

The Role of Brand Image in Mediating the Influence of Brand Ambassador and E-WOM on Repurchase Intention (A Study on Consumers of Ultra Milk Products in Denpasar City)

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ABSTRACT

The present research examines the role of brand image in mediating the influence of brand ambassadors and e-WOM on repurchase intentions for Ultra Milk in Denpasar. Using a quantitative associative method with 140 samples and SEM-PLS analysis, results show that brand ambassadors and e-WOM do not have a positive significant effect on repurchase intentions. Brand ambassadors also do not have a positive significant effect on brand image, while e-WOM has a positive significant effect on brand image. Brand image has a positive significant effect on repurchase intentions. Furthermore, brand image does not have a positive significant mediating effect between brand ambassadors and repurchase intentions but does have a positive significant mediating effect among e-WOM and repurchase intentions.

INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization, people's food and beverage consumption patterns are increasingly influenced by modern lifestyles driven by financial capacity. People tend to choose practical, ready-to-consume products, for instance packaged meals and beverages (Adzkie et al., 2021). Beverages are a daily staple, leading to a growing demand for beverage products, particularly ready-to-drink beverages. This increase is driven by rising affluence and people's busy daily lives (Shabrina & Dwijayanti, 2021).

Of the various types of packaged beverages, milk is one of the most popular dairy products. Ultra Milk is a widely recognized brand of ready-to-drink milk and a top consumer choice. However, according to the Top Brand Index data from 2021–2024, Ultra Milk's popularity has fluctuated. Although Ultra Milk held the top spot from 2021 to 2023, it was overtaken by Bear Brand in 2024. This shift in position indicates a decline in consumer preference for Ultra Milk, requiring the company to measure and improve marketing plans to maintain and increase sales and consumer repurchase intentions.

Repurchase intentions are closely linked to brand ambassadors, as consumers tend to be attracted to and influenced by products promoted by well-known public figures (Naumi et al., 2023). Furthermore, positive consumer attitudes or expressions toward a brand also influence purchase intentions, both in the immediate and extended future. These attitudes can be formed from the opinions or comments of other consumers, thus e-WOM has a major impact in shaping repurchase intentions (Sa'ait et al., 2016).

However, various previous studies revealed differences in the influence of research with the same title. Therefore, a mediating variable is needed to explain how or why the relationship between these two variables and repurchase intentions occurs. In this study, brand image was used as a mediating variable because this variable is a crucial aspect to consider in marketing strategies (Wulandari & Panasea, 2024). Consumers tend to have high purchase intentions for products with a strong brand image (Weking & Panasea, n.d.). The fluctuations and declines in Ultra Milk's percentage in the Top Brand Index data require further research to identify factors influencing consumer repurchase intentions. This research will specifically examine the effect exerted by brand ambassadors, e-WOM, and brand image as mediating variable on repurchase intentions for Ultra Milk.

Several previous studies have examined the influence of e-WOM on repurchase intentions. Research conducted by Arif (2019) found that e-WOM had a positive and significant effect on repurchase intentions. This study's results also align with research by Nathalia & Indriyanti (2022), which found that e-WOM had a positive effect on repurchase intentions. However, the results of Abd Jalil et al.'s (2021) study differed, as they found that e-WOM had no effect on repurchase intentions, and the relationship between the two variables was negative.

Therefore, a mediating variable is needed to explain how or why the relationship between these two variables and repurchase intentions occurs. In this study, brand image was used as a mediating variable because this variable

is a crucial aspect to consider in marketing strategies (Wulandari & Panasea, 2024). Consumers tend to have high purchase intentions for products with a strong brand image (Weking & Panasea, n.d.). The fluctuations and declines in Ultra Milk's percentage in the Top Brand Index data require further research to identify factors influencing consumer repurchase intentions. This research will specifically examine the effect exerted by brand ambassadors, e-WOM, and brand image as mediating variable on repurchase intentions for Ultra Milk.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen (1991) argues that the Theory of Planned Behavior positions behavioral intention as the most immediate predictor of real-world action. According to this model, intention arises from a combination of three antecedents and functions as the direct precursor to behavior. This intention reflects the motivational influences behind the behavior, illustrating the degree of determination and effort a person is prepared to invest in carrying out that behavior. The theory of planned behavior posits three conceptually independent determinants of intention. The first factor is attitude toward the behavior, which refers to the extent to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or assessment of the behavior. The second factor is a social factor called subjective norm, which describes the sense of social expectations experienced by an individual to carry out or not the behavior. Third element involves perceived behavioral control, which describes how straightforward or challenging an individual believes it is to carry out the behavior. This perception is thought to be shaped by previous experiences and expected challenges.

