

# K-Pop Brand Ambassador Effects on Brand Image and Purchase Intention: Evidence from Fandom Consumers

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## ABSTRACT

The Korean Wave phenomenon has transformed global marketing landscapes, compelling firms to leverage celebrity endorsement strategies aligned with evolving consumer cultural preferences. Despite growing adoption of K-pop brand ambassadors, prior research reports mixed findings regarding celebrity endorsement effectiveness on brand outcomes and consumer behavior, particularly regarding the boundary conditions under which endorsement succeeds within culturally congruent contexts. This study examines the influence of brand ambassador on brand image and purchase intention within a K-pop fandom consumer segment in Indonesia. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, collecting primary data from 108 purposively sampled consumers comprising Seventeen fan community members who had purchased Indomilk Authentic Korean Flavour products. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression. The findings reveal that brand ambassador engagement demonstrates substantial positive effects on both brand image and purchase intention, with stronger influence observed on behavioral responses compared to perceptual outcomes. Theoretically, this study extends celebrity endorsement literature by providing segment-specific evidence of endorsement effectiveness within culturally congruent marketing contexts where fandom identification may amplify consumer responsiveness. Practically, findings provide evidence-based guidance for marketing practitioners regarding K-pop celebrity endorsement strategies targeting youth demographics with high cultural affinity. The study acknowledges sample limitations and suggests future research incorporating mediation mechanisms and broader consumer segments.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The globalization of popular culture has fundamentally transformed contemporary marketing landscapes, with the Korean Wave (Hallyu) emerging as one of the most influential cultural exports of the twenty-first century. This phenomenon—marked by the cross-border diffusion of Korean entertainment, fashion, and lifestyle—has reshaped consumer tastes and market demand in many countries, including

Indonesia, where exposure to Korean cultural content is empirically associated with stronger purchase intentions toward Korean-linked products (Tjoe & Kim, 2016). The economic magnitude of Hallyu extends beyond entertainment revenues by generating spillover effects for consumer goods industries, as brands increasingly incorporate Korean cultural cues to enhance brand appeal and relevance. In Indonesia, these dynamics are particularly pronounced among

younger consumers, encouraging fast-moving consumer goods companies to recalibrate promotional strategies to align with evolving aspirations and cultural affinities (Tjoe & Kim, 2016).

This paradigm shift compels firms to reorient brand communication and endorsement strategies, making brand image and purchase intention central outcomes in competitive markets. Brand image can be understood as the set of brand associations held in consumer memory that shape how a brand is perceived and evaluated (Keller, 1993). As a strategic asset, brand image differentiates products from competitors and helps build trust and preference. Meanwhile, Purchase intention represents consumers' expressed willingness to acquire a product following information processing and evaluation of alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2016). For firms operating in saturated markets such as the Indonesian dairy industry—where multiple established brands compete for attention—the use of celebrity endorsers that resonate with target segments has become a strategic imperative (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Accordingly, this study examines how brand ambassador engagement influences brand image and purchase intention through the mechanisms of popularity, credibility, attractiveness, and persuasive power.

Brand ambassadors are individuals or groups appointed to represent and communicate a brand's values to the public, functioning as intermediaries who shape consumer perceptions and stimulate buying-related responses (Lea-Greenwood, 2012; Firmansyah, 2019). Through celebrity endorsement mechanisms, ambassadors may transfer personal meanings—such as familiarity, expertise cues, and likability—to the endorsed brand, thereby influencing consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Shimp, 2010). The effectiveness of brand ambassadors can be explained using the VisCAP perspective—visibility (popularity / recognition), credibility (trustworthiness / expertise cues), attraction (likability / appeal), and power (capacity to persuade or influence compliance)—which helps clarify why some celebrity endorsements strengthen brand outcomes while others do not (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012). These mechanisms collectively determine whether endorsement investments translate into tangible branding and commercial outcomes.

Brand image is formed through consumers' experiences, exposure to information, and the associative networks built in memory over time (Keller, 1993). In this context, brand image strength reflects how firmly associations are embedded; uniqueness indicates distinct associations that set the brand apart; and favorability denotes positive evaluations that support preference and choice (Keller, 1993). When brand ambassadors successfully communicate brand meanings and trigger positive associations, these associations may be integrated into consumers' brand knowledge structures, thereby

enhancing competitive positioning and preference (Keller, 1993).

