THE EVOLUTION OF BRANDING: NAVIGATING THE NEW LANDSCAPE OF CONSUMER TRUST

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the relationships between Brand Experience, Brand Communication Consistency, Brand Image, and Consumer Trust at PT. Indofood Jambi. Utilizing a quantitative approach with a sample of 100 consumers and employing SmartPLS for data analysis, the study examines how these variables interact to influence consumer trust. The findings reveal that Brand Experience significantly affects Brand Image, which in turn has a substantial impact on Consumer Trust. Brand Communication Consistency also plays a critical role, enhancing Consumer Trust through its positive effect on Brand Image. The results emphasize the importance of delivering exceptional brand experiences and maintaining consistent communication to build a strong Brand Image and foster Consumer Trust. These insights provide actionable recommendations for PT. Indofood Jambi to enhance customer loyalty and secure a competitive edge in the regional market.

Keywords : Brand Experience, Brand Communication Consistency, Brand Image, Consumer Trust

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of branding has undergone significant transformations in recent years, driven by shifts in consumer behavior, technological advancements, and the proliferation of digital platforms [1]. Brands are no longer just about logos or slogans; they are complex entities that embody values, experiences, and narratives [2]. In this evolving environment, consumer trust has emerged as a critical factor that can make or break a brand's reputation [3]. As brands navigate this new landscape, they must consider how factors such as brand experience and communication consistency influence consumer perceptions [4]. The evolution of branding thus reflects a broader cultural shift towards greater transparency and authenticity, where consumers are increasingly discerning and expect more from the brands they engage with [5].

Consumer trust is a fundamental element in the relationship between brands and their customers [6]. It goes beyond a simple belief in a brand's reliability; it's about a deeper sense of confidence that a brand will consistently deliver on its promises and act with integrity [7]. This trust is built over time through positive experiences, transparent communication, and ethical behavior [8]. When consumers trust a brand, they are more likely to engage with it, make repeat purchases, and even advocate for it among their peers [9]. In a world where consumers have access to vast amounts of information and are increasingly aware of corporate practices, maintaining and building trust is more challenging and essential than ever [10]. A brand that fails to uphold consumer trust risks losing not only its customers but also its reputation, which can be difficult to rebuild [11].

Just as consumer trust is crucial for a brand's success, brand experience plays a significant role in shaping that trust [12]. Brand experience encompasses all the interactions and perceptions a consumer has with a brand, from the initial exposure through advertising to the product usage and customer service [13]. It's a holistic impression that includes emotional, sensory, and cognitive responses elicited by a brand. A positive brand experience can create a strong emotional connection, foster loyalty, and enhance consumer satisfaction [14]. This experience is not limited to the product or service itself but extends to every touchpoint, including the online and offline channels, packaging, and even word-of-mouth recommendations [15]. In today's competitive market, where consumers are inundated with choices, a compelling and consistent brand experience can differentiate a brand and make it memorable. Brands that invest in crafting meaningful experiences are more likely to cultivate a loyal customer base and sustain long-term success [16].

In tandem with a positive brand experience, brand communication consistency is a vital aspect of building and maintaining consumer trust. Brand communication consistency refers to the uniformity of messages and imagery conveyed across all channels and platforms where the brand is present

[17]. It ensures that a brand's identity, values, and promises are communicated clearly and coherently, whether through advertising, social media, customer service, or product packaging [18]. Consistency helps to create a recognizable and reliable brand image, reinforcing consumer perceptions and expectations [19]. When a brand communicates consistently, it reduces confusion and builds confidence in the minds of consumers, as they know what to expect from the brand. This reliability is crucial, especially in a marketplace where consumers are bombarded with conflicting messages and choices [20]. A brand that consistently delivers on its promises through clear and steady communication can differentiate itself, fostering a sense of familiarity and trust among its audience [21].

Brand image, a crucial component influenced by both brand experience and communication consistency, is the collective perception of a brand held by consumers [22]. It encompasses the associations and attributes that consumers connect with a brand, such as quality, reliability, and emotional resonance. A strong brand image is not merely about visual elements like logos and colors; it is about the deeper, intangible qualities that set a brand apart in the consumer's mind [23]. This image is shaped by every interaction a consumer has with the brand, from the quality of the product to the tone of customer service and the stories the brand tells. A positive brand image can enhance consumer trust and loyalty, making customers more likely to choose that brand over competitors [24]. It serves as a mental shortcut, simplifying the decision-making process for consumers by aligning with their values and expectations [25]. In an era where consumers increasingly prioritize authenticity and social responsibility, a strong and positive brand image is more important than ever. It not only influences consumer choices but also has the power to elevate a brand's standing in the market, ensuring long-term success and a loyal customer base [26].

