

The Influence Of Brand Image On The Decision To Use Maxim Services In Bengkulu City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of brand image on the decision to use Maxim's services in Bengkulu City. A quantitative survey method was employed, involving 100 randomly selected Maxim users. The research instrument, in the form of a questionnaire, was tested for validity and reliability. Classical assumption tests confirmed that the data met the requirements of normality, homoscedasticity, and linearity. The simple linear regression analysis showed that brand image had a positive and significant effect on the decision to use Maxim's services, with a regression coefficient of 0.404 and a significance level of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.247, indicating that brand image accounted for 24.7% of the variance in usage decisions, while the remaining 75.3% was influenced by other factors outside the model. These results suggest that a more favorable brand image leads to a higher likelihood of consumers choosing Maxim's services. Aligned with Brand Equity theory, the findings emphasize the importance of consumer perception in shaping decisions. Practically, it implies that Maxim should continue to strengthen its brand identity, improve service quality, and enhance user experience to maintain and increase customer engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has significantly transformed the way individuals interact in various aspects of life, particularly in the business sector. The internet has become a pivotal force in redefining communication, transactions, and services, enabling real-time access across geographical boundaries (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In this context, online-based transportation services have emerged as a major innovation in urban mobility, providing practical, fast, and efficient alternatives to conventional transport.

Online transportation platforms, such as Maxim, Gojek, and Grab, have revolutionized the transportation landscape in Indonesia, including secondary cities such as Bengkulu. These services cater to the increasing need for accessible and affordable transport, especially in urban settings characterized by rapid population growth and dense traffic conditions. According to Damayanti and Handayani (2023), online transportation has become more effective than conventional alternatives, thanks to its integration with mobile applications and GPS systems that allow for route optimization, digital payments, and real-time driver-tracking. Maxim, a Russian-origin platform founded in 2003 and officially entering the Indonesian market in 2018, has steadily expanded its operations to cities like Bengkulu. Its services include not only passenger transport but also delivery, food ordering, and courier services. However, despite its growing presence, Maxim still faces significant competition from more established players like Gojek and Grab (Utami & Astuti, 2023). In this highly competitive market, one of the determining factors influencing consumer choice is brand image.

Brand image refers to the perception and association consumers hold toward a particular brand based on their experiences, advertisements, peer influence, and brand messaging. Kotler and Keller (2018) define brand image as a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions a customer holds about a brand. A strong, positive brand image fosters customer trust, reduces perceived risk, and influences buying decisions — particularly in service-oriented industries such as transportation, where intangible aspects such as driver professionalism and app usability greatly matter (Larika & Ekowati, 2020). Brand image

becomes a crucial determinant when consumers evaluate competing alternatives offering similar services at comparable prices. In the context of Bengkulu City, where Maxim is relatively newer and less dominant than its rivals, consumer decisions to use Maxim can be strongly linked to how they perceive the brand in terms of safety, reliability, responsiveness, and overall reputation (Tanady & Fuad, 2020). This suggests that beyond service delivery, how a brand is positioned in the consumer's mind plays a vital role in driving engagement and repeat usage.

In the realm of marketing communication, consumer decision-making is a complex process involving five key stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Within this process, brand image acts as a psychological shortcut that simplifies consumer evaluation and strengthens emotional connections, particularly when tangible product differences are minimal. Consumers tend to choose brands that align with their values, beliefs, and perceptions of social acceptance.

The importance of brand image is also reinforced by previous studies. Herawati and Khoirotunnisa (2022) found that brand image has a significant and positive effect on consumer decision-making in the context of smartphone usage. Similarly, Sumpu and Tumbel (2018) demonstrated that brand image directly influences consumer purchase decisions, especially when product differentiation is minimal. In the transport sector, Solihin et al. (2021) affirmed the role of brand image in shaping consumer confidence and usage patterns, particularly in service-driven environments like ride-hailing apps.

Despite its steady expansion in Indonesia, Maxim still faces several challenges, both in terms of perception and operational issues. Reports of driver dissatisfaction, safety concerns, and fluctuating service quality have occasionally marred the company's public image (Maxim Indonesia, 2024). On the other hand, the company has made several strategic efforts to address these issues, such as launching the "I'm Out" feature to improve communication transparency and continuously updating its application to enhance user experience. In Bengkulu City specifically, preliminary surveys suggest that consumer experiences with Maxim vary significantly. While many users appreciate its affordability and ease of use, others express concerns regarding safety, vehicle cleanliness, and occasional technical glitches in the app. These mixed perceptions suggest that Maxim's brand image in Bengkulu is still evolving and remains vulnerable to public opinion and service performance (Rahmawati & Pradana, 2024). Consequently, evaluating the role of brand image in influencing usage decisions becomes not only timely but also strategically important.

