THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND AMBASSADOR CHARISMA ON PRODUCT IMAGE
Survey on the Influence of Najwa Shihab as Brand Ambassador on Nah Project's Sneakers

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ABSTRACT

One of the government's efforts to invite the Indonesian people to love domestic products is to encourage people to become brand ambassadors for local products by using Indonesian products. Brands are believed and proven to influence a company's success. Brands can be a strength and a differentiating element for a company against its competitors in the eyes of consumers. This research was conducted to know whether brand ambassadors' charisma can influence the brand image of local products. Brand ambassadors can help build a stronger emotional relationship between a brand or company and consumers. Brand ambassadors will indirectly improve product image, impacting purchasing decisions and product use. Based on the data findings, it can be concluded that the use of brand ambassadors influences brand image. The three indicators of the brand ambassador variable: credibility, charisma, and control, significantly affect the Nah Project brand image with Najwa Shihab as the brand ambassador. The brand ambassador's charisma is the most influencing indicator of brand image. Therefore, the selection of brand ambassadors must be based on the criteria of a person who is known to the public, understands issues that are trending in the community, is stunning, attracts attention, and is brilliant.

Keywords: brand ambassador, charisma, brand image, Najwa Shihab, Nah Project

INTRODUCTION

To become a recognizable brand, product owners must build a strong image, which will be attached to the brand name. A *brand* is a name given to a product or service that takes on an identity by itself (The Economic Times, 2022). A brand is a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or services as distinct from those of other sellers (American Marketing Association in Marion, 2022). A brand is an indicator of value offered by the company to customers or consumers (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan,

2017). Meanwhile, according to Keegan *et al.* (Ferrinadewi, 2008, p.137), a brand is several images and opinions in the minds of consumers that communicate the benefits promised by a particular company. This definition says that a brand is a promise and personality presented to potential and existing customers. A promise is about the business it is currently running, what it does, its strengths, and what sets it apart. Personality is everything related to attitude, style, and feelings. Based on this definition, it can be said that a brand is how the company relates to customers.

Branding is the formation of the correct perception in the eyes of consumers so that consumers can understand what a brand has to offer, and then they will say that this is the brand they know (Permana, 2012, p.5). Branding is done to make the brand stick to the memory of consumers or the public. Currently, there are many ways that companies do to create brands. It is not uncommon for companies to spend much money on the branding process. The more the company is promoted, the more the company will be known and remembered by consumers. If the consumer has felt something positive from a brand, then the consumer will take the next step and purchase because the brand is already top of mind.

Brands are believed and proven to influence a company's success. Brands can be a strength and a differentiating element for a company against its competitors in the eyes of consumers. The collection of beliefs about a brand will form a brand image. According to Kotler and Keller (2012, p.338), a brand image is several beliefs, ideas, and impressions a person holds about an object. *Brand image* is the perception and belief held by consumers, as reflected in the associations embedded in consumers' memories. Hatch and Schultz (2002) stated that the image could be defined as an external view of the organization. The same thing was said by Kotler and Armstrong (2012), who stated that brand image is the public's perception of the company or its products. Hence, a brand's image affects the perception, people, or consumer views of the company or its products (Kotler, 2012, p.94).

According to Keller (2003), brand image indicators are:
1. Strength of brand associations

    The strength of brand associations depends on how information about the brand enters the target audience's memory and how to maintain it as part of the brand image of the advertised product. Factors related to the strength of brand associations are personal relevance and consistency. Personal relevance (relationship or attachment) means that the target audience will find it easier to grow a brand image in their minds when they see a new product because they already have extensive knowledge and are related to the brand before. Consistency (consistent or not changing) means that the message conveyed to the target audience through a particular program is constant at a time. An example is building brand popularity with a communication strategy through advertising or other communication media.

2. Favorability of brand associations

    The advantages of brand associations are created by convincing the target audience that the brand has relevant benefits and satisfies their needs and desires to form a positive brand attitude. Favorable are associations the target audience can expect (desirable) and delivered successfully by a product.

3. The uniqueness of brand associations

    The essence of the brand association is the level of brand uniqueness with competitive and continuous benefits, which can cause the target audience to be inter-

ested i using it.

