

HOW CELEBRITY ENDORSERS AND ADVERTISING APPEAL INFLUENCE MILLENNIAL SHOPPING INTENTIONS ON SHOPEE: BRAND IMAGE AS A MEDIATOR



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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of celebrity endorsers and advertising appeal on millennials' purchase intention on Shopee, with brand image acting as a mediating variable. Employing a quantitative explanatory approach, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 100 millennial Shopee users in Kupang. The study reveals that both celebrity endorsers and advertising appeal significantly enhance brand image. However, while advertising appeal directly and positively affects purchase intention, celebrity endorsers have a negative direct effect, though they exert a positive indirect effect through brand image. These findings underscore the importance of strategic alignment between celebrities and brand identity, and highlight the crucial role of emotionally resonant advertising in driving millennial purchase behavior. The research contributes to marketing literature by integrating celebrity credibility, advertisement appeal, and brand image in one model, offering practical insights for e-commerce branding strategies targeting the millennial segment.

Keywords: *Celebrity Endorser; Advertising Appeal; Brand Image' Purchase Intention; Millennials; Shopee; E-Commerce Marketing*

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INTRODUCTION

The digital economy in Southeast Asia has experienced rapid expansion over the past decade, with Indonesia emerging as one of the most dynamic markets in the region (ekon.go.id 2022). E-commerce has been a major driver of this growth, supported by increasing internet penetration, the dominance of mobile-first consumers, and accelerated digital transformation (gsmaintelligence.com 2024). According to the latest e-Conomy SEA Report, the value of Indonesia's e-commerce sector is projected to reach USD 82 billion by 2025, making it the largest digital market in the region (temasek.com.sg 2023). Major platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and Lazada have become integral to daily consumer transactions, reflecting the shift toward digital consumption patterns. Among these, Shopee has distinguished itself through a combination of brand visibility, user-friendly interface, and aggressive marketing strategies (ginee.com 2021).

Millennials, defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (pewresearch.org 2020), represent a particularly important consumer segment within Indonesia's digital economy. This cohort is highly adaptive to technological innovations and is responsive to marketing communication strategies that emphasize value, identity, and emotional connection (Tanrikulu, 2022). Shopee has effectively engaged this demographic through celebrity endorsements and high-profile advertising campaigns, employing global icons such as BLACKPINK and Cristiano Ronaldo, as well as prominent Indonesian influencers, to reinforce its aspirational brand image (marketing-interactive.com 2019).

Celebrity endorsement is widely recognized as a persuasive marketing tool (Foong & Yazdanifard 2014). A celebrity's credibility, attractiveness, and familiarity significantly influence consumer attitudes and purchase behaviors, a finding that remains relevant in contemporary digital contexts (Afifah, 2022). Alongside endorsement, advertising appeal is also central to consumer persuasion (communication.iresearchnet.com n.d.). Effective appeals, whether rational or emotional, can capture attention, trigger affective responses, and increase brand relevance (Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023). Within the Indonesian e-commerce context, these elements are increasingly deployed in tandem, yet their combined impact on purchase intention, particularly when mediated by brand image, remains underexplored.

Existing studies often examine celebrity endorsement and advertising appeal separately, with limited attention to their interactive effects on millennials' consumer decision-making in mobile-based e-commerce (Andita et al., 2021; Kaban & Angelina, 2022). Furthermore, empirical research on the mediating role of brand image in these relationships is still scarce. Brand image, conceptualized as the set of associations and perceptions that consumers hold toward a brand, has been shown to play a crucial role in shaping purchase intention (Zhong, 2023). However, its mediating function in the digital consumer journey of Indonesian millennials requires further investigation.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of celebrity endorsement and advertising appeal on millennials' purchase intention toward Shopee, with brand image as a mediating variable. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by integrating these constructs into a single explanatory framework and practically by providing insights for marketers and brand strategists to design more resonant campaigns that align with evolving consumer behaviors in Indonesia's competitive e-commerce sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, AND HYPOTHESIS

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is generally defined as an individual's conscious plan or willingness to purchase a product or service in the future, shaped by cognitive evaluations, affective responses, and prior brand-related experiences (B. Lin & Shen, 2023). In digital marketplaces, purchase intention extends beyond traditional determinants such as perceived quality and credibility to include online-specific attributes such as website usability, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and persuasive digital marketing content (Amarullah et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2020).