The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Repurchase Intentions

Empirical findings conducted by Cahyani & Dwiridotjahjono (2024), they found that brand ambassadors have a positive effect on repurchase intentions, which aligns with research by Singgih et al. (2024) and Fariha (2019), which also revealed that brand ambassadors also has the same effect on repurchase intentions. Essentially, a person will be attracted to something linked to someone they admire or figure of inspiration. Through the use of well-known celebrities as brand ambassadors, it is hoped that this will highlight consumer participation in increasing profits through purchases (Singgih et al., 2024).

H1: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on purchase intentions.

The Influence of e-WOM on Repurchase Intention

E-WOM is currently a crucial resource for consumers to obtain product information and build repurchase intentions. E-WOM has a positive and significant influence on repurchase intentions (Bulut & Karabulut, 2018). As supported by previous studies by Nathalia & Indriyanti (2022), which aligns with the findings of Arif's (2019) study. This suggests that e-WOM can impact consumers to engage in repeat purchases.

H2: E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention.

The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Brand Image

Brand ambassadors offer an effective means of enhancing a brand's image and create public trust in a company. Increased public trust will also increase public interest in the company, thereby maintaining its image (Justica & Lestari, 2021). Based on research by Larasari et al. (2018), brand ambassadors have a positive and significant impact on brand image. Such results support earlier findings from Hong et al. (2023) and Murdiyani et al. (2023).

H3: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on brand image.

The Influence of E-WOM on Brand Image

E-WOM provides a variety of information about authentic experiences of using offerings that are not tied to a specific brand. This allows consumers to perceive the information from e-WOM as reliable, leading to trust and developing their own perspectives on the product or service (Sa'ait et al., 2016). Based on the results of research conducted by Putra & Rastini (2022), e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image, which aligns with the results of research by Putera & Warmika (2020) and Handoko & Melinda (2021).

H4: E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image.

The Influence of Brand Image on Repurchase Intention

According to Arif's (2019) research, which revealed that brand image has a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention, this also aligns with research by Trisnalia & Farida (2024) and Devantha & Ekawati (2021). Consumers will be attracted and intend to repurchase when they trust and feel secure in a brand they have previously used. A better brand image will further increase consumer interest in the product (Wulandari & Panasea, 2024).

H5: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention.

The Role of Brand Image Mediates the Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Repurchase Intentions

Research carried out by Putri & Putra (2024) showed that brand image successfully mediated the influence of brand ambassadors on repurchase intentions. This indicates in which the presence of brand image as a mediating variable increases the influence of brand ambassadors on repurchase intentions. Other research has similar results, it is evident that brand image serves as a mediator in the relationship connecting those two variables, as found in research by Cahyani & Dwiridotjahjono (2024).

H6: Brand image has a positive and significant mediating effect on brand ambassadors repurchase intentions.

The Role of Brand Image in Mediating the Influence of E-WOM on Repurchase Intention

According to the results of research conducted by Fransisca & Santika (2024), they found that brand image significantly mediates the influence of e-WOM on repurchase intention. This indicates that the influence of e-WOM on repurchase intention increases with the presence of brand image as a mediating

variable. Another study with similar results, namely the study by Santi & Suasana (2021).

H7: Brand image has a positive and significant mediating effect on e-WOM on repurchase intention.

The relationship between variables in this study is visually illustrated in Figure 1 below.

