

The Impact of Women Sexual Visualization in E-Sport Brand Ambassadors on Fan Engagement and Perception

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the impact of the sexualized of women brand ambassadors in the e-sports industry on fan perception and engagement. It explores how the sexual visualization of women as brand ambassador shapes fan perceptions, loyalty, and their emotional connection with e-sports teams. This issue is particularly relevant in the context of popular culture and the broader societal debate about the commodification of women in media and entertainment. While e-sports has developed into a significant cultural phenomenon, the sexualized visualization of women brand ambassadors raises questions about its influence on fan loyalty, emotional connection, and perceptions of professionalism. Despite the increasing visibility of women in e-sports, there are still gaps in understanding how it shapes fan engagement and perception. This study uses qualitative methods by applying ethnography. This study use theory of circuit of culture by Hall. The data collection techniques in this study are in-depth interviews with 10 e-sports fans who are involved in e-sport field. The results show that the sexual visualization of women as Brand Ambassadors in e-sports has an initial influence in attracting fans attention, but their loyalty and engagement are not influence by BA sexual visualization, but based on team skill performance, and a balanced between professionalism and visuals in a BA. Fans perceive female BAs as centre of attention who have an attractive appearance, which often this sexuality of appearance is used as a commodification of female BAs in e-sports. This study provides insights into fans' perceptions of sexual representation, emphasizing the need for more balanced and empowering portrayals of women in e-sports. The findings highlight the importance of aligning visual strategy with professionalism to increase inclusivity and sustain meaningful engagement in the e-sports community.

Article history:

Received 6 January 2025

Accepted 19 March 2025

Keyword:

Women, E-sport, Sexual, Visualization

INTRODUCTION

E-sports is a relatively new and increasingly socially important phenomenon both locally and globally. Today, e-sports, which is referred to as an intellectual “sports” activity. About sports that is now recognized and often described as a phenomenon that has become an element of modern addiction (Tomecka, 2017, p.22). E-sports can be watched and played on personal computers (PCs) or video game consoles and mobile devices. These platforms provide a unique and diverse way to engage with competitive video game content, helping to further increase the popularity of e-sports. In addition, e-sports team-based competitions

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primarily use PCs and video game consoles or mobile phone devices like these platforms are more suitable for team competitions, while mobile devices generally involve two individuals competing against each other (Huettermann & Pizzo, 2022, p.2).

The rises of digital marketing and the uses of brand ambassadors in order to increase sales and build a good image of the company's products and it is the right strategy in this digitalization era, a brand must also have an identity that can connection between the brand and their consumers through a proposition value that involves functional benefits (Nisa & Pramesti, 2019, p.365). Some e-sports teams choose women brand ambassadors and use a sexual visualization approach as part of their marketing strategy. Sexual visualization in this context refers to the way women brand ambassadors are visually displayed, such as the choice of clothing, certain seductive poses, or physical characteristics that are prioritized to attract the attention of the audience. This is done to utilize visual appeal as one part of marketing that is expected to attract fans to the e-sport team. According to Sahlberg (2024) as distrust of traditional advertising grows, many companies are turning to influencer marketing. E-sports players are an example of potential influencers due to their large follower base. This strategy is considered effective because consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from people they know or follow. Brand ambassadors are responsible for building connections with audiences through popularity and attractiveness, thereby increasing fan loyalty to the e-sports teams they represent.

In Sahlberg's book (2024, p. 65-66) she provides the effect of using sexual visualization in e-sport as a brand ambassador marketing strategy can be analyzed through several perspectives. First, the use of sponsorship in e-sport has been proven to help increase brand engagement as esport audiences are highly loyal and interested in the social interaction around the content they follow. For example, by positioning the brand through a recognized figure in the e-sport world, such as a player or influencer, the sponsorship is perceived as more personalized and relevant to the fans. Secondly, the interaction between the brand and the audience through the figure of an ambassador who has a certain visualization often serves to strength then the brand image. In addition, e-sport players or influencers have a large follower base and have a strong influence, so visualizations related to brand ambassadors are important.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the role of brand ambassadors. One such study is "Female Students Perceptions on The Effect of Country of Origin, Brand Ambassador on Purchase Intentions: A Study on The Geographical Origin of Tokopedia E-Commerce Company, Indonesia" by Nurunnisha et al. (2021). This study examines how brand ambassadors influence consumer purchase intentions in Indonesia, especially on the Tokopedia e-commerce platform. Using a questionnaire distributed to 100 Widyatama University students, the results of this study show that attractive and widely recognized brand ambassadors significantly increase product attractiveness and purchase intention. Although this study shows that brand ambassador objectification can increase product appeal, the focus is different from this study which explores how the sexual visualization of female brand ambassadors in esports clubs affects fans' engagement and perception of female BAs. Also, in contrast to the questionnaire method used by Nurunnisha et al, this study used interviews to uncover more about fan perceptions and interactions.

Another study is "Blackpink as Shopee's Brand Ambassador: Does it Influence Brand Image and Purchase Intention?" by Rebecca, et al. (2022). This research discusses the influence of Blackpink's role as Shopee's brand ambassador on brand image and consumer

purchase intention. With data from 300 respondents through an online survey, this study found that Blackpink's global popularity significantly enhanced Shopee's brand image and consumer purchase intention, creating alignment with pop culture trends. Despite the similarities in exploring the role of female brand ambassadors, this study has a fundamental difference, which focuses on the impact of sexual visualization of female brand ambassadors on fan engagement and popularity of esports teams. In addition, a study by Arifin and Pratama (2024) titled "The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Onic Supply ID Brand Image among Communication Science Students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember" analyzed the influence of brand ambassadors on the brand image of Onic Supply ID, a merchandise brand associated with esports teams. While relevant, the study focused more on the effectiveness of brand image and increased sales, in contrast to this study which highlights the dynamics of perception as well as fan engagement, such as interaction on social media and participation in events.