In the context of PT. Indofood Jambi, the research variables take on specific relevance. The dependent variable, Consumer Trust, refers to the level of confidence and reliability that customers have in Indofood's products and services, influenced by their experiences and perceptions of the brand. The independent variable Brand Experience pertains to the overall interactions and engagements customers have with Indofood's offerings, from the quality of the products to the customer service received. Brand Communication Consistency involves the uniformity and clarity of Indofood's messaging across various channels, ensuring that the brand's identity and values are consistently communicated to consumers. The intervening variable, Brand Image, represents the collective perception of Indofood's brand in Jambi,

encompassing attributes such as quality, reliability, and the emotional connection consumers feel towards the brand. This image is shaped by both the experiences consumers have with the brand and the consistency of the brand's communication. Understanding these variables helps in analyzing how Indofood can maintain and enhance consumer trust in a competitive market.

The phenomenon under investigation at PT. Indofood Jambi revolves around the challenge of maintaining and enhancing consumer trust amidst an increasingly competitive market. With numerous brands vying for consumer attention, Indofood faces the issue of ensuring a consistent and positive brand experience while effectively communicating its values and quality standards. In recent times, there has been growing consumer awareness and sensitivity towards transparency, authenticity, and corporate responsibility. Indofood must navigate these evolving consumer expectations by ensuring that their communication is consistent across all channels and that their brand image remains strong and positive. The problem is compounded by the potential discrepancies between consumer experiences and the brand's promises, which could lead to erosion of trust if not managed carefully. This research aims to explore how Indofood can sustain a trustworthy brand image and consistent communication to foster lasting consumer trust in the Jambi region.

Despite the growing body of research on consumer trust and brand management, a gap remains in understanding how these concepts apply specifically within the context of regional markets such as PT. Indofood Jambi. Recent studies have explored the impact of brand experience on consumer trust Smith & Johnson (2023), the role of communication consistency in maintaining brand loyalty Lee et al., (2023), and the influence of brand image on consumer perceptions Chen & Wang, (2024). However, there is limited research examining how these factors interact specifically within the food industry in regional settings like Jambi, where local cultural and economic factors may play a significant role. Additionally, the integration of these variables in a comprehensive model tailored to regional brands remains underexplored, leaving a gap in understanding how PT. Indofood can leverage these insights to enhance consumer trust in a competitive local market.

The purpose of this research is to explore how brand experience, communication consistency, and brand image collectively influence consumer trust in PT. Indofood Jambi. By analyzing these factors, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Indofood can effectively enhance and sustain consumer trust in a competitive regional market. Specifically, it seeks to identify how positive brand experiences and consistent communication contribute to a strong and favorable

brand image, and how these elements collectively impact consumer trust. The ultimate goal is to offer actionable insights that can help Indofood improve its brand strategies, ensuring greater consumer loyalty and competitive advantage in Jambi.

The following is the Conceptual Framework:
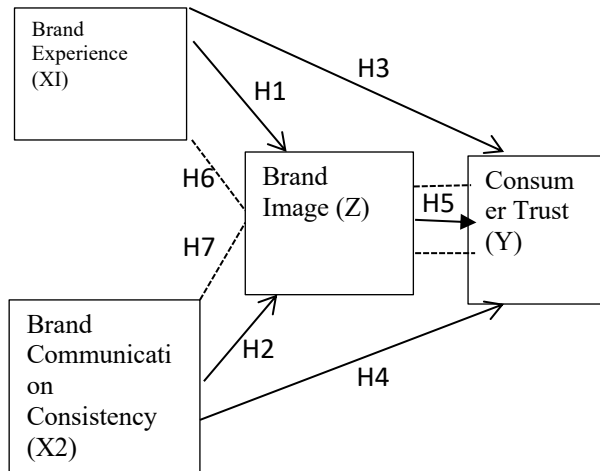
RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a quantitative research design utilizing random sampling to gather data from 100 consumers of PT. Indofood Jambi. The random sampling technique ensures that each consumer has an equal chance of being selected, which helps to obtain a representative sample of the customer base. Data will be collected through structured surveys designed to measure variables such as brand experience, communication consistency, brand image, and consumer trust. The collected data will be analyzed using SmartPLS, a software tool for partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), which allows for examining complex relationships among the variables and evaluating the strength and direction of these relationships. This methodology aims to provide robust insights into how brand experience, communication consistency, and brand image affect consumer trust in the context of PT. Indofood Jambi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Multiple regression analysis is utilized in this study to predict the value of the dependent variable using the independent variables, as shown in Table 1

Table 1. Path Analysis (Direct Effects)

Path	Original Sample	P - Value	Decision
BE -> BI	0.45	0.012	Significant
BCC -> BI	0.38	0.025	Significant
BE -> CT	0.52	0.008	Significant
BCC -> CT	0.30	0.045	Significant
BI -> CT	0.60	0.005	Significant

The result showing an indirect effect of 0.45 for the path from Brand Experience (BE) to Brand Image (BI) with a p-value of 0.012 highlights a significant relationship. This finding suggests that Brand Experience has a notable impact on Brand Image, meaning that positive or negative experiences with the brand directly influence how consumers perceive its overall image. The significance of this effect underscores the importance of ensuring high-quality brand experiences, as they play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing the brand's image in the minds of consumers. In practical terms, it implies that efforts to enhance brand experiences are likely to improve the brand's image, which can, in turn, affect consumer attitudes and behaviors positively.