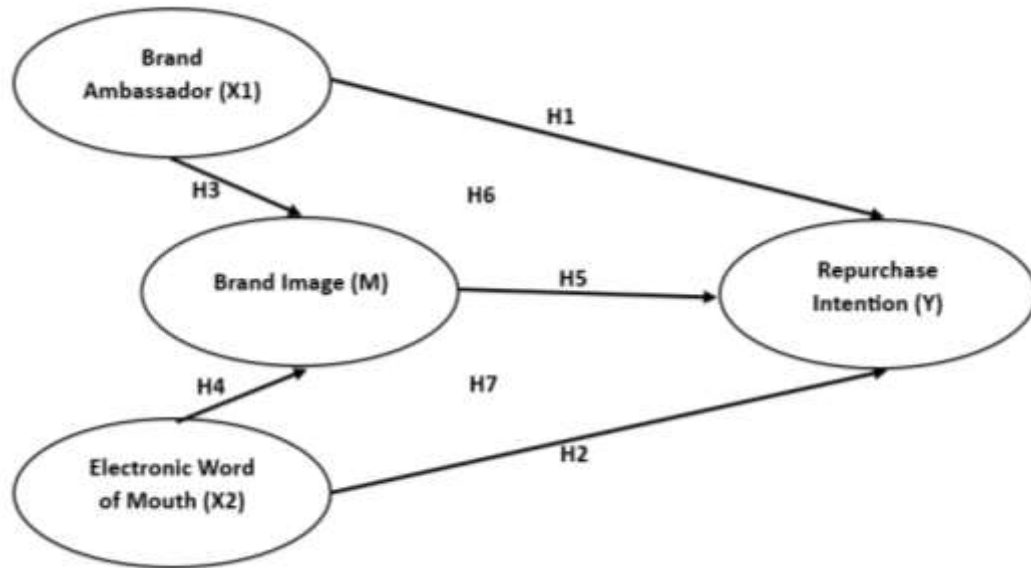


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Model

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative approach with an associative research form, intended to examine and assess the correlation between variables: brand image, brand ambassadorship, e-WOM, and repurchase intention. Ultra Milk consumers in Denpasar City served as the population for the present research. The study was conducted using a sample of 140 respondents. The ample parameters for acceptable were a minimum of a high school, residing in Denpasar City, active social media users, and a prior purchase of Ultra Milk products. The study employed a non-probability sampling approach, specifically utilizing purposive sampling. Data were evaluated through PLS- SEM.

RESEARCH RESULT

Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Convergent validity is the first aspect assessed in the evaluation of the measurement (outer) model. This was assessed by evaluating the correlation between each indicator and its respective latent construct. A reflective indicator is considered to have strong validity when its loading exceeds 0.70, indicating a substantial relationship with the construct it represents. As shown in Table 1, all indicators demonstrate adequate convergent validity and are therefore deemed valid for further analysis.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Test

Indicator	Construct	Outer Loadings
Y 1	Intention to Repurchase	0.842
Y 2		0.790
Y 3		0.789
Y 4		0.861
(X1) 1	Brand Ambassador	0.895
(X1) 2		0.911
(X1) 3		0.880
(X2) 1	E-WOM	0.743
(X2) 2		0.884
(X2) 3		0.885
(X2) 4		0.774
M 1	Brand Image	0.794
M 2		0.909
M 3		0.848

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

The discriminant validity test was assessed according to the cross-loading measurements with the constructs. This test was also conducted to assess the validity of each indicator used in the research. Based on Table 2, the cross-loading values for each construct were higher than those for the other constructs, thus indicating validity.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Test

	M	X1	X2	Y
M 1	0.794	0.176	0.208	0.454
M 2	0.909	0.185	0.306	0.605
M 3	0.848	0.273	0.433	0.525
X 1.1	0.213	0.895	0.471	0.265
X 1.2	0.211	0.911	0.523	0.311
X 1.3	0.249	0.880	0.320	0.282
X 2.1	0.226	0.525	0.743	0.274
X 2.2	0.367	0.433	0.884	0.304
X 2.3	0.355	0.370	0.885	0.386
X 2.4	0.287	0.315	0.774	0.292
Y 1	0.569	0.191	0.300	0.842
Y 2	0.541	0.269	0.252	0.790
Y 3	0.445	0.277	0.365	0.789
Y 4	0.488	0.320	0.352	0.861

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

Table 3 presents the results of the reliability test, which shows that the Cronbach's alpha value is more than 0.70 and the composite reliability exceeds the threshold of 0.70 of each variable used. The purpose of this test was to verify

whether each variable demonstrated sufficient reliability for inclusion in subsequent analysis. These findings suggest that all variables indicate satisfactory internal consistency coefficients and can be considered reliable.