The goal of building a brand image is to produce a unique and attractive offer that satisfies the rational and emotional needs of customers in a better way than competitors. Thus, a strong brand image will provide a competitive advantage for a product. Image is influenced by many factors beyond the company's control. A compelling image will affect three things: first, strengthening the character of the product and the proposed value. Second, convey nature differently so it is not confused with the competitor's character. Third, provide emotional power that is more than just a mental image (Keller, 2003). For an image to function, it must be conveyed through every available means of communication and brand contact. A positive brand image is created through marketing communication programs that connect strong, favorable, and unique associations between brands and customers' memories (Keller, 2003, p.70). To build a positive image, corporations need a strategy. One strategy that can be done is to use brand ambassadors.

A brand ambassador is a marketing model that employs a trusted and credible personality to promote and provide greater visibility to its brand products (Bazzano, 2009, p.1). A brand ambassador is an icon of a brand (Achmad, 2016, para.14). Brand ambassadors play a crucial role in the smooth running of marketing activities locally and globally (Lea-Greenwood, 2012, p.78). Brand ambassadors will help create a stronger emotional connection between a brand or company and consumers, indirectly building a product image that can ultimately impact purchasing decisions and product usage (Royan, 2005, p.8).

The current trend is to use actors or artists, athletes, TV broadcasters, presenters, or celebrities as brand ambassadors (Kirana *et al.*, 2020). The brand ambassador used must be credible so that consumers believe in the truth of the product or service being offered. If the brand ambassador can be trusted, the message conveyed can also be trusted to encourage consumers to act (Yusiana & Maulida, 2015, p.312).

The selection of celebrities as brand ambassadors can direct persuasive communication to consumers and the public. In addition to having the advantage of publicity and the power to get the attention of consumers, celebrities also can be used as a tool to seduce, persuade, and influence target consumers; besides, they must excel and be famous. The function and role of brand ambassadors are to humanize the brand or product, increase brand reach, and make customers more loyal. In addition, brand ambassadors provide positive word-of-mouth marketing, improve online reputation, attract new customers, drive company website traffic, and boost consumer confidence (Bite Brands, 2017). It is expected that consumers will be interested in making purchases of the advertised product.

Khatri (2006, p.27) divides the use of celebrities to promote products or services into four types:
1. Testimonials are when celebrities personally use a product or service to prove its quality. Then the celebrity states the advantages or benefits obtained after using the product or service.
2. Endorsement is when celebrities permit to use their name in an advertisement or product where he is not an expert in the advertised field.
3. The actor uses celebrities as models in advertisements as if they are using the product.
4. Spokesperson uses celebrities as spokespersons because these celebrities have the potential to significantly influence the product because they are widely

known and noticed by consumers.

One way to promote a company or product is by using brand ambassadors as spokespersons or communicators. The use of brand ambassadors as spokespersons is carried out by companies to influence or persuade consumers. Brand ambassadors are intended to attract consumers to use the product, primarily since the selection of brand ambassadors is usually based on the image of a well-known celebrity. It is necessary to determine who will deliver the message, what kind of message is to be conveyed, the structure of the message, and the sentence that will be used with what kind of symbols. Determining who will deliver the message (communicator) is crucial to achieving communication effectiveness. The effectiveness of communicators can be seen from the "Three C's" (Smith, 2005, p.118).
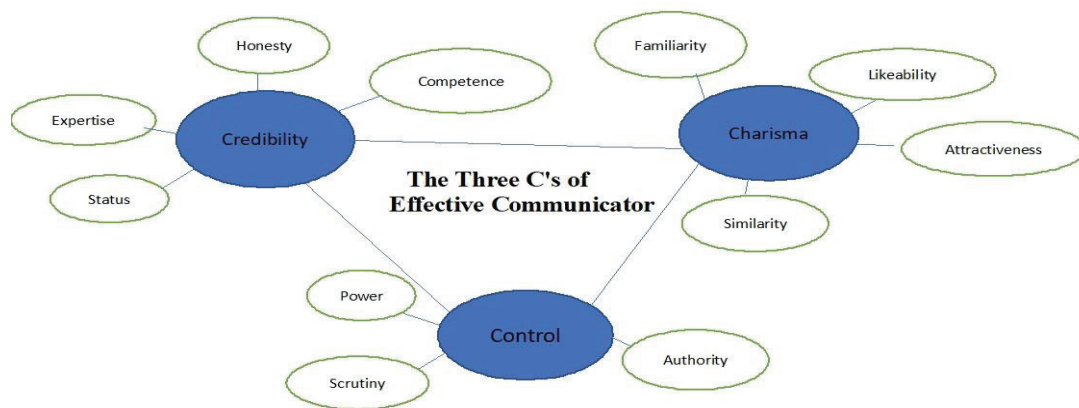