Previous studies have mostly focused on the impact of brand ambassadors on brand image, purchase intention, or effectiveness in increasing sales, both in the context of e-commerce and esports merchandise products. However, no research has specifically explored how the sexual visualization of female brand ambassadors affects fan engagement and perception. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the influence of sexual visualization of female brand ambassadors on fan engagement and perception. Using interviews as the data collection method, this research will provide new insights into how sexual visualization affects the way fans perceive and how loyal they are to esports clubs. It is expected to make an important contribution to the literature on women brand ambassadors in esports as well as provide implications for popular culture on how the use of women brand ambassadors in esports clubs affects fan perception and loyalty.

This research is urgent as it addresses a pivotal yet underexplored dynamic in the rapidly growing e-sports industry—namely, the representation and commodification of women Brand Ambassadors. Sometimes, we can find women as sexual object in some digital industry (Ulfa *et.al*, 2024). This research indicates that while the sexualized visualization of BAs may boost audience engagement, it often diminishes their roles to mere decorative marketing tools, obscuring their professional capabilities and meaningful contributions to their teams. This imbalance not only reinforces harmful beauty standards but also risks alienating potential female talent, thereby limiting diversity and perpetuating a narrow, unsustainable narrative within the industry. By critically examining these issues, the study seeks to inform more equitable practices that balance visual appeal with demonstrable skill and expertise, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and professionally robust e-sports culture.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of the sexual visualization of women as brand ambassadors in the e-sports industry on fan engagement and perception. This research will look at how the use women sexual visualization in brand ambassadors can influence fans perceptions, including relationship bonds with e-sport teams. This research also examines how the use of sexual visualization as a marketing strategy around the role of women in the e-sport community is influenced. Therefore, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how strategies in e-sports marketing can shape audience views.

METHOD

This study uses qualitative methods by applying ethnography. According to Gobo (2011) Ethnography is a methodology that focuses on direct observation, with interviews with

participants serving as supplementary tools to gain deeper insights into their experiences, perceptions, and behaviors within a specific cultural context. While According to Yusriani (2022), qualitative methods are more descriptive and conclusions can be drawn quite easily from the data obtained. So, this research uses an ethnographic approach applied in qualitative research, researchers collect data through direct observation and interviews with participants.

The theory used in this research is the concept of circuit of culture by Hall. The data sources in this research are in-depth interviews with 10 e-sports fans who are involved in participating in activities within the e-sport field. The data analyzed in this research are transcripts of in-depth interviews with 10 e-sports fans in the form of words, phrases, clauses and sentences. The data collection procedure in this study begins by selecting respondents who fit the criteria of the research topic by conducting a short interview. Respondents in this study were selected using purposive sampling technique with the main criteria: actively following the world of e-sports, monitoring the activities of female brand ambassadors on social media, and are students of Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya. In addition, respondents were also selected because they follow Untag's e-sports Instagram account as a form of their involvement in the e-sport community on social media, making it relevant to the research context. Before conducting in-depth interviews, researchers conducted short interviews to ensure that respondents met the criteria, such as experience interacting with the promotional content of female brand ambassadors, and were willing to provide in-depth responses for this study.

The researcher developed a semi-structured questions list consisting of 10-15 key questions to explore the respondents' perceptions, experiences, and views on sexual visualization of female brand ambassadors in e-sports, and then conducting in-depth interviews with 10 e-sports fans who actively follow the activities and promotions of women brand ambassadors on social media. The interviews were conducted in person or through online platforms to explore their views, perceptions and experiences. During the interviews, the researcher recorded each answer and then transcribed the conversation into text form.

This data will be analyzed in descriptive qualitative form to explore the views, perceptions, experiences, and impact of sexual visualization in the representation of women brand ambassadors on fans' interest, emotional engagement, and loyalty to e-sports teams. The data will be analyzed descriptively qualitatively to explore the views, perceptions, experiences and impact of sexual visualization in the representation of women brand ambassadors on fans' attraction, emotional engagement and loyalty to e-sports teams. The data in this study was analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach with the following steps, namely, transcription of interview results into text, initial coding to identify themes and patterns, and grouping data into categories based on elements of Hall's circuit of culture theory, as appropriate to the topic. These themes were analyzed in depth to understand the relationship between the sexual visualization of female brand ambassadors and respondents' attraction, emotional engagement, and loyalty to e-sports teams. The researcher ensured the validity of the data by triangulating, comparing interview results between respondents, and discussing the findings with colleagues to avoid interpretation bias, and then drawing conclusions from the in-depth explanations of the analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Descriptive Analysis of Fan Interviews on Identity, Representation, and Consumption in the Sexual Visualization of Women Brand Ambassadors in E-Sports

Researchers conducted interviews with students from Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya. Based on these interviews, researchers found 10 students from several study program at the Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya who were involved in the e-sport industry. Researchers successfully conducted interviews on how the identity and representation of women brand ambassadors in the e-sport team, as well as how the impact of BA e-sport visualization in influencing their loyalty in supporting and consuming the products they produce, that can find in Table 1.

*Table 1 Identity, Representation, and Consumption
in the Sexual Visualization of Women Brand Ambassadors in E-Sports*

| Theme | Key Insights | Examples |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Identity | Female BAs as the "face of the team," having interesting personality and visual, create image of the team | Relatable personalities, active participation in promoting a team, related content creation and joining event. |
| Representation | Challenges include overemphasis on beauty standards; opportunities lie in skill-focused portrayals. | Calls to highlight expertise, shift away from objectification. |
| Consumption | Fans' loyalty influenced by team performance and meaningful engagement rather than sexual visualization. | Merchandise purchases and attending event driven by team loyalty, not solely by BA sexual visualization. |

Identity in the Sexual Visualization of Women Brand Ambassadors in E-Sports

The findings indicate that the identity of women Brand Ambassadors in e-sports is a multifaceted construct that extends beyond mere physical appearance. According to the respondents, these ambassadors serve a dual role, functioning not only as the visual representation of their teams but also playing a pivotal part in communicating the team's core values and fostering emotional connections with fans. The identity of these individuals is shaped by a multifaceted combination of personal charisma, professional gaming skills, and dynamic social media engagement, which collectively contribute to a comprehensive branding strategy. The ambassadors' effective communication styles, leveraging of past entertainment credentials, and exhibition of genuine gaming prowess serve as critical bridges that link team values with audience expectations.