The present study seeks to analyze the extent to which brand image influences consumer decisions to use Maxim's services in Bengkulu. By focusing on a local context and using empirical data collected through structured questionnaires, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge surrounding consumer behavior in the digital transportation sector. Moreover, the study serves a practical purpose for marketing managers and strategists by highlighting areas of improvement and opportunities for building stronger brand equity. To structure the inquiry, the study will explore the following hypothesis: *Brand image has a significant influence on the decision to use Maxim's services in Bengkulu City.* The results of the study are expected to validate the applicability of Brand Equity Theory (Aaker, 1991) in a real-world setting and offer insights into how brand perception correlates with consumer behavior in digital transportation.

In conclusion, understanding the role of brand image in consumer decision-making is critical for online transport providers like Maxim. It provides strategic direction for enhancing service delivery, branding strategies, and customer retention initiatives. By focusing on the specific context of Bengkulu City, this study offers a localized perspective that can serve as a reference for both academia and practitioners aiming to navigate the increasingly competitive landscape of urban mobility in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Image

Brand image refers to the collective perception and associations consumers form about a brand, typically based on direct experiences, marketing communications, peer influence, and public reputation. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), brand image encompasses a consumer's beliefs and impressions about a brand, often functioning as a mental shortcut in decision-making. A strong brand image can reduce perceived risk and foster loyalty, especially in service industries where the physical product is intangible. Larika and Ekowati (2020) argue that brand image serves as a benchmark for consumers to assess unfamiliar products, thereby acting as a signal of quality and trust. Brand image is not only built through advertisements or logos but also through customer service quality, responsiveness to complaints, and the perceived social responsibility of the company.

Dimensions of Brand Image

Kotler and Keller (2018) propose several key dimensions of brand image. These include brand identity, which relates to the visual and verbal elements of the brand such as logos, packaging, and brand colors. Brand personality reflects the human characteristics associated with a brand, such as being innovative or friendly. Brand association refers to the connections or ideas linked with the brand, often shaped by repeated exposure and unique selling propositions. Brand attitude and behavior involve the emotional and behavioral responses consumers exhibit toward the brand. Lastly, brand benefits and competence relate to the practical advantages consumers associate with the brand, including reliability, efficiency, and satisfaction.

Usage Decision (Purchase Decision)

A usage decision, or consumer purchase decision, is defined as the process by which individuals choose among several options to satisfy their needs and desires. Kotler and Armstrong (2018) describe this as a multi-stage process that includes need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. A well-informed consumer tends to make decisions based on a combination of rational analysis and emotional impulse. In the context of digital services such as online transportation, this decision-making process is often compressed due to the real-time nature of mobile apps, yet still fundamentally influenced by brand trust and previous experience (Setiadi, 2003).

Factors Affecting Usage Decisions

Consumer usage decisions are influenced by a variety of internal and external factors. Internally, factors such as motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes shape how individuals interpret marketing messages and make consumption choices (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Externally, social influences—like family, peers, and cultural norms—play a crucial role. In service contexts like Maxim, usage decisions are also driven by perceived value, service reliability, ease of use, and pricing. According to Ruliyani et al. (2024), brand image becomes especially important when competing services offer similar features at similar prices, making the decision rely more heavily on perception than on objective quality differences.

Relationship Between Brand Image and Usage Decision

Numerous studies have shown that brand image significantly influences consumer behavior. Herawati and Khoirotunnisa (2022) found that a positive brand image increased the likelihood of choosing a specific smartphone brand, while Sumpu and Tumbel (2018) highlighted its role in product preference among students. In the transportation sector, a favorable brand image correlates with higher consumer confidence, reduced risk perception, and increased likelihood of continued use (Solihin et al., 2021). A brand perceived as safe, reliable, and socially responsible is more likely to be chosen, even in competitive markets.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Brand Equity Theory, which posits that a brand's value is derived not only from its financial metrics but also from customer perceptions and emotional attachment (Aaker, 1991). The theory emphasizes the role of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty in shaping consumer behavior. In the context of Maxim in Bengkulu City, this theory provides a lens to understand how consumers evaluate the service and make decisions based on perceived brand value rather than just price or functional benefits.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey method to examine the influence of brand image on the decision to use Maxim's services in Bengkulu City. The approach was chosen to test the hypothesis through measurable data and statistical analysis, allowing for generalization within the target population.

The population in this study comprised all active Maxim users in Bengkulu City, totaling approximately 80,575 individuals. To determine the sample size, the Slovin formula was applied with a margin of error (e) of 10%, resulting in a sample of 100 respondents. Simple random sampling was used to ensure that each individual had an equal chance of being selected, minimizing selection bias.