Figure 1: Three C's of Effective Communicator

The three C's that affect the effectiveness of communicators are:
1. Credibility
   According to Perloff (2008), credibility is "the attitude towards a source of communication held at a given time by a receiver." Lea-Greenwood (2012) further states that credibility is the degree to which consumers perceive that ambassadors have relevant knowledge, expertise, or experience and can be trusted to provide objective and unconventional information. Credibility is measured using criteria: a) expertise, b) status means the audience respects the social position or prestige of the speaker, c) competence or the speaker knows what he is talking about, and 4) honesty means that the speaker is willing to provide accurate and unbiased information.
2. Charisma
   Some message sources enjoy the magnetic attraction or personal charm through the audience (Smith, 2005). According to Olivia Fox Cabane (2013), "personal magnetism" can be taught by combining presence, strength, and warmth. *Charisma* is an alluring quality that can help a person get their target audience's attention and drive sales. Charisma is measured based on the criteria: a) familiarity is the extent to which the audience knows the speaker, b) likability is the extent to which the audience admires what is known about the speaker, c) similarity is defined as the

extent to which the speaker resembles the audience, and d) attractiveness is the physical appearance, attitude, calmness, and presence of the speaker.

3. Control

Control is the ability to be able to direct the audience (Smith, 2005), which includes: a) authority is the right to command or direct the actions of others, b) power is the ability to dominate, reward or punish (recognized by the audience), and c) scrutiny is the ability to check.

In June 2021, the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment invited all Indonesians to become brand ambassadors for local products made by Indonesians (Sulaeman, 2021). The same thing was conveyed by President Joko Widodo, who wanted the Indonesian people to become spartan, loyal customers and always prioritize Indonesian products. The President also hopes that all Indonesians can become markets for products made by Indonesian so that these products can become hosts in our own country (Al Faqir, 2021). The President's invitation prompted this research to see how the brand ambassador's charisma can affect the brand image of local products made in Indonesia. Domestic products that are the object of research are Nah Project products.

Nah Project is a pioneer of shoe brands in Indonesia that uses the transparency pricing method, which is an effort to keep product prices cheap without messing with quality. They have the principle that consumers have the right to know the product's price (Nah Project, 2022). Nah Project shoes are priced without excessive markup, without wasting a lot of unnecessary costs, without compromising the quality, and always trying hard to keep the production flow as efficient as possible.

Several Indonesian celebrities have used Nah Project products. One of them is Najwa Shihab. Najwa is a lover of sneakers. Through her personal Instagram account, Najwa often shares photos of herself wearing a collection of sneakers. Not only famous foreign products, but Najwa also wears a collection of local sneakers. In the photo set in the narration studio, Najwa looks very proud to wear shoes made by Nah Project, which seem to combine attractive colors (Sulaeman, 2021). Najwa Shihab is a competent journalist because of her critical mindset, which the Indonesian people widely admire. Many people then make Najwa Shihab an idol. By using local product sneakers and then posting them on social media, Najwa Shihab has indirectly become the brand ambassador of Nah Project. Moreover, her social media has thousands of followers, so indirectly, Najwa has been promoting Nah Project products globally.

Najwa Shihab's popularity and pride in using local products prompted the need for this research to be carried out. Most of the research on brand ambassadors that has been conducted has examined their credibility and not charisma. The findings of this study are expected to assist local product promotion and marketing activities, especially in choosing a brand ambassador so that their products can be known globally.

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research is used because the researcher wants to describe or ex-

plain a problem whose findings can be generalized (Neuman, 2011). The quantitative analysis aims to present a problem and test theories or hypotheses with measuring instruments that have met validity and reliability. So, the purpose of this research is explanative. This explanatory quantitative method aims to explain the relationship or correlation between variables. Researchers not only describe the occurrence of phenomena but also try to explain why these phenomena occur and what their effects are.