Millennials, often identified as digital natives, display distinctive purchase behaviors in online environments. They are highly responsive to interactive brand communication, peer influence, and brand storytelling (Novita & Lina, 2024). Moreover, authenticity and emotional resonance play a critical role in shaping their purchase intention (Mayasari et al., 2025). Millennials are more likely to express intention to purchase when they perceive genuineness and an affective bond with the brand, frequently fostered through influencer endorsements and emotionally appealing advertisements (clove-research.com 2024).

Brand Image

Brand image is conceptualized as the set of perceptions, associations, and meanings stored in consumer memory about a brand (Keller, 1993). It is built through interactions such as marketing communication, customer experience, and endorsements (Andryani & Salim, 2024). A strong and favorable brand image enhances trust, loyalty, and purchase intention, making it a critical intangible asset (Mutiah & Marliani, 2024).

In the context of celebrity endorsement and advertising, brand image frequently acts as a mediating mechanism that translates external marketing stimuli into consumer perceptions and behavioral outcomes (Angeline & Rastini, 2025). Endorsers' credibility, attractiveness, and congruence with the brand are shown to strengthen positive brand associations (Min et al., 2019). Similarly, advertising appeals reinforce brand-related meanings, thereby contributing to brand image formation (Keller, 2016).

Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is defined as the use of publicly recognized individuals who employ their image to promote a product in advertising (McCracken, 1989). According to Min et al., (2019), the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement rests on three attributes: credibility, attractiveness, and congruence with the endorsed brand. When these conditions are met, celebrities transfer symbolic meaning to the product, enhancing brand evaluations and consumer trust (Erdogan, 1999). In the e-commerce context, endorsements have been shown to increase engagement, click-through rates, and purchase intention (Geng et al., 2019; Li et al., 2014)

Advertising Appeal

Advertising appeal refers to the creative strategy used to attract attention, evoke emotions, and motivate action (Jovanović et al., 2016). Appeals may be emotional, such as humor, fear, or nostalgia or rational, highlighting product features, quality, or price (Modhavadiya et al., 2025). Lin (2011) argue that advertising appeal constitutes one of the most critical elements

of persuasive communication. Empirical evidence shows that effective appeals strengthen consumer perceptions of brand value, trust, and purchase behavior, particularly among millennials who are more emotionally driven in their decision-making (Jovanović et al., 2016; Junejo et al., 2022).

The Mediating Role of Brand Image

Prior research suggests that the effects of celebrity endorsement and advertising appeal on purchase intention are not always direct but often operate through brand image. Endorsers and advertising messages shape brand-related associations, which subsequently influence purchase decisions (Erdogan, 1999; Escalas & Bettman, 2017; Jun et al., 2023). This mediation mechanism underscores brand image as a central pathway in translating external marketing efforts into consumer behavioral outcomes.

Based on the aforementioned literatures, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Celebrity endorsement positively influences millennials' perceptions of brand image on Shopee

H2: Advertising appeal positively influences millennials' perceptions of brand image on Shopee

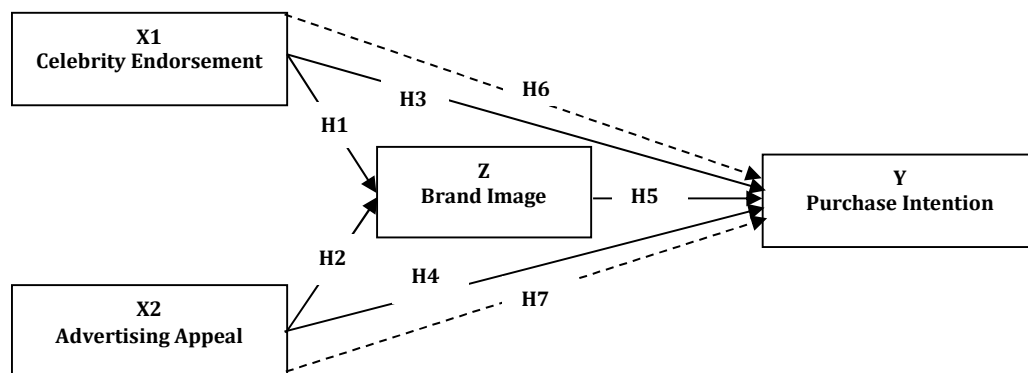
H3: Celebrity endorsement positively influences millennials' purchase intentions on Shopee