Purchase intention encompasses the cognitive-behavioral sequence in which consumers recognize needs, search and evaluate alternatives, and ultimately select a product and brand for purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Peter & Olson, 2010). It also involves concrete decision facets such as brand choice, timing, quantity, and payment method, which together operationalize purchase behavior in the marketplace (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The relationship between brand ambassador effectiveness and purchase intention may occur directly through persuasion and indirectly through an improved brand image that increases perceived value and confidence in choice (Keller, 1993; Kotler & Keller, 2016). This logic is increasingly relevant in contemporary endorsement environments where persuasive influence is also shaped by perceived credibility and recommendation dynamics in digital contexts (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

Prior research examining brand ambassador effects on brand image and purchase intention reports mixed findings, suggesting contextual contingencies that warrant further investigation. Some studies demonstrate positive endorsement effects within Indonesian e-commerce contexts when accompanied by trust mechanisms (Nurhasanah et al., 2021; Kausarani & Sulaeman, 2023), while others indicate that effectiveness depends critically on endorser-brand congruence, where misalignment yields weak or negative outcomes (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012; Till & Busler, 2000). However, existing research predominantly examines general consumer populations, leaving underexplored the question of whether endorsement effectiveness differs systematically among high-involvement consumer segments characterized by strong cultural identification with endorsers. Specifically, fandom consumers who possess parasocial relationships with celebrity endorsers may exhibit amplified responsiveness to endorsement cues compared to general audiences (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This segment-specific boundary condition remains insufficiently tested, particularly within emerging market contexts where cultural congruence between K-pop endorsers and Korean-themed products creates natural alignment. Understanding these conditional effects addresses the inconsistency in prior findings and clarifies when celebrity endorsement generates meaningful brand and behavioral outcomes.

This study advances the literature by providing segment-specific evidence of celebrity endorsement effectiveness within a theoretically justified boundary condition—culturally congruent marketing targeting fandom consumers. Unlike prior studies examining general populations where endorser effects may be diluted by heterogeneous audience characteristics (Knoll & Matthes, 2017), this research focuses on

consumers with established cultural identification, enabling cleaner estimation of endorsement mechanisms under favorable conditions. The theoretical contribution lies in demonstrating that the endorsement-outcome relationship operates with substantial magnitude within high-involvement segments. This extends the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989) by clarifying how global cultural phenomena, such as the Korean Wave, interact with local consumption dynamics to drive brand image and purchase intention (Tjoe & Kim, 2016). Methodologically, the study employs respondents with verified product consumption experience, enhancing ecological validity beyond hypothetical scenario designs prevalent in prior research (Hung, 2014).

The research motivation arises from the convergence of theoretical gaps and practical imperatives. Mixed empirical evidence on brand ambassador effectiveness highlights the need for context-specific testing to identify the conditions under which celebrity endorsement improves brand perceptions and purchase outcomes (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012). Practically, clearer insight into these pathways can guide resource allocation for endorsement investments and campaign design in culturally infused markets (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

This study pursues two objectives: first, to examine the direct effects of brand ambassador engagement on brand image in the Indonesian dairy market; and second, to test the direct effects of brand ambassador engagement on consumer purchase intentions for Korean-themed product variants within a fandom consumer segment (Keller, 1993; Kotler & Keller, 2016). The anticipated contributions span theoretical, practical, and contextual domains by clarifying how ambassador attributes—popularity/visibility, credibility, attractiveness, and persuasive power—shape both perceptual and behavioral consumer outcomes in cultural marketing contexts (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012).

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations

This study draws on Source Credibility Theory, Brand Knowledge/Association Theory, and stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) logic to explain how a brand ambassador shapes brand image and purchase intention. Source Credibility Theory posits that persuasive impact depends on the communicator's perceived expertise and trustworthiness, implying that credible endorsers can strengthen message acceptance and evaluation of the endorsed brand (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). Brand Knowledge/Association Theory argues that consumer responses are driven by brand knowledge stored in memory; brand image is built through associations

that are favorable, strong, and unique, and these associations can be influenced by marketing communications and endorsement cues (Keller, 1993).

In celebrity endorsement contexts, the Meaning Transfer Model explains that cultural meanings attached to celebrities can move to brands and subsequently to consumers, making brand ambassadors strategic carriers of symbolic value that can enrich brand associations (McCracken, 1989). In addition, the VisCAP framework (visibility, credibility, attraction, and power) provides a practical lens for evaluating endorser effectiveness and clarifies why certain celebrity–brand pairings persuade while others fail due to poor “fit” (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012). Finally, consumer responses can be interpreted through S–O–R logic, where promotional stimuli (S) influence internal states (O) such as attitudes and perceptions, which then shape behavioral responses (R) including purchase intentions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

The theoretical integration suggests that brand ambassador effects may operate through dual pathways: directly influencing purchase intentions via persuasion mechanisms, and indirectly through enhanced brand image serving as a cognitive–evaluative mediator. While the present study tests direct relationships as primary hypotheses, the theoretical logic implies potential mediation warranting future investigation. The focus on fandom consumers provides a theoretically motivated boundary condition where endorser credibility and cultural identification are maximized, enabling estimation of endorsement effects under favorable conditions.