Table 1: Measurement of items

Variable	Indicator	Items	Adapted sources
Brand Ambassador	Credibility	Najwa is a news presenter who knows what to do	Perloff (2008)
		Najwa conveys the message as it is	
		Najwa is a competent journalist	
		Najwa's journalistic abilities are recognized nationally and internationally	
	Charisma	Najwa is known to the public	Smith (2005)
		Najwa understands the problems in society	
		Najwa's figure is stunning and attracts the attention	
		Najwa is an intelligent person	
	Control	Najwa can influence one's thoughts	Smith (2005)
		Najwa can arouse other people's emotions	
		Najwa can make others behave as desired	
Brand Images	Strength of Brand Associations	When I saw Najwa, I immediately thought of Nah Project	Keller (2003)
		I like Nah Project's tagline: Transparency of pricing	
		Because of Najwa, I came to know that Nah Project is a low-priced product with premium quality	
		Because of Najwa, I know that Nah Project always tries to keep the production flow as efficient as possible	
		Because of Najwa, I know that Nah Project's output is a product that wastes a lot of unnecessary costs	
	Favorability of Brand Associations	All socioeconomic statuses can use Nah Project products	
		Nah Project products can be purchased online or offline	
		Najwa made me interested in buying Nah Project products	
		Nah Project has many product choices compared to other sneakers products	

	The Unique-ness of Brand Associations	Nah Project Design is always different from others	
		Nah Project can be used for formal or informal	
		Nah Project products are not damaged quickly	
		Nah Project products are affordable but not market	
		Well Project products are convenient to use	

The research location is limited to Jakarta. The target audience for the Nah Project product is young people aged 18-27 years. Therefore, the research population is 2,479.535 according to Jakarta's population aged 15-29 (BPS, 2020).

The research sample was determined using a probability sampling technique using stratified sampling. Stratified sampling is a method in which a heterogeneous population is divided into layers (strata) that are entirely separated. A random sample can be drawn from each stratum. The strata in this study are students at an accredited A university in DKI Jakarta. The researcher believes that the existence of this stratum can have a more positive influence, especially in matters of reason whose level of truth and opinion can be accounted for is higher than the level of accreditation below it.

To ensure that all members of the respondent population in each institution have the same opportunity as the research sample, the researchers conducted a random number drawing before distributing the questionnaires. Researchers took 37 numbers at random from 50 digits to determine which members of the population had the opportunity to be respondents to fill out the research questionnaire. The distribution of questionnaires was carried out in the library because this location is a neutral location where various students from each study program can gather. Each respondent that the researcher met at the place by a sequence of numbers taken at random and met the predetermined requirements. Then, members of the population became respondents in this study. The other conditions are:

1. Respondents are active students of the institution by showing their identity with a valid Student Identity Card.
2. Between 17-22 years old
3. Knowing the Nah Project shoe brand

Suppose the respondent selected based on the lottery number does not meet the requirements specified above. In that case, the researcher will take another lottery number that remains a condition for taking population members as the next respondent. The provisions of this sampling technique were carried out by researchers at 11 universities with A accreditation in DKI Jakarta (BAN-PT, 2021).

To support this research, the researcher uses a closed questionnaire method, in which respondents choose a statement that they think follows the reality and opinions experienced. Questionnaires were distributed directly to each respondent by asking them to fill out a self-administered questionnaire. Questionnaires were

distributed by visiting 11 educational institutions in Jakarta, which were selected as sample strata.

The researcher chose the 11 institutions because they were following the required strata and, in this study, needed reasoning and opinions from each sample. This research has a minimum research sample requirement of 400 samples, which includes the results of answers from each respondent from 11 selected institutions. Researchers will evenly divide the number of respondents in each institution from the minimum number of samples that must be collected. Therefore, each institution will represent a sample of 37 respondents, so the total number of respondents researchers will accept is 407.

Analysis of the average value is used in this study to measure the middle sample of the variables of brand ambassadors and brand image. The average value results are then mapped to various scales to interpret the research variables. In addition, the data will be analyzed to determine the coefficient or degree of strength of the relationship between the brand ambassador variable and brand image. Calculating the coefficient will be from 0 (zero) to 1 (one) to indicate whether the linear relationship is positive or negative. In this study, partial regression calculations will also be carried out for three independent variable indicators (X): credibility, charisma, and control. The hypothesis to be tested is whether there is an influence between the use of the brand ambassador Najwa Shihab on the Nah Project brand image.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 407 respondents in this study, the majority were women (94%), with an age range of 21-22 years of 41%. Women were aged 18-20 years 35% and 23-24 years 24%. Regarding the habit of using social media, most respondents stated the frequency of using social media every day, as stated by 71% of respondents. The second position is respondents who use social media erratically, with a percentage of 28%. The lowest is respondents who use social media every two days, which is 1% of respondents. About the duration of social media use, respondents who use social media for more than 1-2 hours are 31%, those who use 3-4 hours a day are 23%, respondents who use less than 30 minutes are 21%, and those who use more than 3 hours are 17%.

