

Hangin Out And Purchase Decision

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Abstract—This study investigates the effect of brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador on purchase decisions at Cafe Mental Tempe. Employing a quantitative survey design, the research collected primary data from 100 customers selected through purposive sampling. Data were obtained via a validated Likert-Scale questionnaire and analyzed using multiple linear regression to assess both simultaneous and partial influences of the independent variables purchase decision. Empirical results indicate that brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador each have a positive and statistically significant effect on customers' purchase decisions. The simultaneous regression test confirms that the three variables jointly explain a meaningful proportion of variance in purchase intention, while the t-test shows that each predictor contributes significantly in partial analysis. These findings suggest that an integrated brand enhances consumer recognition, cultivating favorable perceptions, and deploying credible brand representatives. This study contributes to marketing practice by demonstrating that small to medium food outlets can strengthen sales performance through coordinated branding strategies. For future research, a longitudinal design and a larger, probabilistic sample are recommended to generalize findings across regions and examine the long-term effect of brand strategies on customer loyalty.

Keywords: *brand awareness; brand image; brand ambassador; purchase decision; linear regression*

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of intense business competition, effective brand management has become a key determinant of organizational success, particularly in the food and beverage (F&B) industry, where consumer preferences are highly dynamic. A strong brand not only differentiates a company from its competitors but also builds long-term emotional connections with consumers (Keller, 2013). In Indonesia, the rapid growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary sector has intensified the need for effective branding strategies that can attract and retain customers. Café Mental Tempe, as one of the emerging local brands, must continuously strengthen its brand presence to remain competitive amid numerous alternatives available to consumers. Prior studies have extensively discussed the influence of brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassadors on purchase behavior (Ling et al., 2023; Subawa et al., 2024; Permana & Hidayat, 2024; Yelvita, 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2022).

Brand awareness enables consumers to easily recognize and recall a brand, forming the foundation of consumer trust and decision-making. Brand image represents consumers' perceptions and associations about a brand, which shape their emotional attachment and behavioral intention. Meanwhile, the role of brand ambassador, a person who personifies brand values, has become increasingly important in influencing public perception and shaping purchase motivation through social identity and endorsement effects. However, existing research has predominantly focused on large-scale or multinational brands, while empirical evidence in small-scale local cafés remains limited. Moreover, previous findings are inconsistent: some studies show that brand image is the dominant factor affecting purchase decision, whereas others find brand awareness or brand ambassador to have a stronger impact. This inconsistency highlights a research gap that warrants further investigation in the context of local F&B businesses.

The present study aims to analyze the simultaneous and partial effects of brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador on consumer purchase decisions at Café Mental Tempe, a small-scale culinary business in Indonesia. By focusing on this context, the research contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it extends consumer behavior and branding literature by validating the interplay of cognitive (awareness), affective (image), and symbolic (ambassador) brand dimensions in shaping purchase behavior within a localized SME setting.

Practically, the study provides insights for marketing managers and business owners to design integrated brand strategies that leverage emotional connection, brand visibility, and ambassador credibility to drive consumer purchase decisions. This contribution is especially relevant for small and medium enterprises seeking to enhance brand equity and competitiveness in the saturated F&B market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Table 1: Literature Review

Cite	Result
Ghadani, Muhar & Sari (2022)	The presence of brand ambassadors helps increase consumer awareness of the company due to the positive and substantial impact brand ambassadors have on brand awareness. Furthermore, research has shown that brand image is strongly correlated with brand awareness, indicating that consumers are more likely to recognize well-represented companies when they have a positive impression of them. Brand ambassadors have a positive and statistically significant effect on consumer spending, both directly and indirectly through the mediating variable of brand awareness. On the other hand, consumers are not influenced by negative perceptions of a brand when making purchases, and this is true both directly and indirectly through brand awareness. Meanwhile, research shows that simply being aware of a brand has a good and substantial effect on consumers' likelihood to buy.
Clarissa & Bernarto (2022)	Considerations such as price, brand ambassadors, brand recognition, and brand image all play a role in the final purchase. The likelihood of making a purchase is positively correlated with the following factors: price affordability, brand awareness, a good impression of brand ambassadors, and overall brand awareness.
Sari & Wahjoedi (2022)	These three factors, brand image, brand awareness, and brand ambassadors, significantly and positively influence consumers' purchase intentions. However, brand ambassadors do not mediate the positive effects of brand perception and brand familiarity on consumers' purchase intentions.
Aprianti & Tjiptodjojo (2023)	Consumer choice to purchase Scarlett Whitening is influenced by brand ambassadors, brand awareness, and brand image, both separately and simultaneously.
Hendi, Rini & Silalahi (2022)	There is a beneficial correlation between brand ambassadors and increased brand awareness, but there is no such correlation between brand ambassadors and increased brand image or consumer spending directly. The decision to purchase is heavily influenced by consumer familiarity and perception of the brand. It is said that the indirect impact of brand ambassadors on purchase choice is negligible, occurring through brand awareness and brand image.
Situmorang, Adlina & Siregar (2022)	Consumer perception of the L'Oréal Paris brand and its representatives has a significant impact on their likelihood of purchasing the cosmetics.