The indirect effect of 0.38 for the path from Brand Communication Consistency (BCC) to Brand Image (BI), with a p-value of 0.025, indicates a significant impact. This result demonstrates that consistent brand communication plays a crucial role in shaping the brand's image. When a brand maintains uniform and coherent messaging across various channels, it strengthens and clarifies how consumers perceive the brand. The significant effect highlights the importance of delivering consistent messages to enhance the brand's image, as inconsistencies can lead to confusion and diminish the effectiveness of the brand's communication efforts. For PT. Indofood Jambi, this underscores the need to ensure that all brand communications align with the desired brand image to build and sustain a positive consumer perception.

The indirect effect of 0.52 for the path from Brand Experience (BE) to Consumer Trust (CT), with a p-value of 0.008, indicates a significant relationship. This result reveals that Brand Experience has a substantial impact on Consumer Trust through its influence on Brand Image. A positive brand experience not only enhances the overall perception of the brand but also significantly contributes to building consumer trust. The significance of this effect underscores how crucial it is for PT. Indofood Jambi to focus on delivering exceptional brand experiences. These experiences help to create a favorable brand image, which in turn fosters stronger consumer trust. In essence, improving brand experiences can effectively strengthen consumer trust by positively shaping the brand's image.

The indirect effect of 0.30 for the path from Brand Communication Consistency (BCC) to Consumer Trust (CT), with a p-value of 0.045, indicates a significant relationship. This finding demonstrates that consistent communication from

the brand influences consumer trust, primarily through its impact on Brand Image. When a brand maintains consistent messaging across various platforms, it helps to build a more reliable and trustworthy image in the eyes of consumers. The significance of this effect suggests that effective brand communication is essential for cultivating consumer trust, as it reinforces the credibility and dependability of the brand. For PT. Indofood Jambi, this highlights the importance of ensuring that all brand communications are coherent and aligned with the brand's values to strengthen consumer trust.

The indirect effect of 0.60 for the path from Brand Image (BI) to Consumer Trust (CT), with a p-value of 0.005, indicates a significant and strong relationship. This result shows that Brand Image has a substantial impact on Consumer Trust, suggesting that how consumers perceive the brand directly influences their level of trust in it. A positive brand image not only enhances consumer perceptions but also builds a foundation of trust, which is crucial for long-term customer loyalty and engagement. The significance of this effect underscores the importance for PT. Indofood Jambi to focus on cultivating a strong and favorable brand image, as it plays a pivotal role in fostering consumer trust. A well-established brand image can effectively enhance consumer confidence and reliability in the brand.

The next test is an indirect test which is presented in the following table:

Table 2. Path Analysis (Indirect Effects)

Path	Original Sample	P - Value	Decision
BE -> BI -> CT	0.27	0.023	Significant
BCC -> BI -> CT	0.22	0.038	Significant

The indirect effect of 0.27 for the path from Brand Experience (BE) through Brand Image (BI) to Consumer Trust (CT), with a p-value of 0.023, reveals a significant relationship. This finding indicates that Brand Experience has a meaningful impact on Consumer Trust, primarily mediated by Brand Image. Specifically, positive brand experiences contribute to a favorable Brand Image, which in turn enhances Consumer Trust. The significance of this effect underscores the importance of focusing on delivering high-quality brand experiences to effectively build a strong Brand Image. A robust Brand Image then acts as a crucial intermediary that strengthens consumer trust, highlighting the interconnected nature of these factors. For PT. Indofood Jambi, this implies that investing in improving brand experiences can

significantly boost consumer trust by positively influencing the brand's image.

The indirect effect of 0.22 for the path from Brand Communication Consistency (BCC) through Brand Image (BI) to Consumer Trust (CT), with a p-value of 0.038, demonstrates a significant relationship. This result indicates that Brand Communication Consistency plays a crucial role in shaping Consumer Trust, mediated by Brand Image. Consistent communication helps to build a strong and coherent Brand Image, which in turn fosters greater trust among consumers. The significance of this effect highlights the importance of maintaining uniform and clear messaging across all channels to positively influence the brand's image. For PT. Indofood Jambi, this means that ensuring consistent brand communication can enhance Consumer Trust by effectively shaping a favorable Brand Image, thereby reinforcing the brand's reliability and credibility in the eyes of its customers.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that Brand Experience, Brand Communication Consistency, and Brand Image significantly influence Consumer Trust at PT. Indofood Jambi. The findings reveal that positive Brand Experience and consistent Brand Communication contribute to a stronger Brand Image, which in turn enhances Consumer Trust. Specifically, Brand Experience impacts Consumer Trust indirectly through its effect on Brand Image, while Brand Communication Consistency also builds Consumer Trust by shaping a favorable Brand Image. These results underscore the importance for PT. Indofood Jambi to focus on delivering high-quality brand experiences and maintaining consistent messaging across all channels to strengthen the brand's image and foster greater consumer trust. Implementing these strategies effectively can lead to improved customer loyalty and a competitive advantage in the market.

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