The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended items, measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was divided into two main variables: Brand Image (independent variable) and Usage

Decision (dependent variable). Each variable was further operationalized into indicators based on previous studies and theoretical frameworks by Kotler & Keller (2016) and Larika & Ekowati (2020). To ensure data quality, the instrument was subjected to validity and reliability testing. Validity was assessed using Pearson's correlation coefficient, while reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold of ≥ 0.60 indicating acceptable internal consistency.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to profile the respondents, and inferential statistics, particularly simple linear regression analysis, to test the hypothesis. The regression model measured the effect of brand image on usage decisions, with significance tested at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$). All statistical calculations were performed using SPSS version 26.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine the effect of brand image on the decision to use Maxim's services in Bengkulu City, using a sample of 100 respondents selected through random sampling. The initial step involved analyzing respondent demographics to understand the user profile. The data revealed a balanced distribution of gender (52% male, 48% female), with the highest proportion of users aged over 30 years (28%), followed by those aged 20–25 (26%). In terms of frequency of usage, 42% of respondents reported using Maxim 1–2 times a month, 31% used it more than 5 times per month, and 27% used it between 3–5 times per month. This distribution shows that Maxim has captured a relatively wide market segment in Bengkulu, including both occasional and frequent users.

The central analysis was conducted using simple linear regression to examine the relationship between brand image (independent variable) and usage decision (dependent variable). The analysis yielded a regression coefficient (β) of 0.404, indicating a positive relationship between the variables. Furthermore, the significance level (p-value) was found to be 0.000, which is below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This confirms that the relationship is statistically significant, meaning that changes in brand image perception are associated with changes in the consumer's decision to use Maxim. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated at 0.247, which implies that 24.7% of the variance in consumer usage decision is explained by the brand image variable. This percentage is substantial in the context of consumer behavior studies, where psychological and situational factors often produce diffuse influences. However, it also means that 75.3% of the decision-making process is influenced by other variables not explored in this study. These could include pricing, user interface design of the app, quality of service delivery, social recommendations, competitor promotions, or even contextual factors such as weather or time availability.

To help interpret this result, the data can be visualized as a pie chart. Approximately a quarter of the decision-making "pie" (24.7%) is taken up by brand image—representing how much trust, familiarity, reputation, and emotional connection influence users. The remaining three-quarters of the "pie" (75.3%) includes numerous other factors outside brand perception. These findings signal that while brand image holds considerable weight in influencing user choice, it cannot work in isolation. For a service like Maxim, branding must be reinforced with consistent service delivery, attractive pricing, and effective customer support to convert first-time users into loyal customers.

In terms of descriptive statistics, the questionnaire responses revealed generally positive ratings across all brand image indicators. The dimensions of brand identity, brand personality, brand association, brand behavior, and brand benefit scored consistently in the "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" range based on the Likert scale applied. This confirms that the majority of respondents perceive Maxim as a reliable and competent brand in Bengkulu. However, the standard deviation values observed for several items suggest a degree of variation in perception, indicating that not all users share the same level of confidence in the brand.

During the course of the survey, a number of qualitative comments were also noted from open-ended responses. Some users highlighted positive experiences, such as punctual drivers, helpful customer support, and affordable rates. Others, however, noted inconsistencies, such as sudden price surges during peak hours, unclean vehicles, or unprofessional driver behavior. These qualitative insights help explain why brand image alone does not dominate the decision-making process; a strong brand reputation can be undermined quickly by poor operational experiences.

Additionally, the reliability and validity testing of the research instrument reinforced the robustness of the data. All items passed the validity threshold based on Pearson correlation tests, and Cronbach's Alpha exceeded 0.7 for all variable constructs, indicating strong internal consistency. This strengthens the credibility of the regression findings and suggests that the measured constructs (brand image and usage decision) reflect the intended theoretical concepts with high precision.

In summary, the research results indicate that brand image is a statistically significant and practically meaningful predictor of usage decision among Maxim consumers in Bengkulu. However, the