Respondent 1 explained that the identity of a women Brand Ambassador (BA) in an e-sports team is not only the face of the team, but also reflects the personality and values that the team wants to convey to the audience. he highlighted that BAs like Meyden are able to attract attention through their outspoken communication style and relatable personality to fans. For him, the identity of a women BA is not only built on physical appearance, but also the ability to create an emotional connection with the audience.

Respondent 2 explained that the identity of women Brand Ambassadors (BAs) in e-sports teams was seen by interviewees as an important part of the team's branding strategy. For example, EVOS E-sport Yuvia is recognized for her status as a former JKT48 member, which

gives her an emotional and personal attraction to fans, and BAs such as RRQ's Vonzy are seen as bringing a professional and attractive image through her fashion style and aura that reflects the team's values.

Respondent sees women Brand Ambassadors (BAs) as an important element in creating an e-sports team's identity. BAs, such as EVOS' Cindy Yuvia, are considered capable of expanding the team's reach by using her popularity and background in entertainment, such as being a former member of JKT48. For Respondent, the BA's role in building a positive image of the team through interaction with the community, promoting the value of inclusivity, and inspiring other women to get involved in e-sports is emphasized.

For respondent 4, the identity of a women Brand Ambassador (BA) in e-sports is as the face of the team that represents the team's values and image. Respondent gave an example of a BA from the Onic team named Vior who emphasizes her ability to play games. Respondent emphasized that it is important for BAs to have skills that support the team's overall image and that focusing on skills helps to create a credible BA identity, not just a visual symbol, but also an inspiration to the wider e-sports community.

For respondent 5, the identity of a women Brand Ambassador (BA) in an e-sports team is closely related to their visual appeal and their role as the promotional face of the team. He gives the example of Livy Renata, BA of Bigetron (BTR), who is considered attractive due to her beautiful looks and personality displayed on social media. Respondent sees BAs as an aspect of promotion that aims to attract audiences through visual aesthetics. Although he focuses more on the visual aspect, he still recognizes the importance of the balance between appearance and professionalism. However, he stated that appearance tends to be the main factor that determines a BA's success in attracting attention. Respondent 5 sees women BAs in e-sports as more often represented through physically attractive visualizations, often highlighting beauty and style. He also observed that women BAs are often represented with attention-grabbing imagery, especially on social media. Respondent also believes that today's women BAs often highlight their visual beauty more than their playing skills.

Respondent 6 perceives women Brand Ambassadors (BAs) in e-sports teams as the 'face of the team,' who have the responsibility of introducing the team and building a positive image through social media. One such women BA is Meyden from Bigetron E-sports (BTR), who respondent finds appealing due to her fun personality, interactivity with fans, and strong visual appeal. For respondent, a women BA's identity is not only in her looks but also in her ability to create connections with audiences through creative content such as videos on TikTok or team vlogs on YouTube.

Respondent 9 sees women Brand Ambassadors (BAs) in e-sports as important figures who serve to promote the team through various platforms. Respondent mentioned Livy Renata from Alter Ego E-sports as catching the interviewee's attention due to her innocent personality, good English communication skills, and extensive knowledge about e-sports. Respondent thinks the ideal BA is someone who is not only physically attractive but also able to represent the professional and positive values of the team they represent.

Respondent recognizes women Brand Ambassadors (BAs) in e-sports as central figures who play an important role in boosting a team's image and popularity. As an example he mentions ONIC's Vior, who is known for her goofy personality but also has good Mobile Legends gaming skills. According to respondent, identity is built from a combination of visual appeal, communication skills, and professional abilities that can create a connection with fans. She also stated that a women BA has a big responsibility in delivering relevant

messages, expressing herself, and being a positive representation for the e-sports team she represents.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the pivotal role of women Brand Ambassadors in e-sports, not only in augmenting team visibility but also in consolidating the brand's identity. While visual appeal is often sufficient to capture initial attention, it is the combination of communication skills, personal authenticity, and professional competence that cultivates lasting fan loyalty and trust. The ambassadors' embodiment of both the aesthetic and operational dimensions of their teams fosters the development of a coherent, inclusive, and relatable team image that resonates profoundly within the broader e-sports community.

Representation in the Sexual Visualization of Women Brand Ambassadors in E-Sports

The findings illustrate a recurring tension in the representation of women Brand Ambassadors in e-sports, where aesthetic appeal is often emphasized alongside, or even at the expense of, their professional competencies. The respondents emphasize that while visual appeal and adherence to beauty standards can drive initial audience engagement, an overemphasis on looks risks reinforcing harmful stereotypes and commodifying women in the industry. The prevailing argument suggests that a more balanced representation, one that equally celebrates professional expertise, active contribution, and personal charisma, is essential for empowering women and fostering diversity in e-sports.

The respondent 1 pointed out that women are often represented as visual figures or aesthetic images in e-sports. However, he suggested that women BAs should emphasize competence and ability, not just beauty. Akira also recognizes that this kind of representation can create a high standard of beauty in the e-sports industry, which can be dangerous if there is too much focus on looks.

Respondent 2 explained that women BAs are often associated with certain beauty standards in the e-sports industry. Respondent admitted that visual appeal is one of the main factors that audiences pay attention to. But he emphasized that focusing too much on beauty can be problematic, as it reinforces the negative stereotype that women in esports are only valued based on their looks. To create better representation, Respondent highlights the importance of showcasing BAs' expertise and professionalism.

According to respondent 3, women BAs are often represented through interesting visualizations and aesthetic appeal. Respondent assumed that this can have a positive impact if done in a way that empowers and demonstrates diversity in e-sports. However, he also argued that too much focus on physical appearance can reinforce strict beauty standards, putting pressure on other individuals to live up to those expectations. The ideal representation, according to respondent, is a BA who is not only visually attractive, but also actively demonstrates expertise and contribution in the industry of e-sports.