Based on this reasoning, the hypotheses are developed as follows.

### 2.2 Brand Ambassador and Brand Image

A brand ambassador refers to an individual or group appointed by a firm to represent and communicate brand values, serving as a symbolic interface between the brand and consumers. In endorsement research, ambassador effectiveness is commonly operationalized through perceived credibility (expertise and trustworthiness) and attractiveness, which together influence consumers' attitudes toward the ad and brand evaluations (Ohanian, 1990). From a managerial and fit-based perspective, ambassador effectiveness is also explained through visibility/recognition and the persuasive capacity of the presenter in the advertising context (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012).

The relationship between brand ambassador and brand image operates through several mechanisms. First, meaning transfer suggests that endorsers can inject symbolic meanings into the brand, shaping how consumers interpret and remember brand-related cues (McCracken, 1989). Second, brand knowledge theory

implies that repeated exposure to endorser cues can strengthen brand associations in memory, thereby improving the favorability, strength, and uniqueness of brand image (Keller, 1993). Third, endorsement outcomes depend on perceived fit; when endorser attributes align with product/category expectations, the endorsement is more likely to enhance brand beliefs and attitudes (Till & Busler, 2000; Rossiter & Smidts, 2012).

Empirically, prior studies generally support that credible endorsers can build brand credibility and reinforce consumer-based brand evaluations, which are closely linked to stronger brand equity outcomes (Spry et al., 2011). In Korean Wave–related consumption contexts, evidence also suggests that cultural exposure can strengthen receptivity to Korean-linked products in Indonesia, providing a plausible pathway for ambassador-led cultural cues to enhance brand perceptions (Tjoe & Kim, 2016).

**H1:** Brand ambassador has a positive effect on brand image.

### 2.3 Brand Ambassador and Purchase intention

Purchase intention reflects the stage in which consumers evaluate alternatives and decide whether to buy a product/brand; it can be observed through decisions such as brand choice, purchase timing, purchase amount, and payment method (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Brand ambassadors may influence these decisions through (1) persuasion based on credibility and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990), (2) symbolic/identity-based motivations consistent with meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989), and (3) fit-driven evaluation effects that shape purchase intentions (Till & Busler, 2000).

Under S–O–R logic, brand ambassador exposure functions as an external stimulus (S) that shapes internal evaluations (O)—such as perceived quality, trust, and brand attitudes—leading to behavioral responses (R) such as purchase intention and actual purchase intentions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In cultural marketing contexts, Korean Wave exposure has also been shown to influence purchase intention toward Korean products in Indonesia, indicating that culturally resonant endorsers may intensify consumer motivation and reduce psychological distance to the product (Tjoe & Kim, 2016). Moreover, endorsement-driven credibility can strengthen brand credibility and thereby improve consumer-based evaluations associated with downstream purchasing responses (Spry et al., 2011).

**H2:** Brand ambassador has a positive effect on purchase intention.

### 2.4 Control Variables

Beyond the focal constructs, this study acknowledges that respondent demographic characteristics including gender, age, occupation, domicile, and fan community membership duration

may shape differential exposure, receptivity to celebrity cues, cultural consumption intensity, and purchasing power. Due to the homogeneous sample composition (predominantly female students aged 21–25), these variables exhibited insufficient variance for meaningful statistical control. Consequently, the analysis focuses on bivariate relationships while acknowledging demographic homogeneity as a scope condition that may influence external validity. Future research with more heterogeneous samples should incorporate these controls to isolate endorsement effects from demographic confounds.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

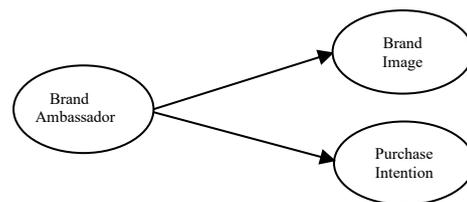


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework guiding this study. Brand ambassador is modeled as the independent variable and captured through endorser effectiveness cues commonly discussed in endorsement literature (e.g., credibility/attractiveness and presenter effectiveness) (Ohanian, 1990; Rossiter & Smidts, 2012). Brand image is conceptualized as consumer-based brand knowledge reflected in association favorability, strength, and uniqueness (Keller, 1993). Purchase intention is treated as the consumer’s selection outcome following evaluation among alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The framework posits direct positive relationships from brand ambassador to brand image (H1) and to purchase intention (H2), with demographic controls included to strengthen model specification.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative positivist design using a cross-sectional survey approach to test the proposed hypotheses. The research employs explanatory methodology to examine causal relationships between variables (Sugiyono, 2017). The unit of analysis is individual consumers—specifically members of the Seventeen fan community (Carat) in Indonesia—who have consumed Indomilk Authentic Korean Flavour products. The empirical strategy is designed to estimate the direct effects of brand ambassador on brand image and purchase intention, while controlling for demographic characteristics including gender, age, occupation, domicile, and fan community membership duration. This design enables assessment of hypothesized

relationships within a real consumption context where respondents have experienced both the brand ambassador stimulus through promotional exposure and actual product consumption.