Table 3. Composite Realibility Test

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
M	0.811	0.888
X1	0.876	0.924
X2	0.841	0.894
Y	0.838	0.892

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

From the outer model evaluation, it was determined that all latent variables and their corresponding indicators satisfy validity and reliability criteria making them suitable for inclusion in further analysis.

Evaluation of Measurement Model (Inner Model)

The adjusted R-square of variable (M) of 0.138 indicates that the brand ambassador (X1) and e-WOM (X2) contribute significantly to the explanation of the brand image variable. by 13.8 percent while the rest show 86.2 percent is influenced by other variables. Therefore, the model is deemed to have limited explanatory strength. Meanwhile, repurchase intention variable (Y) get a score of 0.416 indicates that the brand ambassador (X1), e-WOM (X2), and brand image (M) are able to describe the repurchase intention by 41.6 percent and the remaining 58.4 percent is influenced by other variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model is considered moderate.

Table 4. R Square

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
M	0.151	0.138
Y	0.428	0.416

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

According to the Table 5, that the Q square value for brand image variable (M) is 0.089 and for the repurchase intention variable (Y) is 0.110. Since both values exceed zero, the model is considered to possess predictive relevance.

Table 5. Q-square

Indicator	Q2predict	RMSE	MAE
M	0.089	0.973	0.802
Y	0.110	0.960	0.774

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is performed to assess whether one variable has an effect on another. The findings from the hypothesis test are reflected in the estimated path coefficients to see the significant test between constructs and the results of the specific indirect effect to examine the indirect connection between exogenous variables and endogenous variables with mediation by an intermediate variable. One way to assess the support for the hypothesis is by comparing the t-table and t-statistics, in this study used t-table value of ≥ 1.64 which means the t-statistic value obtained must be at least 1.64 to be considered significant. In addition, it can be assessed based on the p-value, when the p-value falls below 0.05, H_0 is rejected in favor of the H_1 .

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

	Original Sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T - statistics	P values
M $\rightarrow$ Y	0.550	0.543	0.073	7.583	0.000
X1 $\rightarrow$ M	0.086	0.084	0.106	0.808	0.209
X1 $\rightarrow$ Y	0.127	0.123	0.087	1.469	0.071
X2 $\rightarrow$ M	0.339	0.353	0.109	3.105	0.001
X2 $\rightarrow$ Y	0.113	0.127	0.094	1.192	0.117
X1 $\rightarrow$ M $\rightarrow$ Y	0.047	0.047	0.059	0.795	0.213
X2 $\rightarrow$ M $\rightarrow$ Y	0.187	0.189	0.058	3.199	0.001

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

The t-statistic value of the brand ambassador variable on repurchase intention is $1.469 < t\text{-table } 1.64$ and $p\text{-value } 0.071 > 0.05$. The t-statistic value of the e-WOM variable on repurchase intention is $1.192 < t\text{-table } 1.64$ and $p\text{-value } 0.117 > 0.05$. Therefore, H_0 is recognized and H_1 is rejected, meaning that the brand ambassador and e-WOM variables do not have a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.

The t-statistic value of the brand ambassador variable on brand image intention is $0.808 < t\text{-table } 1.64$ and $p\text{-value } 0.209 > 0.05$. Therefore, H_0 is recognized and H_1 is dismissed, signifying that the brand ambassador variable does not have a significant positive effect on brand image. Meanwhile, brand ambassador variable on brand image intention is H_1 recognized (t-statistic 3.105 and p-value 0.001), indicating that e-WOM has a significant positive effect on brand image.

The t-statistic derived from the brand image measure on repurchase intention is $7.583 > t\text{-table } 1.64$ and $p\text{-value } 0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that brand image has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.

The t-statistic value of the brand image mediating on repurchase intention is $0.795 < t\text{-table } 1.64$ and $p\text{-value } 0.213 > 0.05$. Indicating that brand image does not have a significant positive effect mediating brand ambassadors on repurchase intention. The t-statistic 3.199 and p-value 0.001, indicating that the brand image variable has a significant positive effect on mediating e-WOM on repurchase intention.