Respondent 7 understands that a women Brand Ambassador (BA) in an e-sports team serves as the team's 'centre of attention', bringing a positive image of the team through promotions, especially on social media where the charm is in the visual appearance and personality. As an example, Respondent mentioned Sze, a BA who attracts attention for her beautiful and cheerful appearance, as well as her active interaction with fans. Respondent stated that women BAs are often represented with certain beauty standards-for example, flawless skin, ideal body, and attractive appearance. However, the interviewee also emphasized that beyond visuals, a friendly demeanor and professionalism are crucial. For her, a successful BA is not only physically attractive but also has a personality that can build

positive relationships with fans and the community. Respondent sees this kind of representation as allowing BAs to be not only symbols of beauty but also professional representatives of e-sports teams. She believes that women BAs should create a more comprehensive image that can have a positive impact on the teams they represent.

Respondent 8 understands a women BA in e-sports as someone who is chosen to represent the team in various promotional activities, events, and communication with fans. As an example, she mentions BTR Alice from Bigetron team as being attractive because of her expertise in PUBG Mobile and her dedication in inspiring fans, especially women, to be more active in the e-sports world. Respondent emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between visual appeal and professional skills to reinforce the positive image of the e-sports teams they represent. According to respondent 8, women BAs are represented as positive symbols to support diversity and inclusivity in the e-sports world which, if done well, can have a huge impact in motivating more women to get involved in the industry. However, respondent also recognizes that BAs have an influence in shaping certain beauty standards. For respondent, BA's professional skills, success and dedication are more important in creating an ideal and inspiring representation.

According to Respondent 10, women as BAs are often represented through attractive visualizations such as beautiful faces and good looks, and this is considered a strategy to increase viewership and audience engagement. Respondent also stated that the representation of women BAs is often linked to the commodification of women, where visual appeal is used to attract a wide audience. However, respondent highlighted the importance of maintaining a balance between visual appeals and professional contributions. The ideal women BA representation does not only focus on physical aspects but also reflects their abilities, soft skills and hard skills in supporting the success of the team.

In summary, the study reveals that achieving an ideal representation of women Brand Ambassadors requires a distinct approach that goes beyond physical attractiveness. While aesthetic elements are undoubtedly important in attracting attention and increasing viewership, the true impact of a Brand Ambassador (BA) is ultimately determined by her ability to contribute to the team's success through her skills, professionalism, and genuine engagement with fans. Achieving this balance is not only essential to challenge beauty standards, but also to inspire a more inclusive and empowering environment within the e-sports community.

Consumption in the Sexual Visualization of Women Brand Ambassadors in E-Sports

Social media plays a significant role in shaping fans' perceptions of BA. the respondents consume products promoted by BA through social media and digital platforms, especially YouTube and live streaming of e-sports competitions, such as the *Mobile Legends Professional League* (MPL). Respondents noted that social media allows audiences to get to know BA on a deeper level, both professionally and personally. However, while social media and BA visuals can increase fan engagement, the interviewee asserted that their decision to support a team is mostly influenced by the team's performance, not the BA's visualization.

The other products that can be seen through digital platforms such as Instagram and e-sports tournaments, such as MPL. Social media is the main medium through which interviewees learn about BA, such as Vonzy and Livy Renata, who utilise the platform to build connections with audiences. While visual interest is often the first point of focus,

respondent 2 emphasised that loyalty to a team is mostly influenced by the performance and gameplay of the team itself, not just the presence of BA.

Respondent 3, 4, and 10 argue that these contents attract audiences by creating a lively atmosphere and strengthening emotional connections with fans. While visualization plays a role in enhancing initial appeal, Respondent values relevant and inspirational content more. He emphasizes that BA's charm can enhance the watching experience, although loyalty to the team is mostly influenced by the gameplay and performance of the team itself. He focused more on the overall performance and skills of the team. women BAs not only increased brand awareness but also helped popularize online gaming to a wider audience. This makes engagement with BA content one of the factors that strengthen support for the team. However, respondents 10 argues even if there is no attractive women BA in an e-sport team, it does not matter to respondent as she will still contribute in supporting the team. For respondent, the important point is the professional skills of the players in the team.

In other hand, respondent 5, 6, 7, and 9 states the visualization of BAs does not really affect respondent's loyalty to support or contribute to the activities of an e-sport team. Because he also admires male players from a team. While respondent' loyalty to the team is mostly influenced by the team's achievements, gameplay, and player interactions with fans, the presence of women BAs only adds value in creating an emotional connection with the audience.

The present study explores the role of social media in shaping the perceptions and interactions of fans with female brand ambassadors in the context of e-sports. The findings indicate that digital channels—ranging from YouTube and live-streaming events like the Mobile Legends Professional League (MPL) to Instagram—enable audiences to gain an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of BA identities. It is noteworthy that respondents have observed that the visual allure and engaging online persona of Brand Ambassadors such as Vonzy and Livy Renata initially captivate interest. However, these platforms also facilitate connections on a personal and professional level through relatable content and dynamic interactions. This enhanced engagement not only boosts brand awareness but also cultivates a lively digital atmosphere that resonates with the broader e-sports community.

However, despite the significant role that social media visuals and BA content play in drawing fan attention, the loyalty of supporters appears to be largely driven by the actual performance and gameplay of the teams. Several respondents emphasized that while attractive BA representations contribute to a positive viewing experience and foster emotional connections, they do not ultimately determine fan support or commitment. Instead, the competitive success and professional skills demonstrated by the players—and by extension, the overall team performance—are the primary factors anchoring viewer allegiance. In essence, the digital influence of women BAs acts as a complementary force to the core values of competitive performance, rather than the sole driver of loyalty in the e-sports arena.