### 3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises members of the Seventeen fan community (Carat) in Indonesia who have purchased and consumed Indomilk Authentic Korean Flavour products. This population was identified through social media platform Twitter, yielding 147 identifiable individuals meeting the inclusion criteria.

Respondents were selected via non-probability purposive sampling to ensure theoretical relevance to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). This sampling strategy is appropriate when investigating specific population segments with defined characteristics rather than seeking population-level generalization. Selection criteria included: (1) prior purchase experience with Indomilk Authentic Korean Flavour products; (2) awareness of K-pop, particularly Seventeen; and (3) active membership in Seventeen fan communities on social media platforms.

The final sample comprised 108 respondents, representing 73.5% of the identified population. This sample size exceeds minimum thresholds for regression analysis, which recommend at least 50 observations plus 8 times the number of predictors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), and satisfies the 10:1 subject-to-variable ratio commonly recommended for multivariate analyses (Hair et al., 2019).

The purposive sampling approach and fandom-specific population define this study's scope conditions. Findings represent endorsement effects within a high-involvement consumer segment characterized by cultural identification with endorsers, rather than generalizable effects across the broader Indonesian dairy market. This segment-specific focus is theoretically motivated, as fandom consumers constitute an important target market for culturally themed products and provide insight into endorsement effectiveness under favorable boundary conditions.

Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms and disseminated across social media platforms including WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter during April–August 2025. The questionnaire comprised three sections: respondent demographic profiles, brand ambassador assessment items, and outcome variable measurement items.

Prior to main data collection, instrument quality was established through validity and reliability testing. Content validity was ensured through item construction based on established theoretical dimensions from prior literature. Construct validity was assessed using Pearson Product Moment

correlation, comparing  $r$ -calculated values against  $r$ -table thresholds (0.189 for  $n=108$  at  $\alpha=0.05$ ). All items across brand ambassador (12 items), brand image (9 items), and purchase intention (18 items) constructs demonstrated  $r$ -calculated values exceeding the critical threshold, confirming item validity. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with  $\alpha \geq 0.60$  as the acceptability threshold (Sugiyono, 2017). Results indicated satisfactory reliability: brand ambassador ( $\alpha = 0.834$ ), brand image ( $\alpha = 0.774$ ), and purchase intention ( $\alpha = 0.845$ ). These values exceed conventional benchmarks, indicating acceptable measurement consistency across all constructs.

To further enhance data quality and mitigate potential common method bias, several procedural controls were implemented. First, respondent anonymity was assured to encourage candid responses. Second, questionnaire items were presented in randomized order within each construct block to reduce response pattern effects. Third, construct-specific instructions were provided to create psychological separation between predictor and criterion measures (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Fourth, the questionnaire included an attention check item to identify careless responding; no respondents were excluded based on this criterion.

Finally, a post-hoc assessment of common method variance was conducted using Harman's single-factor test. Unrotated principal component analysis of all measurement items yielded a first factor explaining 28.4% of total variance, which is well below the 50% threshold indicating problematic common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). While Harman's test has limitations, this result, combined with the procedural controls, suggests that common method variance does not pose a substantial threat to the study's findings.

### 3.4 Variable Definition and Measurement

All constructs were measured using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 1 presents the operational definitions and measurement specifications for each variable.

**Table 1. Variable Operationalization**

Variable	Definition	Dimensions / Indicators	Items
Brand Ambassador	Individual or group selected to represent and promote brand values to the public,	Popularity, Credibility, Attractiveness, Power	12
Rosster & Percy (1997)	-serving as intermediary between company and consumers		
Brand Image	Consumer perceptions and associations toward a brand stored in memory, reflecting how consumers view and feel about the brand	Strength, Uniqueness, Favorability	9
Kotler & Keller (2016)			

Purchase intention	Consumers' expressed willingness to acquire a product following evaluation of alternatives.	Product choice, Brand selection, Dealer preference, Purchase timing, Purchase quantity, Payment method	18
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Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

Brand Ambassador captures the perceived effectiveness of Seventeen members (S.Coups, Wonwoo, Vernon) as Indomilk endorsers. Popularity items assess ambassador visibility and public recognition. Credibility items measure perceived expertise and trustworthiness regarding product recommendations. Attractiveness items evaluate physical appeal and personality congruence with brand identity. Power items assess ability to inspire and motivate purchase behavior.

