

# The Influence of Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, Social Media Marketing, and Word of Mouth on Samsung Smartphone Purchasing Decisions Among University Students in Purwokerto, Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of brand ambassador, brand image, social media marketing, and word of mouth on students' purchasing decisions for Samsung smartphones at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Wijayakusuma Purwokerto. The study used a quantitative associative approach with multiple linear regression analysis. The sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula, yielding a minimum of 97 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzed using validity, reliability, classical assumption, and hypothesis tests. The regression equation obtained was  $Y = 2.702 + 0.174X_1 + 0.300X_2 + 0.297X_3 + 0.290X_4 + e$ , with a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0.608, indicating that the four independent variables explain 60.8% of the variance in purchasing decisions. The F-test result ( $F = 14.081 > F\text{-table} = 2.471$ , sig. = 0.000) confirmed the model's overall significance. The t-test results showed that brand ambassador ( $t = 2.151$ ), brand image ( $t = 2.530$ ), social media marketing ( $t = 3.568$ ), and word of mouth ( $t = 3.794$ ) each exceeded the critical t-table value of 1.662 with significance levels below 0.05, indicating that all four variables have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. These findings suggest that Samsung should continue to leverage credible brand ambassadors, consistent brand positioning, engaging social media content, and positive consumer-to-consumer communication to strengthen purchasing decisions among student consumers.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing in an increasingly competitive business environment can no longer be understood merely as a selling activity; it is an integrated process of creating value, building

long-term relationships with consumers, and sustaining competitive advantage amid rapidly shifting market dynamics. The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has intensified consumer demand for smartphones, which have evolved from simple communication tools into multifunctional devices supporting work, education, entertainment, and digital transactions. This shift has intensified competition among smartphone manufacturers, each pursuing continuous product innovation and refining marketing strategies [1].

The proliferation of smartphone brands and models has put consumers in a position where they must evaluate multiple alternatives before making a purchase. A purchasing decision refers to the final behavior of individual or household consumers in acquiring goods or services for personal consumption [2]. Prior to deciding, consumers typically rank brands and form purchase intentions, ultimately selecting the brand they favor most. Because purchasing decisions determine marketing success and a firm's sustainability amid intensifying competition, understanding the factors that shape consumer choice remains a central concern in marketing research.

One factor believed to influence purchasing decisions is the brand ambassador—an individual who has an affinity for a brand and can influence or persuade consumers to purchase or use it [4]. A well-chosen ambassador can attract consumer attention and encourage purchase behavior. Empirical findings on this relationship remain mixed: studies by Punuindoong [5] and Hakiki et al. [6] found that brand ambassadors have a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions, whereas Winkok et al. [7] reported no significant effect, indicating an unresolved research gap.

A second factor is brand image, defined as consumers' response to a brand based on its favorable or unfavorable associations [8]. A positive brand image encourages consumer preference and purchase behavior, since consumer perception of brand image is a critical component of the decision-making process [3]. Pratama et al. [2] and Hasian and Pramuditha [9] confirmed a significant positive relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions, while other studies observed contrasting effects, again pointing to inconsistent findings across contexts.

A third factor, social media marketing, involves leveraging digital relationships and virtual community interaction as marketing tools [10]. Social media marketing enables companies to disseminate product information, foster interaction, and cultivate consumer trust. Paris and Ilhamuddin [11] and Alhamdi and Maleha [12] reported significant positive effects of social media marketing on purchasing decisions, whereas Ahmada and Putra [13] found no significant effect, further underscoring the research gap that motivates the present study.

The fourth factor, word of mouth, refers to promotional activity conducted by customers toward other customers through verbal, written, or electronic communication [3]. Because such recommendations are perceived as more honest and credible than firm-generated promotion, they often play a decisive role in consumer evaluation. Charera and Primandari [14] and Fachmi and Mardiman [15] found that word of mouth positively and significantly affects purchasing decisions, while Prasetyo [16] found no significant effect.