Discussions

The impact of sexual visualization of women as brand ambassadors on fan engagement in e-sports

A brand ambassador is a figure assigned to support a product, which aims to encourage consumers to take action from a brand (Yolanda & Soesanto, 2017). According to Nurunnisha

et al. (2021) brand ambassadors significantly affect purchase intentions, especially when they are attractive and widely recognized. Based on the responses from 10 respondents, the sexual visualization of women as Brand Ambassadors (BAs) in e-sports has a diverse role in influencing fan engagement loyalty. According to Stuart Hall, consumption addresses how audiences or consumers utilize, understand and respond to the cultural representations provided to them. The following are the findings how the impact of sexual visualization of women brand ambassador for e-sport fans

Diverse Traits of Visualization

Visualization of e-sports Brand Ambassadors (BAs) is not just about physical appearance, but also includes branding, personal image, and engagement strategies. Respondents considered visualization to be a determining factor in their engagement with the team, but the impact varied. Some respondents considered visualization to be the most important aspect of brand identity. Respondent Kresna highlighted the importance of appearance to attract fans, Respondent 5 states *"Daya tariknya ya tetep pada penampilannya sih, kayak penampilan dari BA itu penampilannya menarik cantik dan kepribadian yang ditampilkan di medsos."* (The attraction is still in the appearance, like the appearance of BA's. Her appearance is attractive and beautiful and the personality displayed on social media). Similarly, respondent 6 highlighted the importance of the BA's strategic role in enhancing the team's reputation, she states, respondent 6: *"BA perempuan itu biasanya face of the team dari tim sport itu ya kak, tugas mereka nggak cuma promosiin tim, tapi juga bikin tim nya lebih dikenal sama banyak orang terutama lewat media sosial."* (BA women are usually the face of the sports team, their job is not only to promote the team, but also to make the team more recognisable to the public, especially through the media. not only promote the team, but also make the team more recognisable to many people, especially through social media.). This perspective shows that sexual visualization in e-sports is more than just a visually appealing display, but also as marketing strategy that increases fan engagement through social media presence and team promotion.

The Impact of Visualization on Fan Engagement and Loyalty

Although visualization plays a role in gaining initial attention, long-term loyalty is influenced by other factors, such as the team's performance and the BA's personality and professionalism. Respondent Akira, for example, attaches great importance to the performance aspect of his support for the team, *"Untuk saya sendiri penampilan dari brand ambassador ya tau visualisasi tidak mempengaruhi kebutuhan. Saya sih keputusan saya dalam mendukung suatu tim karena saya mendukung saat itu dengan menilai dari cara bermain tim tersebut."* (For myself, the appearance of the brand ambassador, I know that visualisation does not affect my needs. My decision in supporting a team is because I support at that time by judging from how the team plays)

Likewise with Respondent 2 in terms of balance, Respondent 2 explain that *"Untuk keseimbangan itu pasti sangat penting, karena selain penampilan yang menarik untuk membantu menciptakan daya tarik, kemampuan profesionalisme juga seperti kemampuan untuk komunikasi uh pemahaman tentang industri e-sport terutama yang mereka tekuni seperti misalnya mobile legends seperti itu penting sih untuk itu. Terutama ya untuk membangun kepercayaan dan dampak jangka panjang"* (For balance it is definitely very important, because in addition to an attractive appearance to help create attractiveness, professionalism skills are also like the ability to

communicate uh understanding of the e-sport industry, especially what they are engaged in like for example mobile legends like that is important for that. Especially yes to build trust and long-term impact)

There are respondents, though, who relate visualization to engagement. Respondent 3 said that he only follows e-sports for fun, but an appealing BA can make him more engaged in a team's content, *"banyak orang jadi tertarik gara-gara visual yang menarik dan karisma mereka. Misalnya kalau brand nama punya kaya yang keren dan konten yang seru, pasti bikin kita lebih penasaran untuk mengikuti timnya. Tapi buat aku yang cuma liat e-sport sebagai hiburan tanpa niat serius. Penampilan brand ambassador tidak terlalu berpengaruh."* (many people are attracted to them because of attractive visuals and their charisma. For example, if a brand name has cool, rich and exciting content, it definitely makes us more curious to follow their team. But for me who only sees e-sports as entertainment without serious intentions. The brand ambassador's appearance isn't too influential.). This shows that the casual viewer may be affected more by the visuals, while dedicated fans are more concerned with the team's gameplay and strategy.

The Role of Social Media in Creating Visualization

Social media reinforces the importance of visualization, helping to influence how BAs are perceived. Many of the respondents found BAs on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, where content such as behind-the-scenes clips, live streams and promotions posts contribute to the creation of a catchy image. The respondent 4 describes social media as a great branding tool which helps BAs to further establish in e-sports industry:

Respondent 4: *"Kalau menurut saya sih peran medsos ini sangat besar ya untuk membentuk sebuah persepsi karena dia akan membranding dirinya sebagai BA suatu esport tersebut."* (In my opinion, the role of social media is very large in shaping a perception, because they will brand themselves as BAs of an esport)"

Respondent 7 points out that social media has further emphasized the way in which social media permits the creation of desirability and attraction *"Menurut ku media sosial sangat berperan ya, maksudnya justru kayaknya aku gak bakal tau banyak BA kalau nggak dari media sosial gitu. Jadi peran media sosial ini sangat penting untuk strategi marketing, strategi ngebranding diri trus nge influence orang-orang"* ("I think social media plays a very important role, I mean, I don't think I would know about a lot of BA if not from social media. So the role of social media is very important for marketing strategy, branding strategy, and influencing people). This resonates with the media representation definition, in which visual identities are thoughtfully configured through the use of digital platforms to help achieve more engagement.