H4: Advertising appeal positively influences millennials' purchase intentions on Shopee

H5: Brand image positively influences millennials' purchase intentions on Shopee

H6: Brand image mediates the effect of celebrity endorsement on millennials' purchase intentions on Shopee

H7: Brand image mediates the effect of advertising appeal on millennials' purchase intentions on Shopee



Source: Constructed by authors for this study, 2019

Figure 1
Research Framework

METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design (Saunders et al., 2019) to empirically test the causal relationships between celebrity endorsement, advertising appeal,

brand image, and purchase intention among millennial consumers of Shopee in Indonesia. Explanatory research is appropriate for investigating cause-and-effect relationships among variables and validating theoretical propositions using numerical data and statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). The quantitative approach facilitates hypothesis testing by providing objective, replicable, and generalizable findings regarding the effects of marketing communication strategies on consumer behavior.

The empirical context of this study is Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara, where millennials represent a growing segment of active e-commerce users. The population comprises Shopee users within the millennial cohort (born 1981–1996) (pewresearch.org 2020) who have been exposed to Shopee advertisements. Since the exact population size is not available, non-probability sampling was applied, specifically accidental (convenience) sampling, which is commonly employed in consumer behavior studies when respondents are selected based on accessibility and relevance to the research (Malhotra, 2004)

The minimum required sample size was determined using Green's (1991) formula for multiple regression: $N \geq 50 + 8m$, where m is the number of independent variables. With two predictors (celebrity endorsement and advertising appeal) and one mediator (brand image), the minimum sample size required is 82 respondents. To improve statistical robustness, 100 valid responses were collected, aligning with recommendations for sample adequacy in behavioral research (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Primary data were obtained through an online structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended items. Respondents were asked to evaluate statements related to celebrity endorsers, advertising appeal, brand image, and purchase intention in the Shopee platform. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), which is widely recognized for capturing attitudinal and behavioral constructs in marketing research (Joseph F Hair et al. 2019).

Each construct was operationalized using indicators adapted from prior validated scales in the literature:

- Celebrity Endorser: credibility, attractiveness, and congruence (Erdogan, 1999; Schouten et al., 2021).
- Advertising Appeal: emotional and rational message effectiveness (Belch & Belch, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2014)
- Brand Image: consumer perceptions and associations linked to Shopee (Keller, 1993; Low & Lamb Jr, 2000)
- Purchase Intention: willingness and likelihood of purchase (Fishbein & Ajzen 1977; Spears & Singh 2004)

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were adapted from established scales and contextualized to e-commerce. A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents to examine internal consistency, where Cronbach's Alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.70 confirmed reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and path analysis through multiple regression. This approach allows for testing both direct and indirect effects, consistent with the study's aim of examining the mediating role of brand image. The significance of indirect effects was assessed using bootstrapping procedures, which provide bias-corrected confidence intervals for mediation testing (Hayes 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity Test

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument accurately measures the construct it is intended to measure (Joseph F Hair Jr et al. 2021). In this study, item validity was assessed using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient (Weinberg et al., 2023). An item is considered valid if the correlation between the item score and the total construct score (r_{count}) exceeds the critical r value from the correlation table (r_{table}) at the 5% significance level ($df = n - 2$). With a sample size of 100 respondents ($df = 98$), the minimum threshold is $r_{table} = 0.1966$.

The results indicate that all items across the four constructs exceeded the critical threshold:

- Celebrity Endorser (X1): 8 items with r_{count} values ranging from 0.316 to 0.773.
- Advertising Appeal (X2): 12 items with r_{count} values between 0.585 and 0.769.
- Brand Image (Z): 6 items with r_{count} values between 0.538 and 0.851.
- Purchase Intention (Y): 8 items with r_{count} values between 0.476 and 0.856.