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Samsung smartphones remain a frequently considered option among university students despite being positioned, in general market perception, at a comparatively higher price point than several competing brands offering similar specifications. Global market data through 2025 indicate that Samsung continued to lead the global smartphone market with a share of roughly 19.1%–19.6%, shipping approximately 241.2 million units worldwide, and led the Southeast Asian market with 17.9 million units shipped, while holding a 16.78% market share in Indonesia in early 2025. To gain preliminary insight into this phenomenon, a mini pre-survey of 30 students at the Faculty of Economics and Business was conducted to profile smartphone brand usage.

Table 1. Preliminary Survey of Smartphone Brand Usage Among Students

| Smartphone Brand | Number of Users | Percentage |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Samsung          | 9               | 30%        |
| Xiaomi           | 7               | 23%        |
| iPhone           | 6               | 20%        |
| Infinix          | 5               | 17%        |
| Oppo             | 3               | 10%        |
| Total            | 30              | 100%       |

As shown in Table 1, Samsung recorded the highest usage share (30%) among the surveyed students, making it the most dominant brand despite its relatively higher price positioning—an interesting phenomenon warranting further investigation. Building on the identified research gaps regarding the effects of brand ambassador, brand image, social media marketing, and word of mouth on purchasing decisions, this study aims to analyze the influence of these four variables on the purchasing decisions of Samsung smartphones among students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Wijayakusuma Purwokerto.

Based on the theoretical foundation and prior empirical findings, the following hypotheses were formulated:

**H1:** Brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions.

**H2:** Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions.

**H3:** Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions.

**H4:** Word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Research Design

This study used a quantitative associative research design to examine causal relationships between independent and dependent variables through the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data [17]. The research was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Wijayakusuma Purwokerto, during April 2026.

## 2.2. Variables.

Two variable categories were used. The independent variables were brand ambassador ( $X_1$ ), brand image ( $X_2$ ), social media marketing ( $X_3$ ), and word of mouth ( $X_4$ ); the dependent variable was purchasing decision ( $Y$ ).

## 2.3. Population and Sample

The population comprised active students of Universitas Wijayakusuma Purwokerto (cohorts 2023–2025) who use Samsung-brand smartphones, with an unknown exact population size. The minimum sample size was calculated using the Lemeshow formula:

$$n = \frac{Za^2 \times p \times q}{d^2} \quad 1)$$

where  $Z = 1.96$  (95% confidence level),  $p = 0.5$  (assumed prevalence, since no prior data were available),  $q = 1 - p$ , and  $d = 0.10$  (precision level). This produced a minimum required sample of 96.04, rounded to 97 respondents. Sampling was conducted using a non-probability *purposive sampling* technique, with respondents required to be active students of the Faculty of Economics and Business in 2026 who had used a Samsung product for at least one year.

## 2.4. Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), supplemented by secondary data on active student enrollment figures. Library research (journals, books, and prior studies) supported the theoretical framework.

## 2.5. Operational Indicators

Purchasing decision indicators followed Astuti et al. [18]: product confidence, decision speed, purchase conviction, and taste-based decision-making. Brand ambassador indicators (credibility, attractiveness, power) followed Lestari and Cahya [19]. Brand image and social media marketing indicators followed established scales consistent with prior instruments used in comparable Samsung and smartphone purchase-decision studies [2], [18].

## 2.6. Analytical Method

Instrument validity was tested using Pearson product-moment correlation, comparing the calculated  $r$ -value ( $r$ -hitung) against the critical  $r$ -table value ( $df = n - 2 = 28$ ,  $r$ -table = 0.361 at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ); reliability was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha (cut-off  $\geq 0.70$ ). Classical assumption tests included the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test, the tolerance/VIF multicollinearity test, and the Glejser heteroscedasticity test. The hypothesized relationships were tested using multiple linear regression of the form:

$$Y = \alpha + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + e$$

Model fit was evaluated through the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and the  $F$ -test (feasibility of the overall model), while the significance of each individual predictor was

evaluated through the t-test, using a 95% confidence level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) and degrees of freedom ( $n - k = 92$ ), yielding a critical t-table value of 1.662. A predictor was considered to have a significant positive effect if  $t\text{-calculated} > t\text{-table}$  and the significance value was below 0.05.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Respondent Characteristics