Commercialization of Women Brand Ambassador

The recurring running theme in the interviews was about how women in e-sports are frequently praised for their appearance over their skills. Multiple respondents admitted that this strengthens the stereotype and can ruin a BA's credibility. Respondent 1 has criticized the way female BAs are being represented at the current time *"Cara perempuan diwakilin sama brand ambassador e-sport harusnya enggak cuma sekedar gaya atau tampil cantik doang sih, tapi lebih ke menunjukkan mereka kompeten kuat dan bisa bersaing di e-sport."* (The way women are represented by e-sport brand ambassadors shouldn't just be about style or looking pretty, but more about showing they are strong, competent and can compete in e-sport)

Respondent 3 said that *"Jika hanya mengandalkan visual cenderung akan memperkuat stereotip negatif saja atau biasanya hanya dipandang sebagai objek seksual saja."* (if only relying on visuals

tends to reinforce negative stereotypes only or are usually only seen as sexual objects.) As well, Respondent 3 shows the possible risks of an over-emphasis on looks. This highlights the commodification of females in e-sports, where their role as BAs is therefore sometimes being reduced to mere aesthetics instead of their contribution.

Critique for Balancing Appearance and Professionalism

An overwhelming proportion of respondents were in agreement that a successful BA needs to balance visual appeals with their professionalism and understanding of the industry. Respondent 2 highlighted that a good BA must have both strong communicative skills and an understanding of the e-sports industries, *"Selain penampilan yang menarik untuk membantu menciptakan daya tarik, kemampuan profesionalisme juga seperti kemampuan untuk komunikasi pemahaman tentang industri e-sport terutama yang mereka tekuni"*

(In addition to an attractive appearance to help create attraction, professionalism skills also such as the ability to communicate an understanding of the e-sport industry, especially the one they are in.)

Respondent 8: *"Penampilan menarik dapat menarik perhatian awal, tetapi keterampilan profesional yang konsisten dan unggul adalah yang akan memperkuat citra dan reputasi Brand Ambassador serta timnya."* (Good appearance may attract initial attention, but consistent and excellent professional skills are what will strengthen the image and reputation of the Brand Ambassador and their team.)

Respondent 8 also argues that while attractiveness can be a marketing aid, it is their professional credibility that drives the BA's effectiveness. This is in alignment for Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, which suggests that the media constrict identities according to perceived cultural realities - in this case, the apparent tension between a sexualized marketing strategy and the push for professional legitimacy.

Excessive Beauty Standards in Women Brand Ambassador E-Sports

Many of our respondents pointed out that the standard of beauty for e-sports is very specific and exclusive. Respondent 7 has criticized the way BAs are so often supposed to fit a specific "perfect look", *"Mostly menurut aku yang dicari tuh pasti yang mulus, kurus, putih, rambutnya badai kek gitu sih menurut aku, cuma nilai plus selain itu semua basically sih ramah, karena BA itu kan bertemu dengan banyak orang ya jadi menurutku selain fisik tadi lengkap, sifat ramah itu juga perlu ada gitu di BA"*. (Mostly I think what I'm looking for is smooth, thin, white, and with good hair. In my opinion, the plus point besides all of that is basically being friendly, because BAs meet a lot of people, so in my opinion besides being physically complete, friendliness also needs to be there. with a lot of people, so in my opinion, besides being physically complete, friendliness also needs to be there.)

Respondent 3 expressed his awareness of how this has created some unrealistic expectations, *"Jika penampilan fisik menjadi fokus utama, hal ini bisa menimbulkan tekanan bagi individu lain dalam industri untuk memenuhi ekspektasi tersebut."* (If physical appearance is the main focus, this can create pressure for other individuals in the industry to fulfil these expectations.). These responses have emphasized the necessity for the representation of more inclusive women in e-sports, breaking away from the strict beauty standards and heading towards the representation of diverse talents and personality traits.

Product Consumption

Fans are noted that visual strategies influence merchandise consumption and participation in events. In this case, consumption involved concrete actions, such as buying merchandise or attending events. However, the main motivation was still motivated by their love for the e-sports team, not just the physical appeal of the BA. This shows that the visual sexuality of a BA does not affect their loyalty to contribute and consume products produced by women BAs. They also explained that even if there were no attractive women BAs, they would still contribute to a team because for them the skills of the team players are more important.

Respondent 5 said *Ya, waktu itu pada sebuah turnamen di Galaxy Mall, turnamen Mobile Legend disitu saya tertarik mau beli merchandise nya karena BA nya menarik dan menarik kita untuk membeli merchandisenya gitu.* (Yes, at a tournament in Galaxy Mall, a Mobile Legends tournament, I was interested in buying the merchandise because the BA was attractive, and she made us want to buy it. Meanwhile respondent 6 said *Tapi sejujurnya sepenuhnya gak ngaruh ke loyalitas, apalagi aku suka games ya. Aku bakal tetep ngedukung tim yang punya mainnya bagus atau punya strategi bagus. Tapi kalau ada BA cewek itu jadi plus gitu.* (Honestly, it doesn't fully influence my loyalty. Since I really like games, I will still support teams that play well or have great strategies. But if there's a female BA, that's definitely a bonus. Respondent 2 said, *Oke, uh, walau enggak ada BA ya. Aku akan tetap berkontribusi sih karena memang gimana ya? Uh, walau enggak ada BA itu sebenarnya enggak masalah sekarang.* (Okay, uh, even if there is no BA, I will still contribute because how is it? Uh, even if there is no BA, it doesn't really matter now.)

The discussion revealed that the visualization of brand ambassadors in esports is a complex and multi-faceted enquiry. While appearance may play a large part in initial attraction, long-term engagement is dependent on interaction, professionalism and trust. Social media reinforces both positive as well as problematic aspects of visualization, helping BAs connect with fans while also reinforcing gender-based expectations and stereotypes. Besides that, visual sexuality of a BA does not affect fans loyalty to contribute and consume products produced by women BAs.

Most interviewees admitted the need for balance, emphasizing that BA should not be reduced to a visual commodity but instead should be appreciated for their knowledge, skills and their contribution to the industry. Going ahead, esports organizations must rethink the way female BAs are represented and make sure their visibility is not a restricting factor, but rather a means to increase engagement and inclusivity.