Since all items surpassed the minimum correlation threshold, the instrument demonstrates adequate construct validity, meaning each indicator is capable of capturing the intended latent variable (Azwar, 2022; Hair et al., 2019).

Reliability Test

Reliability reflects the internal consistency of measurement items in representing a construct (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). This study employed Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate reliability. A coefficient greater than 0.70 is generally considered acceptable, with higher values indicating stronger internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2024). The findings are as follows:

Table 1
Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Threshold	Conclusion
Celebrity Endorser (X1)	0.803	8	> 0.60	Reliable
Advertising Appeal (X2)	0.900	12	> 0.60	Reliable
Brand Image (Z)	0.806	6	> 0.60	Reliable
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.889	8	> 0.60	Reliable

Source: Data analyzed, 2019

All Cronbach's Alpha values substantially exceed the recommended cut-off, confirming that the measurement instruments are reliable. This implies that the questionnaire items are internally consistent and capable of producing stable and repeatable results across respondents.

Classical Assumption Test

Prior to hypothesis testing, classical regression assumptions were evaluated to ensure the robustness of the statistical models. These include normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity (Hair Jr et al., 2014).

The normality of residuals was assessed using Normal Probability–Probability (P–P) plots. In all three estimated models (Model I: $X1$ and $X2 \rightarrow Z$; Model II: $X1$, $X2$, and $Z \rightarrow Y$), the data points closely followed the diagonal line, suggesting that residuals were normally distributed and the models satisfied the normality assumption (Hair Jr et al. 2010).

Heteroscedasticity was examined through scatterplots of standardized residuals against predicted values. The plots revealed a random distribution of points without discernible patterns, indicating homoscedasticity. This confirms that the variance of residuals was constant across predicted values, fulfilling the homoscedasticity assumption (Field 2024).

Multicollinearity was tested using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values. All predictors yielded VIF values well below the threshold of 10 and Tolerance values above 0.10, indicating no serious multicollinearity issues among independent variables (Hair et al. 2019).

Hypothesis Testing: Path Analysis

To test the direct and indirect effects among variables, path analysis was employed. This method allows simultaneous estimation of causal relationships and the mediating role of brand image (Hayes 2017). Two regression models were estimated using IBM SPSS Statistics 21.

- Model I: The results show that both celebrity endorsement ($X1$) and advertising appeal ($X2$) significantly influenced brand image (Z). The standardized path coefficients were $\beta = 0.223$ ($p = 0.040$) for $X1$ and $\beta = 0.265$ ($p = 0.015$) for $X2$, with an R^2 of 0.181, indicating that 18.1% of the variance in brand image was explained by the predictors. The residual variance for this model was calculated as $e_1 = \sqrt{1 - 0.181} = 0.905$.
- Model II: When predicting purchase intention (Y), the results revealed significant effects of all predictors. Celebrity endorsement ($X1$) had a negative direct effect ($\beta = -0.219$, $p = 0.010$), whereas advertising appeal ($X2$) ($\beta = 0.322$, $p < 0.001$) and brand image (Z) ($\beta = 0.627$, $p < 0.001$) had strong positive effects. The model's R^2 was 0.527, indicating that 52.7% of the variance in purchase intention was explained by the predictors. The residual variance was $e_2 = \sqrt{1 - 0.527} = 0.688$. The result can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Summary of Path Coefficients and Significance

Model	Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.	R ²
Model I (X1, X2 → Z)	X1	0.223	2.079	0.040	0.181
	X2	0.265	2.466	0.015	
Model II (X1, X2, Z → Y)	X1	-0.219	-2.610	0.010	0.527
	X2	0.322	3.816	0.000	
	Z	0.627	8.090	0.000	

Source: Data analyzed, 2019

The mediating role of brand image was further examined:

- The indirect effect of X1 on Y through Z was $0.223 \times 0.627 = 0.140$. The total effect was $-0.219 + 0.140 = -0.079$.
- The indirect effect of X2 on Y through Z was $0.265 \times 0.627 = 0.166$. The total effect was $0.322 + 0.166 = 0.488$.