Brand Image measures consumer perceptions of Indomilk Authentic Korean Flavour resulting from brand ambassador engagement. Strength items assess recall intensity and memorability of brand associations. Uniqueness items capture distinctive attributes differentiating the brand from competitors. Favorability items measure positive evaluations and consumer preferences toward the brand.

Purchase intention captures consumer behavioral responses toward product acquisition. Product choice items assess alignment between product attributes and consumer needs. Brand selection items measure preference formation based on reputation and personal alignment. Dealer preference items evaluate distribution channel convenience. Purchase timing items assess temporal decision factors. Purchase quantity items measure volume intentions. Payment method items capture transaction preference.

Control Variables include gender (binary: male=0, female=1), age (categorical: 18-20, 21-25, 26-30, >30 years), occupation (categorical: student, employee, entrepreneur, other), domicile (binary: Jakarta=1, other=0), and fan membership duration (categorical: <1 year, 1-2 years, >2 years).

### 3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis employed IBM SPSS Statistics 25 following a sequential analytical strategy. Descriptive statistics characterized respondent profiles and variable distributions. Assumption testing for linear regression included: (1) normality assessment using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test applied to standardized residuals; (2) homoscedasticity evaluation through residual plots; (3) linearity verification through deviation-from-linearity tests; and (4) multicollinearity diagnosis using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) criteria for any extended models.

Hypothesis testing employed simple linear regression analysis to estimate direct effects. The regression models are specified as follows:

**Model 1** (Brand Ambassador → Brand Image):

$$BI = \alpha_1 + \beta_1(BA) + \epsilon_1$$

**Model 2** (Brand Ambassador → Purchase intention):

$$PI = \alpha_2 + \beta_2(BA) + \epsilon_2$$

Where BI represents Brand Image, PI represents Purchase Intention, BA represents Brand Ambassador,  $\alpha$  denotes the intercept constant,  $\beta$  indicates the regression coefficient, and  $\epsilon$  represents the error term.

Statistical significance was evaluated at  $\alpha = 0.05$  using two-tailed t-tests for individual coefficient significance and F-tests for overall model significance. Effect magnitude was assessed through coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) indicating variance explained. Given the cross-sectional survey design, autocorrelation testing (e.g., Durbin-Watson) was not applicable as this diagnostic applies to time-series or panel data structures.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Results

#### 4.1.1 Respondent Characteristics

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of 108 respondents. The sample predominantly comprises female respondents (92.6%), reflecting the gender composition typical of K-pop fan communities. Age distribution reveals concentration in the 21-25 years category (89.8%), with smaller proportions in 18-20 years (8.3%) and above 30 years (1.9%). Occupationally, students dominate the sample (90.7%), followed by employees (4.6%), entrepreneurs (0.9%), and others (3.7%). Geographic distribution indicates Jakarta residents constitute the majority (83.3%). Fan community membership duration shows balanced distribution: 1-2 years (43.5%), more than 2 years (33.3%), and less than 1 year (23.1%).

**Table 2. Respondent Demographics**

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	8	7.4%
	Female	100	92.6%
Age	18-20 years	9	8.3%
	21-25 years	97	89.8%
	26-30 years	0	0.0%
	>30 years	2	1.9%
Occupation	Student	98	90.7%
	Employee	5	4.6%
	Entrepreneur	1	0.9%
	Other	4	3.7%
Domicile	Jakarta	90	83.3%
	Non-Jakarta	18	16.7%
Fan Duration	<1 year	25	23.1%
	1-2 years	47	43.5%
	>2 years	36	33.3%

Note: n=108; Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

#### 4.1.2 Variable Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 summarizes descriptive statistics for the study variables. Brand ambassador demonstrates a

mean of 48.44 (SD = 5.765) from a maximum possible score of 60, indicating generally favorable perceptions of Seventeen as endorsers. The negative skewness (-0.544) suggests left-skewed distribution with responses clustering toward higher values. Brand image exhibits a mean of 36.34 (SD = 4.394) from maximum 45, reflecting positive brand perceptions. Purchase intention shows a mean of 64.85 (SD = 8.065) from maximum 90, indicating moderate-to-favorable purchase intentions.

The ratio of standard deviation to mean reveals relative homogeneity across constructs: brand ambassador (11.9%), brand image (12.1%), and purchase intention (12.4%). These coefficients of variation below 30% indicate acceptable response consistency, suggesting respondents share relatively similar perceptions regarding brand ambassador effectiveness and its outcomes.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	N	Mean	Med	Mode	Std. Dev	Skew	Kurt
BA	12	48.44	49.00	50.00	5.765	-	-
BI	9	36.34	37.00	37.00	4.394	0.544	0.988
PD	18	64.85	64.00	61.00	8.065	0.218	0.530
						0.001	0.597

Note: BA = Brand Ambassador; BI = Brand Image; PD = Purchase intention; Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

Kurtosis values for all variables fall between -3 and +3, indicating leptokurtic distributions within acceptable ranges. The skewness values similarly remain within ±3 bounds, confirming reasonably symmetric distributions suitable for parametric analysis.