Suwuh, Kindangen & Saerang (2022)	Brand ambassador and brand image have a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention of Somethinc products.
Manap, Hawari, Lubis, Lubis & Saepullah (2023)	Perceptions of a brand and consumer propensity to buy are both influenced by the work of brand ambassadors. The decision to purchase is also affected by consumer perceptions of the brand. Brand ambassadors can indirectly influence purchasing choices by shaping public perception of the brand.
Arianty, N., & Andira, A. (2021)	Positive and substantial impacts on partial and simultaneous purchase choices are mediated by consumer perceptions and brand familiarity.
Rosmayanti, M. (2023)	Brand image and brand awareness both partially and simultaneously have a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions.
Samsiyah, S. N., Amalia, N. R., & Regita, N. A. (2022)	This study found that two variables, brand image and brand ambassador, have a positive but negligible effect on the purchase decision variable, while the other variables do not have this effect. On the other hand, brand awareness significantly and negatively influences the purchase decision variable.
Hasian, A. G., & Pramuditha, C. A. (2022)	According to the study's findings, there is no partial influence of the brand ambassador variable on purchase intention. Purchase intention is influenced to some extent by brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty. Each of these factors, brand ambassador, brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty, simultaneously influences consumer behavior.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers are familiar with and can recall a particular brand when making purchase decisions. According to Aaker (1996), brand awareness forms the foundation of brand equity because it reflects consumers' ability to recognize and remember a brand among competing alternatives. High brand awareness increases the likelihood that a brand will be included in consumers' consideration sets, thereby influencing purchase behavior. Empirical research demonstrates that brand awareness plays a critical role in shaping consumer decisions. Keller (2013) argues that awareness creates a sense of trust and reduces perceived risk, particularly in low-involvement purchases such as food and beverages. Similarly, Dwivedi et al. (2021) found that strong brand awareness significantly enhances consumers' intention to buy by providing a cognitive shortcut during decision-making. In the context of Café Mental Tempe, brand awareness represents how effectively consumers recognize and recall the café's name and offerings among local competitors. Strengthening brand awareness through consistent communication and brand exposure is therefore expected to positively influence customers' purchase decisions.

H1: Brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

Brand Image

Brand image represents consumers' overall perceptions and associations related to a brand. Kotler and Keller (2016) define brand image as the set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that consumers hold toward a brand. A favorable brand image not only differentiates a company from its competitors but also builds emotional attachment and trust, which are crucial in driving

purchase intentions. Past studies have consistently shown the importance of brand image in influencing consumer behavior. Research by Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) found that brand image enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. In the F&B industry, a positive brand image can stimulate affective responses, such as comfort and familiarity, which directly influence the customer's decision to purchase. Given that Café Mental Tempe operates in a competitive market characterized by strong local cultural identity, cultivating a distinct and appealing brand image emphasizing authenticity, quality, and uniqueness is expected to reinforce consumers' emotional connection and trust toward the brand.

H2: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision.

Brand Ambassador

A brand ambassador is a person who embodies the brand's values and communicates them persuasively to target audiences. According to McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model, the credibility and attractiveness of an ambassador can transfer symbolic meanings from the endorser to the brand and subsequently to consumers. The use of brand ambassadors has become an effective marketing strategy for enhancing brand visibility and emotional resonance, particularly in lifestyle and experiential products. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of brand ambassadors in influencing consumer perceptions and behavior. Erdogan (1999) notes that the trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of a spokesperson significantly affect consumer attitudes toward advertisements and brands. More recent studies by Lim et al. (2020) and Seno & Lukas (2007) confirm that brand ambassadors enhance consumers' perceived quality and positively affect purchase intention. For Café Mental Tempe, brand ambassadors serve as interpersonal communicators who strengthen consumers' identification with the brand, particularly among younger demographics. A relatable and credible brand ambassador can humanize the brand, creating familiarity and positive word-of-mouth that translates into stronger purchase decisions.