These findings suggest that both celebrity endorsement and advertising appeal significantly shape brand image, which in turn strongly predicts purchase intention. While advertising appeal consistently exerts positive direct and indirect effects on purchase intention, the direct effect of celebrity endorsement is negative. Nevertheless, its positive indirect effect through brand image partially offsets this, highlighting the importance of brand image as a mediating mechanism in e-commerce marketing strategies.

The Influence of Celebrity Endorsers on Shopee's Brand Image

This study confirms that celebrity endorsers exert a significant positive influence on Shopee's brand image. The finding is consistent with (McCracken's, 1989) meaning transfer model, which posits that the symbolic attributes of celebrities, such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, are transferred to the endorsed brand. By leveraging these associations, Shopee strengthens its perceived value and credibility, an essential strategy in digital commerce where consumers often rely on intangible cues.

The results align with prior research emphasizing the strategic role of celebrity endorsement in enhancing brand equity and consumer trust. Dwivedi et al., (2015) demonstrated that credible and relatable celebrity endorsers significantly improve consumer brand evaluations. Similarly, Schimmelpfennig and Hollensen, (2016) highlighted that celebrity endorsement functions not merely as a promotional tactic but as a long-term brand positioning tool, particularly effective among millennials and digital consumers. These findings reinforce that Shopee's use of celebrity endorsers is a strategic brand-building approach in a highly competitive e-commerce market.

The Influence of Advertising Appeal on Shopee's Brand Image

The results further demonstrate that advertising appeal significantly shapes brand image. Emotional and rational advertising cues, such as visuals, narratives, and calls to action, create favorable brand associations among consumers (Widya 2019). This is consistent with Belch

and Belch (2015), who argue that advertising effectiveness lies in its ability to elicit affective responses and establish meaningful consumer connections.

In line with Kotler and Keller (2014), this study supports the idea that advertisements must go beyond functional information and engage consumers' emotions to reinforce brand meaning. For digital-first platforms such as Shopee, visually engaging and emotionally resonant advertisements help position the brand as innovative and trustworthy. This is consistent with De Leon et al., (2022) , who found that advertising appeal influences brand engagement, particularly among millennial and younger consumers.

The Influence of Celebrity Endorsers on Millennials' Purchase Intention

Interestingly, this study identifies a negative direct relationship between celebrity endorsers and millennials' purchase intention. This contrasts with conventional expectations but reflects emerging evidence that celebrity endorsements may backfire if perceived as inauthentic or mismatched with the brand. Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) emphasize that the mere use of a celebrity is insufficient; overexposure or poor congruence between celebrity and brand can reduce persuasive impact.

This resonates with Fleck et al., (2012), who argue that endorsement effectiveness depends heavily on congruence between the endorser's image and brand identity. For millennials, who are especially skeptical of overtly commercial content, a lack of authenticity may trigger resistance rather than purchase motivation. Thus, Shopee must ensure that celebrity selection is strategically aligned with millennial consumers' values and expectations.

The Influence of Advertising Appeal on Millennials' Purchase Intention

Conversely, advertising appeal has a strong positive impact on millennials' purchase intention. This finding corroborates Kim et al.,(2020), who stress that persuasive advertisements must integrate emotional appeal, product benefits, and compelling calls to action to influence consumer behavior.

Consistent with Munsch (2021), millennials are particularly responsive to creative, visually appealing, and interactive digital advertisements. The positive association found in this study further supports Majeed et al., (2017), who demonstrated that emotionally engaging ads can significantly enhance consumers' purchase decisions, especially when combined with celebrity figures or cultural symbols. For Shopee, effective advertising appeal therefore serves as a key driver of purchase behavior among its millennial users.

The Influence of Brand Image on Millennials' Purchase Intention

The study highlights the strong role of brand image in driving purchase intention, confirming the framework of customer-based brand equity proposed by Keller (2016). A favorable brand image reduces perceived risk and strengthens consumer confidence, which is especially important in e-commerce where physical product evaluation is absent (Zakiya et al. 2025).

This finding aligns with Setiarini (2025), who showed that brand image is a central determinant of purchase intention in online shopping. Similarly, Darmawan and Susila (2024) found that brand image mediates the influence of celebrity endorsement on purchase decisions, underscoring its function as both an outcome of marketing communication and a

driver of consumer behavior. For Shopee, managing brand image consistently is critical for maintaining millennial trust and loyalty.