**4.1.3 Summary of Instrument and Diagnostic Tests**

**Table 4. Validity, Reliability, and Assumption Tests**

Test Category	Variable / Model	Statistical Parameter	Result	Criterion
1. Validity	BA	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.383 – 0.557	> 0.189
	BI	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.377 – 0.534	> 0.189
	PD	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.320 – 0.550	> 0.189
2. Reliability	BA	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	0.834	≥ 0.60
	BI	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	0.774	≥ 0.60
	PD	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	0.845	≥ 0.60
3. Normality	Model 1	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig.	0.162	> 0.05
	Model 2	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig.	0.144	> 0.05
4. Homogeneity	BI	Levene's Test Sig.	0.078	> 0.05
	PD	Levene's Test Sig.	0.701	> 0.05
5. Multicollinearity	Model 1	Tolerance / VIF	1.000 / 1.000	Tol > 0.1; VIF < 10
	Model 2	Tolerance / VIF	1.000 / 1.000	Tol > 0.1; VIF < 10
6. Autocorrelation	Model 1	Durbin-Watson (d)	1.931	1.743 < d < 2.256
	Model 2	Durbin-Watson (d)	1.989	1.743 < d < 2.256
7. Linearity	Relationship 1	Deviation from Linearity Sig.	0.664	> 0.05
	Relationship 2	Deviation from Linearity Sig.	0.073	> 0.05

Note: BA = Brand Ambassador; BI = Brand Image; PD = Purchase intention; Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

The statistical analysis confirms that the research data meets all required criteria for validity, reliability, and classical regression assumptions.

First, instrument quality is established as all items are valid (r > 0.189) and all variables demonstrate strong internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.77).

Second, diagnostic tests confirm the models are robust. The residuals are normally distributed (Sig. > 0.05) and variances are homogeneous. Both models are free from multicollinearity (VIF = 1.000) and autocorrelation (DW values within the 1.743–2.256 range). Finally, the linearity test confirms a linear relationship between the variables, ensuring the regression models are appropriate for hypothesis testing.

**4.1.4 Hypothesis Testing**

Table 5 presents comprehensive hypothesis testing results for both models.

**Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results**

Path	Coef. (β)	Std. Err.	t-stat	p-value
BA → BI (H1)	0.620	0.056	11.135	< 0.001
BA → PD (H2)	1.164	0.099	11.709	< 0.001
R (H1)	0.734			
R (H2)	0.751			
R <sup>2</sup> (H1)	0.539			
R <sup>2</sup> (H2)	0.564			
F-stat (H1)			123.988	< 0.001
F-stat (H2)			137.106	< 0.001

Note: Significance level α = 0.05 (two-tailed); t-critical (df = 106) = 1.984; F-critical (1, 106) = 3.93; BA = Brand Ambassador; BI = Brand Image; PI = Purchase Intention; Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

The regression equation H1 is specified as:

$$BI = 5.316 + 0.620BA$$

The results indicate that brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on brand image (β = 0.620, t = 11.135, p < 0.001). The t-statistic exceeds the two-tailed critical value (11.135 > 1.984), providing strong statistical support for H1. The coefficient indicates that each one-unit increase in brand ambassador score corresponds to a 0.620-unit increase in brand image.

Further model assessment reveals a strong positive relationship, as indicated by the correlation coefficient (R = 0.734). The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.539) demonstrates that brand ambassador explains 53.9% of the variance in brand image, with the remaining 46.1% attributable to factors outside the model. The F-statistic (123.988) exceeds the critical value (6.880), confirming the overall significance of the regression model.

The regression equation H2 is specified as:

$$PD = 14.460 + 1.164BA$$

The results indicate that brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (β = 1.164, t = 11.709, p < 0.001). The t-statistic substantially exceeds the two-tailed critical value

(11.709 > 1.984), providing robust statistical support for H2. The coefficient indicates that each one-unit increase in brand ambassador score corresponds to a 1.164-unit increase in purchase intention.

The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.751$ ) indicates a strong positive relationship between brand ambassador and purchase intention, which is marginally stronger than the relationship observed with brand image. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.564$ ) reveals that brand ambassador explains 56.4% of the variance in purchase intention, with 43.6% attributable to external factors. The F-statistic (137.106) exceeds the critical value (6.880), confirming the overall significance of the regression model.

## 4.5 Discussions

### 4.5.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the influence of brand ambassador on brand image and purchase intention, examining Seventeen's endorsement effectiveness for Indomilk Authentic Korean Flavour products among Indonesian consumers. Two objectives guided the investigation: examining direct brand ambassador effects on brand image and assessing direct effects on purchase intention within the Indonesian dairy market context.