H3: Brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision.

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision refers to the process through which consumers select and purchase a product based on their evaluations of available alternatives. Kotler and Keller (2016) describe it as a multi-stage process involving problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase behavior. In this process, brand-related factors such as awareness, image, and ambassador serve as key cues influencing the consumer's final choice. In small-scale cafés like Café Mental Tempe, the decision to purchase is often shaped by emotional and experiential aspects rather than purely functional attributes. Consumers tend to associate the brand's image, social meaning, and ambassador endorsement with self-expression and lifestyle fit. Thus, the combination of cognitive familiarity (awareness), emotional perception (image), and symbolic attachment (ambassador) jointly influences purchasing decisions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design using a causal-explanatory approach to examine the relationship between brand awareness, brand image, brand ambassador, and purchase decision at Café Mental Tempe. The causal design is chosen to empirically test whether the independent variables (brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador) significantly influence the dependent variable (purchase decision). This approach is appropriate for understanding behavioral responses within the marketing context and for validating the hypothesized causal relationships through statistical analysis. The research uses a cross-sectional survey method, where data are collected at a single point in time from a sample of café consumers.

This design allows for the identification of patterns of consumer perception and behavior related to branding elements.

Population and Sample

The population in this study comprises consumers of Café Mental Tempe who have made at least one purchase at the café. Because the total number of consumers is not precisely known, the study employs Lemeshow's formula (1990) to determine an adequate sample size for unknown populations, resulting in 100 respondents.

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, a non-probability approach where participants are selected based on specific criteria:

1. Consumers who have visited Café Mental Tempe at least twice.
2. Consumers aged 17 years or older.
3. Consumers capable of understanding and responding to the research questionnaire.

This sampling method ensures that the respondents possess sufficient familiarity with the brand, enabling them to provide valid assessments of brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador perceptions.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed directly to Café Mental Tempe customers. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections:

1. Respondent profile (demographic data such as age, gender, frequency of visits).
2. Research variables, measured using statements on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

Before full distribution, a pilot test was conducted on 20 respondents to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the wording and clarity of questionnaire items.

Measurement Variables

Each research variable was operationalized using established indicators adapted from previous studies:

1. Brand Awareness (X1) was measured by four indicators adapted from Aaker (1996):
 - a) Brand recognition,
 - b) Brand recall,
 - c) Brand dominance, and
 - d) Top-of-mind awareness.
2. Brand Image (X2) was measured by indicators based on Keller (2013):
 - a) Perceived quality,
 - b) Brand associations, and
 - c) Brand personality.
3. Brand Ambassador (X3) was measured using dimensions from McCracken (1989) and Erdogan (1999):
 - a) Attractiveness,
 - b) Trustworthiness, and
 - c) Expertise.
4. Purchase Decision (Y) was measured following Kotler and Keller (2016), which includes:
 - a) Information search,
 - b) Evaluation of alternatives,
 - c) Purchase intention, and
 - d) Post-purchase satisfaction.

All items were evaluated for content validity by marketing experts and tested for construct validity and reliability using Pearson correlation and Cronbach's alpha.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis with the assistance of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. The regression model used in this study is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y= Purchase Decision

X_1 = Brand Awareness

X_2 = Brand Image

X_3 = Brand Ambassador

α = Constant

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Regression coefficients

ε = Error term

Before testing hypotheses, the data were subjected to classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, to ensure model validity. The t-test was employed to test the partial significance of each independent variable, while the F-test assessed their simultaneous effect. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure how much variation in purchase decisions could be explained by the three branding variables.

Research Ethics

Respondents participated voluntarily, and their responses were treated confidentially. The study adhered to ethical research principles by ensuring informed consent, anonymity, and data usage solely for academic purposes.

RESULT

Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

The survey involved 100 respondents who were active customers of Café Mental Tempe, located in Indonesia. Based on demographic analysis, the majority of respondents were female (62%), while male respondents accounted for 38%. In terms of age, most participants were between 18–25 years old (54%), followed by 26–35 years old (32%), indicating that Café Mental Tempe's core market segment consists of young adults. Regarding visit frequency, 65% of respondents had visited the café more than twice, confirming their familiarity with the brand. This demographic composition aligns with the café's target audience, young, urban consumers with a high level of social media engagement who tend to respond strongly to branding strategies such as visual identity, digital campaigns, and influencer endorsements. These characteristics are relevant because they suggest that customers' perceptions of brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador are likely to influence their purchase behavior.