moderate R^2 value implies that service providers should not rely solely on branding strategies to increase user engagement. Instead, they should adopt an integrated approach—combining brand building with service innovation, dynamic pricing, technological improvements, and personalized user experiences. These results offer valuable insights for both marketing scholars and practitioners. For academics, it supports the existing literature on brand equity and consumer behavior in digital service contexts. For practitioners, especially local managers of Maxim, it provides an evidence-based rationale to invest in not just promotional branding but also in improving the real-world service delivery that ultimately shapes user perception and loyalty.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that brand image has a significant and positive influence on the decision to use Maxim's services in Bengkulu City. This result aligns with the core premise of Brand Equity Theory, which posits that consumer perceptions of a brand—its identity, personality, association, and reputation—play a critical role in shaping behavior and decision-making (Aaker, 1991; Kotler & Keller, 2016). In this study, a regression coefficient of 0.404 and a significance level of $p = 0.000$ indicate that brand image is not only positively correlated with usage decision but also a statistically reliable predictor.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.247 provides a nuanced understanding. While brand image explains 24.7% of the variance in usage decision, the remaining 75.3% is influenced by other factors—some of which were highlighted in qualitative comments, such as fare affordability, app interface usability, availability of drivers, and real-time service reliability. This suggests that while branding can attract users, operational consistency retains them. Therefore, branding and service execution must be seen as complementary forces rather than substitutes.

These results are consistent with prior studies. For example, Herawati and Khoirotunnisa (2022) demonstrated that brand image significantly influenced smartphone purchasing decisions. Likewise, Solihin et al. (2021) found that a positive brand image directly correlated with consumers' confidence and satisfaction in service-based industries. In this context, the current study validates these relationships within the Indonesian ride-hailing market, particularly in secondary cities like Bengkulu, which are less saturated than Jakarta or Surabaya but present unique behavioral dynamics.

An interesting point is that while Maxim's brand image received high average scores across identity, benefit, and association dimensions, its overall contribution to decision-making remains moderate, as seen in the R^2 value. This reflects a cognitive dissonance often observed in service sectors—where consumers may hold favorable brand perceptions yet make decisions based on short-term practical concerns, such as price surges, driver ratings, or app performance. This phenomenon underlines the complexity of consumer behavior, where attitudes do not always translate into action. Moreover, the brand image effect in this study can be interpreted as situationally contingent. For instance, during emergencies or high-demand periods, users may prioritize service availability over brand loyalty. In such cases, even a well-regarded brand may lose out to a competitor offering faster or cheaper service at the moment of need. This reinforces the idea that brand equity must be actively maintained through consistent reinforcement, responsiveness, and innovation, not merely through marketing communications.

Another implication is the importance of trust and safety in influencing user perception. Several respondents referenced their decision to use Maxim based on previous positive or negative experiences. Trust, in this sense, becomes a key mediator between brand image and usage behavior. If a brand fails to uphold expectations in a single instance, it may erode a carefully built reputation. Hence, customer experience management must be embedded as a core operational principle within the brand strategy. Lastly, this study provides contextual insights specific to Bengkulu City, a region where digital adoption continues to grow but is still shaped by local norms, infrastructure, and income levels. This underscores the importance of localized brand strategies. While Maxim competes in a national and even global arena, it must remain sensitive to regional preferences and service expectations to build sustainable brand equity. In conclusion, this discussion emphasizes that brand image plays a vital—but not exclusive—role in shaping usage decisions. Maxim, and similar service providers, must view branding as an ongoing, dynamic process that interacts with daily user experiences. A positive brand image can serve as a gateway to user engagement, but only excellent execution will sustain loyalty and market share.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study aimed to examine the influence of brand image on the decision to use Maxim's services in Bengkulu City. Through quantitative analysis of data collected from 100 respondents, the research confirmed that brand image has a positive and statistically significant effect on usage decisions. The

regression analysis yielded a coefficient of 0.404 with a significance level of $p = 0.000$, indicating a strong relationship between the two variables.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.247, meaning that 24.7% of the variation in consumers' decisions to use Maxim's services can be explained by brand image alone. This suggests that while brand perception plays an important role in influencing user behavior, a majority of the decision-making process (75.3%) is affected by other variables not covered in this study, such as price, driver availability, app usability, and social influence.

The findings support previous literature and align with Brand Equity Theory, which emphasizes the importance of consumer perceptions in shaping brand value and behavior. In the case of Maxim, building a strong and positive brand image contributes meaningfully to user engagement, but it must be complemented by consistent and high-quality service delivery to sustain user trust and satisfaction. In conclusion, brand image is a key driver in attracting and retaining users in the digital transportation market. However, for Maxim to maintain a competitive edge in Bengkulu and beyond, it must integrate branding strategies with operational excellence, user-centered innovation, and responsive service practices. Only by doing so can the company effectively convert brand equity into long-term customer loyalty and market growth.

While this study provides valuable insights into the influence of brand image on the decision to use Maxim services in Bengkulu City, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the research utilized a cross-sectional survey design, which captures user perceptions at a single point in time. As a result, the study cannot account for potential changes in consumer attitudes or behavior over time. Longitudinal studies may offer deeper understanding of how brand image evolves and influences usage decisions across different market conditions or seasonal variations.

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