The empirical analysis, based on 108 respondents from the Seventeen fan community who had consumed the endorsed products, provides strong support for both hypotheses. Brand ambassador demonstrates a positive and significant effect on brand image, with correlation strength indicating robust relationships and explanatory power covering more than half of brand image variance. Brand ambassador similarly exhibits a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, with marginally stronger relationship strength and variance explanation compared to brand image outcomes. These findings suggest that K-pop celebrity endorsement can constitute an effective strategy for enhancing consumer brand perceptions and purchase intentions when targeting audiences with cultural affinity toward endorsers and products with thematic alignment.

### 4.5.2 Theoretical Explanations

The observed relationships align with the theoretical frameworks underpinning this investigation. Source Credibility Theory explains that message effectiveness depends on the communicator's perceived credibility—particularly expertise and trustworthiness—so endorsers with higher perceived credibility are more persuasive and more likely to transfer positive evaluations to the endorsed brand (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). The strong brand ambassador effect on both outcomes suggests that consumers perceive the endorsers as credible and therefore use the

endorsement cue as a heuristic supporting favorable brand judgments and purchase intentions (Ohanian, 1990).

Brand knowledge/association theory clarifies the mechanism for brand image formation. Brand image is rooted in brand associations stored in consumer memory; stronger, more favorable, and more unique associations strengthen consumer-based brand evaluations (Keller, 1993). Celebrity endorsers serve as salient meaning carriers and attention magnets that can create and reinforce these associations through repeated exposure and symbolic linkage (McCracken, 1989; Keller, 1993). In addition, presenter-effectiveness logic emphasizes that endorser impact hinges on visibility, credibility, attraction, and power characteristics—helping explain why prominent K-pop ambassadors can efficiently build brand salience and positive associations (Rossiter & Smidts, 2012).

Consumer response patterns are also consistent with S-O-R logic: external stimuli (celebrity endorsement messages) shape internal states (perceptions, attitudes, affect), which then guide behavioral responses (purchase intentions) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The stronger effect magnitude on purchase intention compared to brand image suggests that endorsement may work through both attitude-based routes and identification-based routes—where consumers adopt preferences aligned with admired figures and groups—consistent with classic identification mechanisms in attitude change (Kelman, 1958). In culturally infused campaigns, endorsement cues may be amplified when the cultural theme resonates with consumers' existing interests and media exposure (McCracken, 1989; Tjoe & Kim, 2016).

### 4.5.3 Comparison with Prior Studies

The findings are broadly consistent with the endorsement literature showing that celebrity credibility can enhance brand credibility and consumer-based brand outcomes, which are closely connected to purchase-related responses (Spry et al., 2011). They also align with evidence from Indonesian contexts indicating that brand ambassador variables can contribute to purchase intentions—particularly when endorsement cues support trust and reduce decision uncertainty in the buying process (Nurhasanah et al., 2021; Kausarani & Sulaeman, 2023).

However, the magnitude of the observed effects warrants interpretation within the study's scope conditions. The substantial variance explained by brand ambassador (53.9% for brand image; 56.4% for purchase intention) exceeds effect sizes typically reported in general-population endorsement studies, which commonly range from 15-35% (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). This elevated magnitude likely reflects the sample composition—fandom consumers with

pre-existing identification with endorsers—rather than endorsement effects generalizable to broader markets. When audiences possess parasocial relationships with celebrity endorsers, source credibility and attractiveness cues may receive amplified processing weight, intensifying endorsement responses (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as demonstrating endorsement effectiveness under favorable boundary conditions rather than baseline effects applicable across all consumer segments.

#### 4. 5.4 Explaining Divergent Findings

The strength of effects observed in this study compared to mixed findings in prior research can be attributed to sample-specific boundary conditions. First, endorser-product congruence was high: K-pop celebrities endorsing Korean-themed flavor variants creates natural cultural alignment supporting coherent meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989; Till & Busler, 2000). Second, audience predisposition was favorable: fandom consumers possess established positive attitudes toward endorsers, reducing resistance to persuasion attempts and intensifying identification processes (Kelman, 1958).

Third, the single-product focus eliminated cross-category variation that may dilute effects in multi-product studies. Furthermore, cultural resonance strengthens endorsement effectiveness, as exposure to the Korean Wave has been associated with higher purchase intention toward Korean-linked products in Indonesia (Tjoe & Kim, 2016). Collectively, these conditions represent the "best case scenario" for celebrity endorsement. Therefore, practitioners should not expect equivalent effects when targeting non-fan audiences or promoting products lacking cultural congruence with endorsers.