The Indirect Influence of Celebrity Endorsers via Brand Image

Although celebrity endorsement had a negative direct effect on purchase intention, its indirect effect through brand image was positive. This indicates that brand image acts as a mediating mechanism that translates celebrity influence into favorable purchase outcomes. When celebrities reinforce Shopee's brand identity, they indirectly shape purchase behavior, even if their direct persuasive power is limited.

This finding resonates with Eng and Jarvis (2020), who argue that endorsements are most effective when they strengthen the overall brand narrative rather than individual transactions. It also echoes Min et al. (2019), who emphasize that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers depends on their capacity to enhance brand perception, which subsequently drives consumer intention.

The Indirect Influence of Advertising Appeal via Brand Image

Finally, this study demonstrates that advertising appeal influences purchase intention indirectly through brand image. While advertisements can capture attention, their long-term impact is realized by shaping brand perceptions, which then translate into purchase behavior. This pathway aligns with Lavidge and Steiner (1961), who proposed that advertising effectiveness operates through a multi-stage process of attention, affect, and behavioral intention.

Similarly, Hamelin et al., (2017) found that advertising appeal strengthens cognitive and affective brand evaluations, thereby enhancing purchase likelihood. (Dwivedi et al. 2015) further confirmed that advertising appeal indirectly increases purchase interest by reinforcing brand image. For Shopee, this underscores the importance of consistency between advertising design and brand positioning to maximize impact on millennial consumers.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study highlights the multifaceted influence of celebrity endorsers and advertising appeal on millennial consumers' purchase intentions on Shopee, with brand image serving as a mediating factor. The results show that both celebrity endorsement and advertising appeal positively influence brand image, confirming that strategic marketing communications can enhance consumer perceptions of a brand. However, while advertising appeal exerts a direct and positive impact on millennials' purchase intention, the direct influence of celebrity endorsers on purchase intention is unexpectedly negative. This suggests that although celebrities contribute to a favorable brand image, they do not always translate into higher purchase motivation, especially when perceived as inauthentic or misaligned with brand values.

Brand image emerged as a critical mediator that links external marketing stimuli (celebrity endorsement and advertising appeal) with consumer behavioral intentions. The indirect effects through brand image suggest that marketing efforts are more effective when they focus on reinforcing a consistent and resonant brand identity. Advertising appeal, in particular, demonstrated the strongest overall influence, both directly and indirectly, on millennial purchase intention, reinforcing its strategic importance in e-commerce branding.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature by integrating key constructs within a single framework and contextualizing them in Indonesia's digital retail environment. The findings underscore the importance of relevance, authenticity, and emotional engagement in shaping the shopping behavior of millennials, particularly in mobile-based platforms like Shopee.

Based on the research findings, several practical and strategic recommendations are proposed for e-commerce marketers, especially those targeting the millennial demographic. Since advertising appeal has the most significant impact on purchase intention, Shopee and similar platforms should continue to invest in emotionally resonant, story-driven, and visually engaging advertisements. These should be tailored to reflect the values, aspirations, and lifestyle of millennials, including themes such as individuality, convenience, and digital fluency. Brands should not rely on celebrity fame alone. Instead, marketers need to select endorsers whose personal brand values align with the brand's identity and resonate with millennial consumers. Authenticity, credibility, and relatability must take precedence over popularity. Testing consumer perceptions before launching endorsement campaigns can mitigate the risk of negative responses.

As brand image plays a mediating role, marketers should ensure that every touchpoint, be it through celebrities, ads, or customer service, consistently reinforces the desired brand perception. Creating a coherent and emotionally resonant brand narrative across digital platforms will improve consumer trust and purchase intention. Given that not all millennials respond similarly to celebrities or ad types, future strategies should incorporate data-driven personalization. This includes tailoring campaigns based on psychographic and behavioral data to better align messaging with subgroups within the millennial cohort.

Future research could explore how different types of celebrity endorsers (local vs. international, macro vs. micro-influencers) or ad formats (video, interactive, AR-based ads) impact purchase decisions. It would also be valuable to examine generational differences beyond millennials, including Gen Z or Gen X consumers, to broaden the applicability of the findings.

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