et al, 2017) the inner model is part of a structural model that describes the relationship between latent variables. This structural model shows the path that connects the latent variables. The inner model is also known as a model that predicts the relationship between latent constructs, which are variables that cannot be measured directly, but are estimated from measured indicator variables.

Table 2. R-Square & Q-Square test result

	R-square	Criteria
Cooficient Determination (R-Square)		
Purchasing Decision	0.812	Strong
Brand Trust	0.704	Medium
Predictive Relevance (Q-Square)		
Purchasing Decision	0.702	Medium
Brand Trust	0.675	Medium

Source: SmartPLS Processed Data (2024)

R-Square

According to (Hair et al., 2023) R-Square values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered strong, medium, and weak. An excessive R2 value indicates that the model fits the data too well. Table 6 shows the R-Square coefficient, or coefficient of determination, which is used to evaluate how much influence the independent variables in the model have on the variation in the dependent variable. The R-Square value for purchasing decisions in this study is 0.812, which indicates that 81.2% of the variability in purchasing decisions can be explained by the independent variables. This indicates a strong and significant influence. Meanwhile, the R-Square for Brand Trust of 0.704 means that 70.4% of the variation in brand trust can be explained by the model, and this indicates a moderate influence. Thus, this model has a fairly good ability to explain these dependent variables.

Q-Square

According to (Hair et al., 2023) Q-Square> 0 indicates that the model has good predictive relevance. If the Q-Square value is close to or smaller than 0, then the model is considered to have insufficient predictive relevance. Q-Square is an indicator used to evaluate how well the model can predict the dependent variable out-of-sample (data not used in model building). In this study, the Q-Square value for purchasing decisions of 0.702 indicates moderate predictive relevance, meaning that the model has a fairly good ability to predict purchasing decisions. For Brand Trust, the Q-Square value of 0.675 also shows moderate predictive ability, which means that the model can predict brand trust quite well. Overall, the model has adequate predictability for both dependent variables.

Path Coefficient Test Results and Hypothesis Test

Table 3 Path Coefficient Test Results and Hypothesis Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Brand Image -> Brand Trust	0.839	0.838	0.033	25.432	0.000
Brand Image -> Purchasing Decision	0.261	0.256	0.099	2.631	0.009

Brand Trust -> Purchasing Decision	0.671	0.676	0.092	7.274	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Processed Data (2024)

There is an influence relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as indicated by the acceptance of the hypotheses through bootstrapping with SmartPLS 4.1. The data results from Table 7 show that all the hypotheses listed in it are accepted. With a coefficient of 0.839, a t-statistic value of 25.432 (above 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.05), Brand Image has a significant positive effect on Brand Trust. Therefore, H1 is accepted. In addition, Brand Image has a positive impact on Purchasing Decisions with a coefficient of 0.261, a t-statistic value of 2.631, and a p-value of 0.009, which indicates that this impact is significant, so H2 is accepted. Brand Trust also has a positive impact on Purchasing Decisions with a coefficient of 0.671, a t-statistic value of 7.274, and a p value of 0.000. This indicates that this impact is also significant, so H3 is accepted. Overall, each independent variable has a positive impact on the dependent variable.

Results of Specific Indirect Effects or Indirect Effects

Table 4. P Specific Indirect Effect Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Brand Image -> Brand Trust -> Purchasing Decision	0.563	0.567	0.086	6.544	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Processed Data (2024)

Based on this table, it can be concluded that Brand Trus can mediate the effect of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions because it has a -p value of 0.000 (below 0.05) and a t statistic of 6.544 (above 1.96), which means that the influence that occurs is positive and significant so that H3 is accepted.

5. Discussion

The Effect of Brand Image on Brand Trust

Based on the research results, hypothesis testing using the Path Coefficient test shows that brand image has a significance level of 0.000, which is below 0.05, which means that the hypothesis can be accepted. This indicates that there is a significant influence of brand image on brand trust. This research supports the findings of (Izzati, 2019) which state that brand image has an effect on brand trust. Therefore, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis is accepted, because the better the brand image of a product, the more consumers trust the product.

The Effect of Brand Trust on Purchasing Decisions

Based on the research results, the hypothesis test conducted using the Path Coefficient test shows that Brand Trust has a significance level of 0.000 which is below 0.05, which means that the hypothesis can be accepted. This indicates that there is a

significant effect of brand trust on purchasing decisions. This research is in line with previous findings by (Apriliani & Setyawati, 2023) which show that trust helps customers make better purchasing decisions. Therefore, it can be concluded that the second hypothesis is accepted because, the greater the trust given to customers, the more effect it has on their decision to buy Unilever goods.

The Effect of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions

Based on the research results, the hypothesis test conducted using the path coefficient test shows that brand image has a significance level of 0.009 which is below 0.05, which means that hypothesis three is accepted. This means that there is a significant effect between brand image on purchasing decisions. This research is in line with previous research by (Nurasmi & Andriana, 2024) which shows that brand image has a positive effect on purchasing decisions. Therefore, hypothesis three is accepted because with a strong and positive brand image, consumers are more likely to choose that product.

The Effect of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions through Brand Trust

Based on the research results, the hypothesis test conducted using the Specific Indirect Effect test shows that Brand Trust can mediate the effect of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions because it has a -p value of 0.000 below 0.05 and a t statistic of 6.544 above 1.96, which means that the influence that occurs is positive and significant. This research supports previous research by (Aurellia & Sidharta, 2023) which shows that brand image has a significant effect on purchasing decisions through brand trust. Therefore, hypothesis four can be accepted because Brand Trust is proven to be able to mediate the influence of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions significantly.

6. Conclusions

This study aims to analyze and discuss the effect of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions, with Brand Trust as a mediating variable, on consumers of Unilever products in Bandar Lampung City. The results showed that all constructs were positively and significantly interconnected. First, Brand Image has a significant effect on Brand Trust. Second, Brand Trust has a significant effect on Purchasing Decisions. Third, Brand Image has a significant impact on Purchasing Decisions. Finally, Brand Trust acts as a positive mediator between Brand Image and Purchasing Decisions. This study can be improved with several suggestions, such as expanding the research area outside Bandar Lampung to get more general results, as well as considering the addition of variables such as brand loyalty and customer Research on the impact of ethical perceptions and social campaigns, especially related to the issue of boycotting Unilever products, is also interesting to study more deeply. In addition, a qualitative approach can provide in-depth insight into the emotional factors that influence consumer perceptions of brand image and brand trust. These suggestions are expected to enrich future research.

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