The brand ambassador variable indicators have a mean score (MS) of 41.94 and an overall mean score (OMS) of 3.5. When compared with the range of answers from 1.00 to 4.00, it can be concluded that the respondents gave an agreeable solution that Najwa Shihab has credibility, charisma, and control as a Nah Project brand ambassador. The findings of this study are the same as those conducted by Pandika *et al.* (2021, p.130), which state that the brand ambassador used by Skin Care made in Korea has credibility, charisma, and control so that it can influence consumer buying interest. On the brand image variable (Y), the result of OMS is 3.43, which means that the average respondent's answers agree that brand image as measured by the strength of brand associations, the superiority of brand associations, and the uniqueness of brand associations, is influenced using brand ambassadors.

The OMS for the credibility indicator is 3.6, which means that most respondents agree that Najwa has credibility, while the highest MS is 3.78 on the item of Na-

jwa's journalistic ability, which is recognized nationally and internationally. Research by Pandika *et al.* (2021) also states that a brand ambassador must have credibility, meaning that consumers see the brand ambassador as having relevant expertise or experience and can be trusted to provide objective and unusual information. Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1954), in the source credibility theory, also state that a person will be more easily persuaded if the sources of persuasion are credible enough. The more credible the source, the easier it will be to influence the audience's perspective. Often a person is more confident and tends to accept well the messages conveyed by people who have credibility in their fields.

For the charisma indicator, the result of the OMS calculation is 3.54, which means that most respondents agree that Najwa has charisma. The highest MS on the item Najwa understands problems in the community is 3.70. The control indicator, OMS is 3.33, which means that the average respondent agrees that Najwa can control, and the highest MS is 3.60 on the item Najwa can make other people act as she wants.

On the brand image variable, OMS indicates the strength of brand associations is 3.45. This number means that the average respondent agrees that Nah Project has the power of brand associations. The highest MS on this indicator is 3.74 on the item respondents like the Nah Project tagline' Transparency of pricing.' As for the brand association variable, OMS on the strength indicator is 3.36, which means that the average respondent agrees that Nah Project has the advantage, with the highest MS being 3.47 in the statement about Najwa as a brand ambassador that makes respondents interested in buying Nah Project products. OMS on the uniqueness indicator of brand association is 3.46, meaning that the average respondent agrees that the Nah Project product is unique.

The correlation value between the brand ambassador variable and brand image is 0.844 or 84.4%, meaning that the brand ambassador variable has a strong relationship with brand image. The calculation results also show that the value of R square or the value of the coefficient of determination is 0.712, which means that the Nah Project brand image is determined mainly by the brand ambassador of 71.2%. Per Royan (2005, p.10), these results state that selecting the right celebrity will closely tie the product brand to consumers because celebrities are a tangible manifestation of the various images consumers think of a brand. Furthermore, Royan (2005) states that messages conveyed by celebrities will receive greater attention and are easier to remember. In addition, audiences prefer goods and services advertised by celebrities rather than those not advertised by them. Other factors not examined by researchers in this study determined 28.8%. Image is the public's perception of the company or while the perception itself can be formed based on cultural background, experience, espoused values, and developing news (Kasali, 2006, p.23). Therefore, apart from the use of ambassadors, one's perception of the image of a product is influenced by one's cultural background, past experiences, espoused values, and developing news that the person is interested in and follows.

The results of the simple regression calculation also show a constant of 6.943 which means the consistent value of the brand image variable is 6.943. The regression coefficient for the brand ambassador variable (X) is 1.226, which means that for each additional unit value of the brand ambassador, the brand image will increase by 1.226. The regression coefficient is also positive, so it can be said that the direc-

tion of the influence of the brand ambassador variable (X) on the brand image variable (Y) is positive. The findings of this study are the same as research findings from Gita and Setyorini (2016), Masyita and Yuliati (2017), and Simanjuntak and Prihatini (2020), which state that brand ambassadors have a strong, significant, and positive influence on Brand Image.