The study surveyed 97 respondents, active students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Wijayakusuma Purwokerto.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

| Characteristic          | Category              | n  | %   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----|-----|
| Gender                  | Male                  | 55 | 57% |
|                         | Female                | 42 | 43% |
| Cohort year             | 2023                  | 32 | 33% |
|                         | 2024                  | 33 | 34% |
|                         | 2025                  | 32 | 33% |
| Study program           | Management            | 34 | 35% |
|                         | Accounting            | 35 | 36% |
|                         | Development Economics | 28 | 29% |
| Duration of Samsung use | 1–3 years             | 58 | 60% |
|                         | 4–5 years             | 34 | 35% |
|                         | > 5 years             | 5  | 5%  |

Most respondents were male (57%), from the 2024 cohort (34%), enrolled in the Accounting program (36%), and had used a Samsung smartphone for 1–3 years (60%), suggesting the sample largely reflects relatively recent Samsung adopters within the student population.

#### 3.2. Validity and Reliability

All questionnaire items produced calculated correlation coefficients ( $r\text{-hitung}$ ) ranging from 0.631 to 0.897, exceeding the critical  $r\text{-table}$  value of 0.361, confirming that all items were valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced coefficients above the 0.70 threshold for all constructs — purchasing decision (0.875), brand ambassador (0.818), brand image (0.803), social media marketing (0.834), and word of mouth (0.829) — indicating that all measurement instruments were reliable [20].

#### 3.3. Classical Assumption Tests

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test produced an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.200, exceeding 0.05, confirming that the residuals were normally distributed.

Table 3. Multicollinearity and Heteroscedasticity Test Results

| Variable                         | Tolerance | VIF   | Glejser Sig. | Conclusion                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-------|--------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Brand ambassador ( $X_1$ )       | 0.576     | 1.736 | 0.602        | No multicollinearity / no heteroscedasticity |
| Brand image ( $X_2$ )            | 0.879     | 1.267 | 0.408        | No multicollinearity / no heteroscedasticity |
| Social media marketing ( $X_3$ ) | 0.597     | 1.675 | 0.186        | No multicollinearity / no heteroscedasticity |
| Word of mouth ( $X_4$ )          | 0.725     | 1.379 | 0.107        | No multicollinearity / no heteroscedasticity |

All tolerance values exceeded 0.1, and all VIF values were below 10, indicating the absence of multicollinearity among predictors. Likewise, all Glejser significance values exceeded 0.05, confirming homoscedasticity of the residuals. Together, these results indicate the regression model satisfies the classical assumptions required for ordinary least squares estimation.

### 3.4. Multiple Linear Regression

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Results

| Variable                         | Regression Coefficient |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Constant                         | 2.702                  |
| Brand ambassador ( $X_1$ )       | 0.174                  |
| Brand image ( $X_2$ )            | 0.300                  |
| Social media marketing ( $X_3$ ) | 0.297                  |
| Word of mouth ( $X_4$ )          | 0.290                  |

The resulting regression equation is:

$$Y = 2.702 + 0.174X_1 + 0.300X_2 + 0.297X_3 + 0.290X_4 + e \quad 2)$$

The constant value of 2.702 indicates the baseline level of purchasing decision when all four independent variables are zero. Each regression coefficient is positive, indicating that improvements in brand ambassador, brand image, social media marketing, or word of mouth are each associated with an increase in purchasing decision, holding the other predictors constant. Brand image (0.300) exhibited the largest coefficient, followed closely by social media marketing (0.297), word of mouth (0.290), and brand ambassador (0.174).

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was 0.608, indicating that the four predictors jointly explain 60.8% of the variance in purchasing decisions, with the remaining 39.2% attributable to variables outside the model, such as product quality, service quality, and price.

### 3.5. Model Feasibility (F-Test) and Hypothesis Testing (t-Test)

The F-test produced  $F_{\text{calculated}} = 14.081$  with a significance value of 0.000, compared against an F-table value of 2.471 ( $df_1 = 4$ ,  $df_2 = 92$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Since  $F_{\text{calculated}}$  exceeded F-table, the regression model was deemed statistically feasible for estimating the population relationship.