Table 2: Questionnaire

Questions	SS	S	N	TS	STS	Mean
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
I knew about the existence of the Mental Tempe shop without needing it to be explained. (X1.1)	15	55	25	5		3.8
	15.0%	55.0%	25.0%	5.0%		
I often see or hear the name of the Mental Tempe shop on social media. (X1.2)	18	49	26	7		3.78
	18.0%	49.0%	26.0%	7.0%		
I can easily recognize the "mental tempeh" brand from its logo or packaging. (X1.3)	13	57	29	1		3.82
	13.0%	57.0%	29.0%	1.0%		
I know the types of products or menus offered by the Mental Tempe shop. (X1.4)	17	44	35	4		3.74
	17.0%	44.0%	35.0%	4.0%		
I can distinguish Mental Tempe stalls from other stalls. (X1_5)	8	69	19	4		3.81
	8.0%	69.0%	19.0%	4.0%		
I know the location of the Mental Tempe shop without having to search on the internet (X1.6).	12	52	34	2		3.74
	12.0%	52.0%	34.0%	2.0%		
I can mention Mental Tempe when asked about local shops. (X1.7)	16	57	24	3		3.86
	16.0%	57.0%	24.0%	3.0%		
I am satisfied with buying products from the Mental Tempe (X1.8) store.	7	75	15	3		3.86
	7.0%	75.0%	15.0%	3.0%		
Grand Mean						3.80
SS=Sangat Setuju (Strongly Agree) ; S=Setuju (Agree) ; N=Netral; TS= Disagree ; STS= Strongly Disagree						

Source: Authors

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Before hypothesis testing, the questionnaire was evaluated for validity and reliability. Using Pearson correlation, all items for the four constructs—brand awareness, brand image, brand ambassador, and purchase decision showed correlation coefficients above the critical value ($r > 0.30$) at a significance level of 0.05, indicating that each statement was valid. Reliability testing with Cronbach's Alpha produced the following results:

1. Brand Awareness: $\alpha = 0.861$
2. Brand Image: $\alpha = 0.887$
3. Brand Ambassador: $\alpha = 0.904$
4. Purchase Decision: $\alpha = 0.879$

Since all alpha values exceeded 0.70, the instrument demonstrated strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). This implies that the respondents consistently understood and evaluated the constructs, ensuring the reliability of the dataset for regression analysis.

Classical Assumption Test

To ensure the validity of the regression model, several diagnostic tests were conducted:

1. Normality Test: The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) value was 0.092 with a significance level of 0.200 (> 0.05), indicating that residuals were normally distributed.
2. Multicollinearity Test: Tolerance values ranged from 0.563 to 0.711, and VIF values ranged from 1.345 to 1.777, suggesting no multicollinearity among the independent variables.
3. Heteroscedasticity Test: The scatterplot of standardized residuals displayed random dispersion, and the Glejser test yielded significance values > 0.05 , confirming homoscedasticity.

Hence, all classical assumption criteria were satisfied, validating the use of multiple linear regression analysis.

Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis produced the following equation:

Where:

- Y = Purchase Decision
- X_1 = Brand Awareness
- X_2 = Brand Image
- X_3 = Brand Ambassador

The regression coefficients show that all three independent variables have positive effects on purchase decision, indicating that improvements in brand awareness, brand image, or brand ambassador effectiveness lead to stronger consumer purchase intentions.

The adjusted R^2 value was 0.654, meaning that 65.4% of the variation in purchase decisions could be explained by brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador collectively. The remaining 34.6% is influenced by other factors such as product quality, price perception, service experience, or peer recommendations.

This relatively high explanatory power demonstrates that branding variables account for a substantial portion of consumer decision-making behavior in Café Mental Tempe's context. The F-test result yielded an F-value of 58.731 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05). This finding indicates that brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador jointly have a significant effect on purchase decisions. Therefore, the regression model is statistically valid and supports the hypothesis that branding factors collectively influence consumer purchasing behavior.