DISCUSSION

Pursuant to the findings from the hypothesis testing, brand ambassadors not have positive significant effect on repurchase intention. Even if a company uses well-known public figures or celebrities to promote a product, this does not necessarily encourage consumers to engage in repeat purchasing. This finding is validated based on research undertaken by Trisnalia & Farida (2024), which showed that brand ambassadors partially had no leads to a significant improvement in effect on repurchase intention. This finding also aligns with research by Fathia & Jokhu (2023). Also show that e-WOM did not have a significant positive effect on repurchase intention. This finding propose that even though consumers receive various online reviews, testimonials, or recommendations, these are not always strong enough to encourage consumers to repurchase the same product. This finding is justified by Abd Jalil et al. (2021) and Amalia et al. (2023), which found that e-WOM had no effect on repurchase intention through their study.

Brand ambassadors not have meaningful positive influence on brand image in this result. This means that even if a company uses a well-known public figure or influencer as a brand ambassador, this may not necessarily shape consumers' overall positive perceptions of the brand. This research draws support from findings reported by Alexandra (2023) and Nabilla (2025), which revealed that brand ambassadors had no influence on brand image.

The findings of this study demonstrate that e-WOM has a significant positive effect on brand image. Consequently that information, reviews, and testimonials shared by consumers online can shape positive consumer perceptions of a brand. This research is supported by Putera & Warmika's (2020) research and Handoko & Melinda's (2021) research, which found that e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image.

Brand image has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention in this study. This means that the stronger favorable consumer perception toward the brand, they have the opportunity to making repeat purchases of that brand increases. The results are proven by research result by Trisnalia & Farida (2024) and Devantha & Ekawati (2021), found that brand image has a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention.

The results showed that brand image did not mediate the influence of brand ambassadors on repurchase intention. This finding suggests that the presence of brand ambassadors, even if popular or influential, does not automatically create a strong brand image and, ultimately, is not sufficient to encourage consumers to repurchase. This finding is supported by research conducted by Fitra (2021), which found that brand image did not significantly mediate the influence of brand ambassadors on repurchase intention.

The results showed that brand image mediated the influence of e-WOM on repurchase intention. This means that information consumers obtain through e-WOM, such as online reviews, testimonials, or recommendations, does not directly encourage consumers to repurchase. Instead, it first forms a positive brand image, which then plays a part in influencing repurchase intention. This results are supported by Fransisca & Santika's (2024) research which is also in line with the

results of research by Santi & Suasana (2021) that brand image is capable to significantly mediate the influence of e-WOM on repurchase intentions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals that brand ambassadors and e-WOM do not exert a positively and significantly affects repurchase intention. Additionally, brand ambassadors do not significantly influence brand image. In contrast, e-WOM has a positive and statistically significant impact on brand image, and in turn, brand image significantly strengthens repurchase intention. Moreover, brand image does not significantly mediate the relationship between brand ambassadors and repurchase intention, but it does serve as a meaningful mediator between e-WOM and repurchase intention.

Not all three exogenous variables included in this study exert the same influence on the endogenous construct. Out of seven proposed hypotheses, only three were supported by statistically significant positive effects. The remaining four hypotheses did not achieve significance, indicating that only a subset of the predictors meaningfully contributes to explaining variation in the dependent variable.

Based on these conclusions, there are several strategic recommendations that Ultra Milk management can implement. First, the company needs to focus on strengthening its e-WOM strategy as one of its primary marketing approaches. Second, the company is advised to evaluate the effectiveness of its brand ambassadors. Third, the company needs to strengthen brand differentiation to build a strong image in the minds of consumers. By implementing these recommendations, the company is expected to enhance consumers' repurchase intentions, which in turn fosters greater long-term loyalty to its products.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study certainly has several limitations. The scope of the study was limited to Ultra Milk consumers in Denpasar City. Therefore, the results cannot be universally applied across different populations to other regions with different consumer characteristics. The scope variables just brand ambassadors, e-WOM, brand image, and repurchase intention, so other potential influencing factors were not included. For scientific development and further research, further research is advised to extend the boundaries of this study, both in terms of sample size and characteristics. Furthermore, further research can add other relevant variables. By including relevant variables, it is anticipated that this research will yield a more thorough understanding of the mechanisms and factors driving repurchase intention, particularly in the context of packaged beverage products like Ultra Milk.

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