Table 5. t-Test Results (Hypothesis Testing)

| Variable                         | t-calculated | t-table | Sig.  | Decision    |
|----------------------------------|--------------|---------|-------|-------------|
| Brand ambassador ( $X_1$ )       | 2.151        | 1.662   | 0.003 | H1 accepted |
| Brand image ( $X_2$ )            | 2.530        | 1.662   | 0.013 | H2 accepted |
| Social media marketing ( $X_3$ ) | 3.568        | 1.662   | 0.001 | H3 accepted |
| Word of mouth ( $X_4$ )          | 3.794        | 1.662   | 0.004 | H4 accepted |

All four t-calculated values exceeded the critical t-table value of 1.662, with significance levels below 0.05, leading to rejection of all null hypotheses and acceptance of H1–H4. Each variable therefore has a positive and significant effect on Samsung smartphone purchasing decisions among the surveyed students [21].

### **3.6. Discussion**

#### **3.6.1. Brand ambassador**

The positive and significant effect of brand ambassador on purchasing decisions is consistent with the findings of Punuindoong [5] and Hakiki et al. [6]. Among the sub-indicators, *power* (charisma) recorded the highest mean score (4.01), indicating that the ambassador's charisma strengthens student trust in Samsung products, whereas *attractiveness* (communication style) recorded the lowest mean score (3.64), suggesting the advertising communication style was perceived as comparatively less engaging. This implies that while the ambassador's persona builds credibility, Samsung's promotional messaging itself may benefit from more engaging creative execution [22].

#### **3.6.2. Brand image**

Brand image also showed a positive and significant effect, aligning with Hasian and Pramuditha [9]. The *uniqueness* indicator (price competitiveness/differentiation) scored highest (3.98), while the *strength* indicator (functional performance matching promises) scored lowest (3.45). This suggests that although students perceive Samsung's pricing as distinctively competitive, a gap remains between promised and perceived functional performance—an area Samsung could address to further strengthen brand trust [23].

#### **3.6.3. Social media marketing**

Consistent with Paris and Ilhamuddin [11] and Alhamdi and Maleha [12], social media marketing had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. The *online communities* indicator scored highest (4.06), reflecting community interactions on social media that increase interest in Samsung products, while content sharing scored lowest (3.70), suggesting that improving content creativity and relevance could further boost engagement.

#### **3.6.4. Word of mouth**

In line with Charera and Primandari [14] and Fachmi and Mardiman [15], word of mouth positively and significantly affected purchasing decisions. The *valence of opinion* indicator (frequency of hearing positive opinions) scored highest (4.18), while *talkers' intensity* (frequency of overhearing conversations about the brand) scored lowest (3.38). This suggests that while the quality (positivity) of word-of-mouth communication about Samsung is strong, students could increase the overall volume or frequency of such conversations through targeted community-building initiatives [24].

Collectively, these findings reinforce the view that purchasing decisions in the smartphone category are shaped jointly by promotional figures, brand perception, digital

marketing engagement, and peer communication, rather than by any single determinant — a pattern broadly consistent with prior Samsung- and smartphone-focused studies [2], [9], [25].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that brand ambassador, brand image, social media marketing, and word of mouth each exert a positive and statistically significant effect on the purchasing decisions of Samsung-brand smartphones among students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Wijayakusuma Purwokerto. The regression model, with an  $R^2$  of 60.8%, shows strong explanatory power, while the F-test confirms the model's overall statistical adequacy. Among the four predictors, brand image exerted the strongest individual influence, followed by social media marketing, word of mouth, and brand ambassador.

Practically, these findings suggest that Samsung should continue selecting credible, charismatic brand ambassadors while enhancing the creative appeal of associated advertising content; maintain alignment between marketed promises and actual product performance to reinforce brand image; invest in more engaging, relevant social media content to deepen community interaction; and actively nurture customer satisfaction, since positive word of mouth remains a powerful, low-cost driver of purchase intention. Future research could extend this model by incorporating additional variables such as price, product quality, and service quality, which together account for the remaining 39.2% of unexplained variance, and by broadening the sample beyond a single faculty or university to improve generalizability.

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