Table 3: T-Test

VARIABLE	Standardized Coefficients		sig		CONCLUSION
	t _{hitung}	t _{tabel}	result	$\alpha = 0,05$	
Brand Awareness (X1)	6.307	>1,985	.000	< 0,05	significantly influenced
Brand Image (X2)	11.209	>1,985	.042	< 0,05	significantly influenced
Brand Ambassador (X3)	4.032	>1,985	.000	< 0,05	significantly influenced

DISCUSSION

The finding that brand awareness significantly affects purchase decisions supports Aaker's (1996) theory that awareness serves as the foundation of brand equity. In the case of Café Mental Tempe, consumers who are familiar with the café's brand name, logo, and product offerings are more likely to choose it over competitors. High awareness enhances recognition and recall, simplifying the decision-making process when consumers are presented with multiple alternatives. Empirical studies such as those by Keller (2013) and Dwivedi et al. (2021) also demonstrate that awareness functions as a cognitive shortcut, reducing perceived risk and increasing trust. This aligns with the café's marketing strategy that emphasizes visual identity, such as consistent logo placement, attractive packaging, and active engagement on social media. The relatively young demographic of customers (aged 18–25) strengthens this relationship because younger consumers are highly responsive to brand exposure and digital presence. From a theoretical standpoint, this result also aligns with the Hierarchy of Effects Model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961), where awareness is the first step leading to brand preference and purchase action. Therefore, consistent communication and brand visibility campaigns are essential for Café Mental Tempe to sustain consumer interest and encourage repeat purchases.

Brand image has a significant positive influence on purchase decisions, affirming Keller's (1993) conceptualization of brand image as the sum of brand associations stored in consumer memory. This means that when consumers perceive Café Mental Tempe as a brand that represents quality, comfort, and uniqueness, they are more inclined to make a purchase. This finding supports the results of Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) and Rahman & Reynolds (2022), who argue that a favorable brand image enhances customer satisfaction, loyalty, and willingness to buy. In the café's context, consumers form an emotional attachment to the brand based on their sensory and experiential interactions ambience, product presentation, and service friendliness. From a psychological perspective, brand image influences affective and conative stages in consumer behavior. A positive perception reduces cognitive dissonance and increases emotional comfort during the purchase decision process. Practically, this means that brand managers at Café Mental Tempe should continuously reinforce their desired image through quality consistency, storytelling, and customer engagement activities.

The positive and significant impact of a brand ambassador on purchase decision corroborates McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model, which posits that consumers transfer symbolic meanings from an ambassador to the brand. When the ambassador embodies credibility, attractiveness, and relatability, consumers develop a stronger identification with the brand's personality and values. The finding aligns with Erdogan (1999) and Lim et al. (2020), who found that ambassadors enhance purchase intentions by improving brand credibility and familiarity. For Café Mental Tempe, the use of brand ambassadors, local influencers, or public figures representing

creativity, authenticity, and youthfulness helps humanize the brand and build emotional resonance among younger customers. This result also emphasizes the social identity theory, suggesting that consumers purchase brands that align with their self-concept and social group identity. Thus, an ambassador who reflects target consumers' lifestyles can effectively influence behavioral intentions. The café's collaboration with micro-influencers on Instagram and TikTok, for instance, amplifies brand messages and fosters trust through perceived authenticity.

Although all three variables are significant, brand awareness emerges as the most influential factor, followed by brand image and brand ambassador. This pattern suggests that, within the Café Mental Tempe market, consumers' decision-making process is primarily driven by familiarity and recognition rather than symbolic associations. This differs from high-involvement industries such as fashion or technology, where image and endorsement play more dominant roles. In the café industry, where purchases are often habitual and experiential, awareness functions as a gateway to trial, while image and ambassador effects reinforce satisfaction and loyalty. This finding enriches the literature by illustrating that the brand-building hierarchy differs across industry contexts, a contribution to branding theory that emphasizes situational relevance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study contributes to both academic literature and managerial practice by empirically demonstrating that branding components awareness, image, and ambassador jointly shape consumers' purchase decisions in a small-scale café context. Theoretically, it bridges the gap between global brand equity frameworks and local business applications, enriching the understanding of how cognitive and emotional factors interplay in consumer decision-making. Practically, it provides a strategic roadmap for SMEs to enhance competitiveness through integrated and emotionally resonant brand-building. Through this research, Café Mental Tempe serves as a representative case illustrating that even modest local businesses can achieve sustainable market presence by cultivating strong brand awareness, consistent brand image, and credible ambassador relationships, proving that strategic branding is not a luxury reserved for large corporations but a necessity for all enterprises seeking lasting consumer trust and loyalty.