Fans/people think of the use of women's sexual visualization as brand ambassadors in e-sport

Identity is reflexive of a person when he/she can perceive himself/herself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name himself/herself in a certain way in relation to other social categories or classifications (Hogg and Abrams 1988). In the e-sport industry, the identity of women brand ambassadors is often associated with their attractive sexual visuals. Sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman's body, body parts or sexual functions are separated from herself, reduced to just an object, or deemed capable of representing herself (Bartky, 1990). Therefore, objectification, especially on women, can have various impacts on women themselves. According to Rebecca, et al. (2022) the use of brand ambassadors has positive and significant impact on brand image. Based on the responses from the 10 e-sport fan respondents, fans reflect diverse views on identity and how women BAs are represented through the use of sexual visualization.

Fans Perception of Women Brand Ambassadors

The findings reveal that women Brand Ambassadors (BAs) in esports are primarily perceived as the public face of their teams, a role akin to that of a public relations representative in traditional fields. Respondents pointed out that BAs embody the team's identity, acting as the visual symbol that communicates the essence and values of the team to a broader audience. This representation is largely driven by the expectation of a striking, attractive appearance, where the visual appeal of BAs is often described as "beautiful" or even "sexy" plays a pivotal role in drawing audience interest and enhancing team visibility.

However, this overemphasis on physical attractiveness carries significant drawbacks. Fans and respondents alike highlighted that reducing women BAs to mere visual objects reinforces harmful beauty standards and perpetuates negative stereotypes about women in esports. When a BA's identity is predominantly defined by her looks, it not only undermines her professional contributions and skills but also contributes to a skewed narrative that values superficial appearance over competence. This imbalance restricts the broader recognition of women as capable and skilled professionals, ultimately limiting the potential for more meaningful and diverse representations in the esports industry.

Some respondents that have been gotten from the respondents, as respondent 3 argues *Untuk BA tim esport itu sebuah wajah dari tim sport tersebut, jadi dia mewakili dari tim nya itu sendiri, jadi kayak misalnya dia bagian kalau di ilkom itu misalnya PR ya.* (For esports BAs, they represent the face of the team, meaning they embody the team's image. For example, in communication science it's like a PR.) Other, respondent 5 argues *Menurut ku itu untuk mempromosikan tim tersebut agar lebih tertarik gitu. Kayak melihat BA yang cantik-cantik dan BA biasanya seksi gitu, itu membuat penonton lebih tertarik melihat tim tersebut. (I think their role is to promote the team and make it more interesting. Like seeing a beautiful and sometimes sexy BA makes viewers more interested in the team).* Differently, Respondent 5 said that *Skill nya harus sih, tapi menurut ku itu tidak terlalu penting jika dirinya sudah good looking (Skill is important, but in my opinion, it's not that crucial if they already have good looks.).*

Women BAs are recognized as the face of the team, which is synonymous with attractive visual appearance. The depictions of women BAs that over-emphasize physical aspects. Fans highlighted that an excessive focus on physical beauty reinforces harmful beauty standards and perpetuates negative stereotypes of women in e-sports. According to them, the identities of women BAs are reduced to visual objects, which overrides their professional roles and skills. This creates the perception that their presence is based solely on physical attractiveness. This image is not only unbalanced but also limits the representation of women in e-sports as competent professionals, reinforcing the narrative that beauty is more important than their actual contributions.

Representation and Empowerment of Women Brand Ambassadors

The findings highlight that a balanced representation of women Brand Ambassadors (BAs) is critical in the esports industry, where both visual appeal and professional competence play complementary roles. Respondent 3 emphasizes that while aesthetic attractiveness garners initial interest from fans, it is the demonstration of solid expertise and reliable knowledge that ultimately builds credibility and trust. This synergy ensures that BAs are not merely ornamental figures but are respected for their ability to promote teams and products effectively. In this light, maintaining a balance between a striking visual presence

and notable professional abilities is essential, as it allows BAs to sustain a healthy image and cement a lasting impact with fans.

Moreover, the findings suggest that a more balanced representation of women BAs can play an empowering role, fostering a positive narrative in the esports community. Respondent 8 and Respondent 6 highlight that when BAs transcend being just decorative elements and actively contribute to the gaming community, they serve as inspiring role models for other women. This shift in representation not only challenges the reductionist views that equate women solely with their looks but also enriches the industry's narrative by celebrating competence, commitment, and active community engagement. By integrating these multidimensional qualities, women BAs can empower their peers and help pave the way for greater inclusion and diversity within the field.

Respondent 3 explains *Menurut saya keseimbangan Antara penampilan visual dan kemampuan profesional pada brand ambassador itu sangat penting. Di era sekarang visualisasi memang memainkan peran peran besar. Orang orang cenderung lebih tertarik pada kecantikan dan daya tarik fisik. Namun kemampuan profesional juga tidak kalah penting pada masa yang hanya menggunakan tampilan tanpa menunjukkan kompetensi atau pengetahuan dalam bidangnya bisa kehilangan kredibilitasnya. Ketika mereka memiliki komunikasi yang baik Antara visual yang menarik dan keahlian yang mumpuni itu menciptakan kesehatan yang kuat dan dapat membangun kepercayaan penggemar. Dengan demikian, BA bisa lebih efektif dalam mempromosikan tim dan produk serta menginspirasi penggemar dengan kemampuan mereka. Keseimbangan ini dapat menciptakan citra yang lebih positif dan mendalam dalam dunia e-sport.* (I think balancing visual appearance and professional skills for a brand ambassador is very important. In today's era, visualization plays a major role. People tend to be more attracted to beauty and physical appeal. However, professional skills are equally important. A brand ambassador who relies only on their looks without showing competence or knowledge in their field could lose credibility. When they effectively balance attractive visuals with strong expertise, it creates a solid foundation of trust among fans. This balance helps the brand ambassador be more effective in promoting the team and products while inspiring fans with their skills.)