The result of the partial regression calculation, which aims to determine which independent variable (X) indicator is the most dominant or has the most significant influence in influencing the dependent variable (Y), can be seen in figure 2.
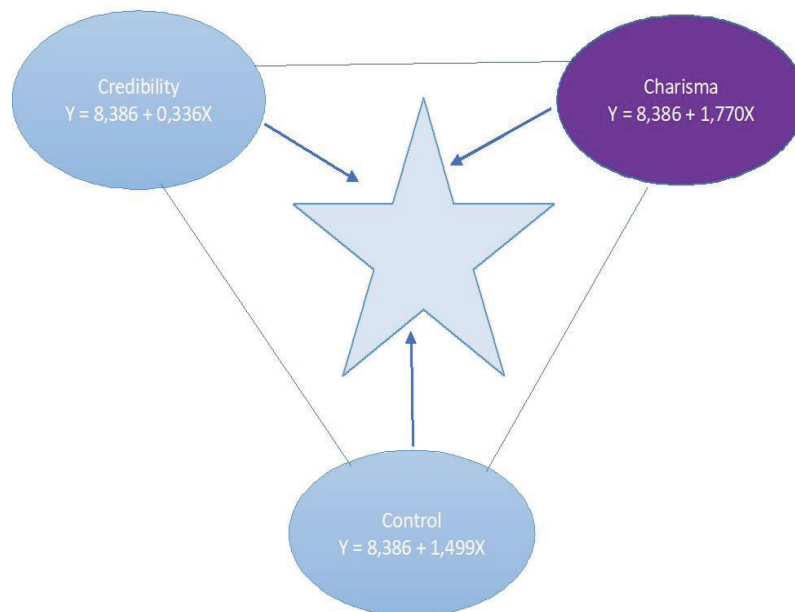

Figure 2: Partial Regression of Brand Ambassador (X) and Brand Image (Y)

Figure 2 shows that the most significant indicator is charisma, with a regression coefficient of 1.770. The calculation also shows positive, which means that each unit increase in the charisma indicator can increase the brand image by 1.770—followed by the control indicator, which has a regression coefficient of 1.499 and is positive. This calculation means that each unit increase from the control indicator will increase the brand image by 1.499. Finally, there is a positive credibility indicator with a regression coefficient of 0.336, which means that if there is an increase in units in the credibility indicator, it will increase the brand image by 0.336.

In the results of the partial regression test, it can be concluded that the indicator that has the most significant influence on the brand image variable is charisma, with a regression coefficient of 1.770 and positive. Each unit increase in the charisma indicator can increase the brand image by 1.770. As explained in the literature review, in the charisma indicator, there is an attractiveness that involves physical appearance, serenity, and the presence of brand ambassadors, as well as how consumers admire brand ambassadors (Smith, 2005). In the context of this research, it means that Najwa is a figure who is respected by the public, is stunning, attracts attention, understands societal problems, and is intelligent. Hence, she deserves to be an ambassador for a brand. This charisma indicator becomes the dominant indicator of the brand ambassador variable. When a company wants to choose an ambassador,

it must pay attention to the charisma factor of the figure so that the brand ambassador can build a positive brand image under the company's expectations, vision, and mission in the future.

In the results of the t-test, it can be concluded that the research rejects H0 and accepts H1, which means that brand ambassadors have a significant effect on brand image. The results of the t-test resulted in a t count of 15.547 > 1.987 (t-table). This finding follows the brand ambassador theory, which states that brand ambassadors influence the brand image. Brand ambassadors will help create a stronger emotional connection between a brand or company and consumers so that it will directly build a brand image (Royan, 2005, p.8). Therefore, brand ambassadors are expected to have the ability to become spokespersons so that the brand of a product is quickly attached to the minds of consumers and potential consumers so that consumers intend to buy the product (Budiman & Nurrahmawati, 2018, p.129). Therefore, it is not surprising that many companies feel that the best way to connect with consumers is to use people who often appear in front of them; if the person is already known, usually people can quickly identify them (Belch & Belch, 2009, p.177).

CONCLUSION

Based on the data findings, it can be concluded that the use of brand ambassadors influences brand image. The three indicators on the brand ambassador variable, namely credibility, charisma, and control, significantly affect the Nah Project brand image with Najwa Shihab as the brand ambassador.

The brand ambassador's charisma is the most influencing indicator of brand image. Therefore, the selection of brand ambassadors must be based on the criteria of a person who is known to the public, understands issues that are trending in the community, is stunning, attracts attention, and is intelligent.

The use of brand ambassadors affects the product's top of mind, uniqueness, and superiority and ultimately can encourage consumers to buy the product.

However, brand ambassadors do not 100% affect brand image. Other factors can influence outside the use of brand ambassadors, such as cultural background, past experiences, values that guide life, and coverage in the mass media.

Other factors influencing the brand image can be a further research variable. In addition, further research is needed to determine the indicators of familiarity, likeability, attractiveness, or similarity that most influence brand ambassador charisma.

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