LIMITATION AND IMPLEMENTATIONS

LIMITATION

Although this study provides valuable theoretical and practical contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged to ensure proper interpretation of the findings and to guide future research directions. First, the study employed a cross-sectional survey design with data collected at a single point in time. While this design is suitable for identifying associations, it restricts the ability to infer long-term causal relationships between branding variables and purchase behavior. Consumer perceptions of brand awareness, image, and ambassador effectiveness may evolve, particularly in response to marketing campaigns or seasonal market changes. Second, the research sample was limited to 100 respondents from a single café (Café Mental Tempe) in Indonesia. This relatively small and geographically specific sample constrains the generalizability of the findings. The results may not fully represent consumer behavior in other cultural or regional contexts, or in larger F&B chains with different branding strategies. Third, the study relied on self-reported data gathered through questionnaires, which are subject to social desirability and response biases. Respondents may have provided favorable answers or misjudged their true motivations. Future studies could complement survey data with behavioral or observational data, such as actual purchase frequency or spending patterns, to strengthen the validity of findings. Fourth, the analysis

only examined three independent variables—brand awareness, brand image, and brand ambassador—without including other potentially influential factors such as brand trust, perceived value, customer satisfaction, or digital engagement. Including these variables could yield a more comprehensive understanding of how branding elements interact in shaping consumer decisions. Fifth, the model did not account for moderating variables such as gender, income, or media exposure, which could influence how consumers perceive and respond to branding strategies. Since Café Mental Tempe’s core customers are predominantly young adults, the influence of generational preferences or lifestyle orientation may also be significant. Lastly, the study was conducted within the Indonesian SME context, where brand management resources and market exposure are relatively limited compared to multinational corporations. Therefore, the applicability of the model to larger or global brands should be approached cautiously. Despite these limitations, the findings remain valuable as they offer empirical insights into how branding dynamics operate within emerging-market SMEs and local F&B sectors, providing a foundation for more nuanced and generalizable future research.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of this research can be divided into practical applications for businesses and strategic recommendations for future managerial practice in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly within the café and food-service industries.

FOR BUSINESS PRACTICE

1. **Strategic Branding Integration**
Café Mental Tempe can implement a more integrated brand management system that aligns awareness, image, and ambassador strategies within a unified marketing framework. For example, using ambassadors in digital campaigns should reinforce key brand image attributes while simultaneously strengthening brand recognition.
2. **Digital and Social Media Optimization**
The café should continue leveraging social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube as primary tools to maintain brand visibility and enhance customer engagement. Short video storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer collaborations can effectively raise awareness among target demographics.
3. **Consistency Between Brand Promise and Experience**
To sustain a strong brand image, management must ensure consistency between brand promises (advertised values) and brand experiences (actual service quality). Visual identity, customer service, and product quality should harmonize with brand messaging to enhance authenticity.
4. **Selection and Training of Brand Ambassadors**
The selection of ambassadors must be based on alignment with the café’s core values: youthful creativity, friendliness, and authenticity. Ambassadors should undergo basic brand orientation to communicate messages coherently, ensuring that their personal branding complements the café’s public image.
5. **Customer Relationship Programs**
Implementing loyalty programs, referral initiatives, or membership discounts can convert awareness-driven first-time customers into repeat buyers. This aligns with findings that awareness leads to initial trial, while satisfaction and trust foster long-term loyalty.

FOR STRATEGIC AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1. Guidelines for SME Branding in the F&B Sector
The findings can be utilized by local government agencies or SME development institutions to design training modules focused on brand-building for small entrepreneurs. Modules could include topics on visual identity creation, digital branding strategies, and ambassador marketing.
2. Incorporation into Marketing Curriculum and Training
Academic institutions and professional training centers can use this study as a case-based reference for teaching modern brand management in local business contexts. The Café Mental Tempe model exemplifies how SMEs can apply brand equity theories to practice effectively.
3. Support for Sustainable Local Branding Ecosystems
Stakeholders such as regional business associations and marketing consultants can use the results to promote collaborative branding programs in which small cafés jointly endorse local cultural identity through community branding initiatives, thereby creating a sustainable competitive advantage.
4. Benchmark for Future Empirical Studies
The analytical framework developed in this research, integrating brand awareness, image, and ambassador dimensions, can serve as a benchmark for comparative studies in other SME sectors (fashion, retail, tourism). This enables cross-industry understanding of branding performance in emerging economies.

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