Respondent 8 said that *Ya, tentu saja. Terutama jika mereka mampu menghadirkan representasi yang positif dan menginspirasi untuk perempuan di industri e-sports.* (yes of course. especially if they are able to present a positive and inspiring representation for women in the e-sport industry. Respondent 6 adds *Tapi ada juga yang Cuma dijadikan pajangan aja yang mungkin kesannya kurang adil gitu. Idealnya kan BA nggak Cuma sekedar penampilan, missal dia juga bisa berkontribusi di komunitas gaming itu juga penting buat BA nya gitu.* (But sometimes they are just used as decoration, which feels unfair. Ideally, a BA should not only focus on appearance but also contribute to the gaming community, which is important for a BA.)

Fans felt that a balanced representation of women BAs should combine professionalism, skills and visual appeal empowering women and creating a more positive narrative. They argued that currently, many women BAs are only used as displays because they are visually beautiful and attractive, but their contribution to the team game is less. Therefore, they believe that with balanced representation, BAs can build a stronger identity as competent individuals who have more value than just physical appearance. This representation allows BAs to be seen as role models, not just aesthetic figures, which can inspire other women to enter the e-sports industry.

Commodification of Women in E-Sports

The commodification reveals a critical tension in the representation of women Brand Ambassadors (BAs) in the e-sport industry, particularly concerning the balance between commodification and authentic contribution. While some respondents argue that the sexualized visualization of BAs—reducing them to mere decorative and marketing tools—can be effective in driving viewership and engagement, there is widespread concern that such practices undermine the professional potential of these ambassadors. These perceptions not only impact how current BAs are viewed but also shape the aspirations of future women entering the industry.

As Respondent 6 discuss about *Tapi ada juga yang Cuma dijadiin pajangan aja yang mungkin kesannya kurang adil gitu. Idealnya kan BA nggak Cuma sekedar penampilan, missal dia juga bisa berkontribusi di komunitas gaming itu juga penting buat BA nya gitu.* (But sometimes they are just used as decoration, which feels unfair. Ideally, a BA should not only focus on appearance but also contribute to the gaming community, which is important for a BA.). Respondent 10 argues *Menurut saya, segala sesuatu yang berkaitan dengan komodifikasi perempuan dapat digunakan sebagai strategi untuk meningkatkan jumlah penonton dan keterlibatan.* (in my opinion anything related to the commodification of women can be used as a strategy to increase viewership and engagement). Respondent 1 explains *Menurut saya brand ambassador besar di e-sport mempunyai pengaruh gede soal standar kecantikan atau dari tarik. Tapi kalau terlalu fokus ke penampilan bisa bahaya lebih bagus kalau mereka bisa tunjukkan skill dan profesionalisme, biar jadi inspirasi buat orang ga cuma soal fisik.* (In my opinion, major Brand Ambassadors in e-sports have a big influence on beauty or attractiveness standards. However, if the focus is too much on appearance, it can be harmful. It would be better if they showcased their skills and professionalism to inspire people beyond just physical appearance.)

Several respondents highlighted that an overemphasis on physical appearance risks reducing women BAs to superficial marketing objects rather than acknowledging their professional expertise and genuine contributions to the gaming community. Respondent 1 cautions that if the focus remains solely on beauty standards, it can be detrimental by alienating audiences and potential talents who are looking for substantive roles within e-sports. This commodification, while possibly increasing initial audience engagement, ultimately fails to promote sustainable respect or inspire others—thus contradicting the broader values of professionalism and collaboration that underpin the industry.

Other respondents, such as Respondent 6 and Respondent 10, further accentuate the inherent problems with viewing women only as decorations for market appeal. They stress that while the use of sexualized imagery might serve as a strategy to boost viewership, it creates an unfair standard that sidelines other essential qualities like skill, expertise, and community contribution. When BAs are primarily judged on their looks, it not only perpetuates narrow, often harmful beauty ideals but also sends a discouraging message to aspiring women in e-sports—implying that conformity to these standards is paramount. As a result, such practices may inadvertently reduce diversity and curtail the broader development of a more inclusive and professionally driven e-sport culture.

Some fans are aware of the commodification of the use of women BAs in the e-sport industry, they feel that the sexualized visualization of women often reduces BAs to just a visual marketing tool. The commodification of BAs creates a representation of women simply as marketing objects, without reflecting their real contribution to e-sports. Women who are interested in entering the world of e-sports may feel alienated if they do not conform to the

set standards of beauty, thus reducing diversity in this community. Fans have also criticized this method because it does not reflect the values of professionalism and collaboration expected in e-sports.

CONCLUSION

The use of women sexual visualization as Brand Ambassadors (BAs) in the e-sports industry has diverse effects on fan engagement and perception. For fans, sexual visual plays role to create diverse traits of visualization in attracting attention and raising awareness of e-sports teams. Social media has become an important tool in image building and increasing fan engagement, although it often also reinforces stereotypes of excessive beauty standards. Fan engagement and loyalty is more influenced by the team's performance, achievements, as well as meaningful interactions made by BA through engaging content and communication on social media. In addition, visual strategies also influence consumption of products such as merchandise and participation in events, but the primary motivation of fans is still based on the immersion in their teams and games, not based on the sexual visualization of brand ambassadors. In the context fans perception, they determine that a BA is the face of the team who has a role to play in attracting fans, but they criticize that women in the e-sport industry is too focused on the physical aspect, which leads to negative stereotypes and unfair beauty standards. Many argue that a balanced women BA is that highlights professionalism and skills instead of visual appeal, which would create a more positive and empowering image for women in the e-sports industry. Moreover, fans are also aware of the commodification of women as a marketing tool, which can decrease the value of their professional contributions and prevent diversity in the e-sports community. Thus, this research highlights the importance of balancing the visualization and professional skills of women BAs in the esport industry to increase engagement and more positive perceptions from fans. Suggestions for further research could explore how highlighting the professionalism and skills of female BAs affects fan perception and engagement compared to a focus on physical visualization. In addition, it is important to analyze the impact of focusing on visualization on gender diversity and inclusivity in the e-sports industry, as well as conduct cross-cultural comparison studies to understand how social norms influence views on the role and visualization of female BAs. The research could also examine alternative marketing strategies that emphasize professional contributions and skills over visualization to increase fan engagement in a more positive and sustainable manner.

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