#### 4.5.5 Why These Findings Matter

These findings contribute to understanding celebrity endorsement effectiveness in emerging markets where cultural consumption patterns intersect with commercial marketing strategies. The substantial variance explained by brand ambassador engagement suggests that careful endorser selection—emphasizing credibility and fit while leveraging visibility and attraction—can be a high-return investment for consumer goods firms (Ohanian, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000; Rossiter & Smidts, 2012). The stronger effect on purchase intention indicates that K-pop endorsement may deliver both perceptual gains (brand image formation via memory associations) and behavioral gains (choice acceleration via credibility and identification mechanisms) (Keller, 1993; Kelman, 1958; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Research Summary

This study investigated the influence of brand ambassador on brand image and purchase intention, examining Seventeen's endorsement effectiveness for Indomilk Authentic Korean Flavour products among Indonesian consumers. Two objectives guided the investigation: examining direct brand ambassador effects on brand image and assessing direct effects on purchase intention within the Indonesian dairy market context.

The empirical analysis, based on 108 respondents from the Seventeen fan community who had consumed the endorsed products, provides strong support for both hypotheses. Brand ambassador demonstrates a positive and significant effect on brand image, with correlation strength indicating robust relationships and explanatory power covering more than half of brand image variance. Brand ambassador similarly exhibits a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, with marginally stronger relationship strength and variance explanation compared to brand image outcomes. These findings confirm that K-pop celebrity endorsement constitutes an effective strategy for enhancing both consumer brand perceptions and purchase intentions in the Indonesian fast-moving consumer goods market.

### 5.2 Practical Implications

The findings generate actionable guidance for marketing practitioners. Firms seeking to leverage celebrity endorsement should prioritize endorser-brand congruence, ensuring selected ambassadors possess attributes naturally aligned with brand positioning and product characteristics. The success of Seventeen's endorsement for Korean-themed products illustrates the value of coherent brand narratives that integrate celebrity identity with product differentiation strategies.

Marketing managers should recognize that brand ambassador investments yield dual returns—both attitudinal (brand image) and behavioral (purchase intention)—justifying comprehensive campaign development rather than limited tactical deployment. The stronger behavioral effect suggests particular value for conversion-focused marketing objectives.

For firms targeting youth demographics, K-pop celebrity endorsement represents a potent strategy given the Korean Wave's cultural resonance. However, effectiveness appears contingent upon genuine engagement mechanisms, including meet-and-greet events and personalized product associations, that build emotional connections between consumers and endorsed brands.

### 5.3 Key Contributions

This study advances celebrity endorsement literature by demonstrating that brand ambassador effects operate through multiple theoretical

pathways—credibility transfer, associative learning, and persuasion mechanisms—to influence both perceptual and behavioral consumer outcomes. The integration of Source Credibility Theory, Brand Association Theory, and Consumer Behavior Theory provides comprehensive theoretical grounding for understanding celebrity endorsement effectiveness in cultural marketing contexts.

Unlike studies relying on general population samples with potentially limited endorsement exposure, this research employs purposive sampling of consumers who have experienced both the endorsement stimulus and actual product consumption. This design enables assessment of realized rather than hypothetical relationships, enhancing ecological validity.

The findings provide evidence-based guidance for marketing practitioners regarding K-pop celebrity endorsement effectiveness for consumer goods targeting Indonesian youth demographics. The substantial variance explained indicates that brand ambassador engagement represents a meaningful lever for influencing consumer outcomes when properly implemented.

#### 5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations contextualize the findings and suggest directions for future research. First, the purposive sampling of fandom consumers limits external validity; findings represent endorsement effects within a high-involvement segment rather than generalizable effects across Indonesian dairy consumers. Future research should replicate these relationships using probability sampling from broader consumer populations to establish baseline effect magnitudes.

Second, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference despite theoretical directionality. Longitudinal or experimental designs would strengthen causal claims and capture temporal dynamics of endorsement effects.

Third, the homogeneous sample composition (predominantly female students) prevented meaningful analysis of demographic moderators. Future studies with heterogeneous samples should examine whether endorsement effectiveness varies across gender, age, and involvement levels.

Fourth, the theoretical framework implies that brand image may mediate the brand ambassador–purchase intention relationship, but this mechanism was not formally tested. Future research should employ mediation analysis to decompose direct and indirect endorsement effects, clarifying the cognitive-evaluative pathways through which celebrity endorsement influences behavioral intentions.

Fifth, single-source self-report data introduces potential common method variance. Although procedural and statistical controls suggest this threat is manageable, future research incorporating

behavioral purchase data or multi-source designs would enhance validity.

Finally, the study examined endorsement effects at a single time point following campaign launch. Temporal dynamics—including potential wear-out effects or cumulative brand equity building—warrant longitudinal investigation.

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