



The influence of korean celebrities as brand ambassador and product quality on purchase decision with brand image as the mediating variable on Scarlett Whitening

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ABSTRACT

Every corporation employs diverse marketing strategies with the anticipation of significantly impacting the company's advancement. One such strategy involves the engagement of a brand ambassador entrusted by the company to cultivate a brand image for the company. The brand image is deemed influential in persuading consumers to place trust in the company, thereby compelling them to make product purchases. The primary objective of this research is to examine the influence of Korean Celebrities as Brand Ambassadors and Product Quality on Purchase Decisions. In this context, Brand Image assumes the role of a mediating variable for Scarlett Whitening. The study adopts a quantitative approach utilizing purposive sampling techniques. It employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of AMOS 24 statistical software to analyze and assess the measurement and structural models of the research construct.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, Korean culture has experienced rapid growth and spread across the globe. Known as the Korean Wave (Hallyu), this phenomenon has caught the attention of many people. Korean Wave (Hallyu) is a term that refers to the spread of South Korean pop culture, entertainment, music, drama, and movies worldwide. As a result, South Korean culture has become famous. The massive impact of the Korean Wave (Hallyu) is strongly felt in the era of globalization, especially for Gen Z, which even encourages many people to learn the Korean language and culture. One of this Korean Wave's most iconic and desirable products is Korean pop music or K-Pop, with groups such as BTS, NCT, BLACKPINK, TWICE, and others. Korean dramas have also received wide attention from various groups, including the younger generation, adults, and parents.

With the increasingly sophisticated technology for disseminating information, the flow of information will be faster to the public. Thus, trends or things that are popular will also reach an area faster (Farrel et al., 2023). This development never stops and is visible with the entry of K-pop

culture into Indonesia. Summarized from a Twitter report released on January 26, Indonesia became the country with the most K-pop fans worldwide in 2021 (Nadila & Windasari, 2022; Napitupulu, 2019). After considering these aspects, many companies are interested in hiring artists from Korea as brand ambassadors for their companies because they see great potential in strengthening their brand image. In addition, Korean celebrities are known to have stunning looks and performances; in this case, they can encourage consumers to be more interested in purchasing if the product's brand ambassador is their idol (Khotimah & Suryadi, 2021). This strategy is familiar in marketing; many industries have long used it, and have proven effective in introducing products to the public.

Communication carried out by brand ambassadors can impact the company's brand image, both positive and negative. Brand image is the perception that consumers have of a product. Brand ambassadors help build an emotional connection between brands and consumers so that they will indirectly build a product image that impacts a consumer's purchasing decision (Frans M. & Royan, 2005). For buyers, brands assess quality and give attention to new products that benefit them. Consumers assume that widely recognized brands are safer than those less well-known because popular brands provide more comprehensive information than those (Evelina et al., 2012). In the context of brand image and purchasing decisions, another thing that has an impact is that the quality of products is an important thing that every company must strive for if it wants what it produces to compete in the market to satisfy customer needs and desires (Napitupulu, 2019). Product quality encompasses the capacity of a product to fulfill its functions, encompassing attributes such as durability, ease of operation, repairability, and other valuable characteristics. The quality of a product is instrumental in meeting the desires and requirements presented in the market, rendering it suitable for ownership, maintenance, utilization, or consumption (Firmansyah & Haryanto, 2019). Thus, companies must present high-quality products to become more popular than competitors. If the company succeeds in doing so, the quality of the product will match the needs sought and expected by potential buyers when they decide to buy the item.

In Indonesia, one of the local skincare brands that utilizes Korean celebrities as brand ambassadors for their products is Scarlett Whitening. Scarlett Whitening is Indonesia's fastest-growing local beauty brand, founded in 2017 by Felicia Angelista. Scarlett Whitening produces various beauty products that focus on brightening and maintaining healthy skin for the body, face, and hair. Scarlett Whitening's products are safe because they are licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (BPOM). Although this brand is relatively new, according to sales data, Scarlett Whitening is the highest in 2022, which has a market share of 11.32% and has received sales revenue of Rp23.8 billion during the second quarter of 2022 (Jumeneng et al., 2023); (Kompas, 2022). As market growth and consumption trends in the cosmetics industry lead to competition, many skincare brands, including Scarlett, continue looking for innovations to increase sales.

Brands employ various strategies to win over their target market through digital channels, but one strategy stands out the most: using celebrities as brand ambassadors. To market its products to a larger target market, Scarlett Whitening uses various Brand Ambassadors to enhance its brand image and increase its sales (Qanaah et al., 2023). Scarlett Whitening has gotten several Korean celebrities as Brand Ambassadors for their products, such as Song Joong Ki, the group Twice, and recently EXO has also become Scarlett Whitening's Brand Ambassador. Scarlett Whitening chose Korean celebrities as Brand Ambassadors because these celebrities have many fans, especially K-Pop lovers, who can benefit Scarlett Whitening's sales.

The impact of a brand ambassador consistently remains a compelling subject for exploration, particularly when the ambassador is a Korean idol with a substantial fan base, including fans from Indonesia. This study aims to assess the extent of influence exerted by Korean celebrities as brand ambassadors and the product quality on purchasing decisions, mediated by brand image. Distinguishing itself from prior research, this study amalgamates elements from previous investigations into a broader framework. Additionally, it introduces novelty by

synthesizing various indicators from previous researchers into constructs. Consequently, the testing of these constructs utilizes Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through statistical analysis with AMOS 24, a tool that elucidates the novelty of constructs based on the indicators employed, providing a more comprehensive depiction of the results. The anticipated results of this research include enhanced product quality, purchasing decisions, and brand image.

RESEARCH METHOD

Brand Ambassador and Purchase Decision

Brand Ambassadors serve as symbolic figures or cultural representations, functioning as strategic marketing tools that embody the attainment of human excellence and individualism and the commodification and commercialization of a given product (Hendayana & Afifah, 2020). The requisites for effective Brand Ambassadors encompass four essential characteristics: visibility, credibility, attractiveness, and strength, as articulated by Pratami & Sari (2020). This necessitates that a Brand Ambassador possesses sufficient popularity and allure to captivate consumers, thereby steering their intent toward product acquisition. Notably, the positive image of a Brand Ambassador plays a pivotal role in accurately portraying the associated product, consequently heightening consumer interest (Fuadi et al., 2023). Making a purchasing decision entails amalgamating knowledge to assess multiple alternative behaviors and ultimately opt for one. When consumers lack direct experience with a product, a predilection for or trust in well-established brands tends to prevail (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). This phenomenon underscores companies' need to fortify their brand positioning, cultivating a distinct brand image that enables consumers to recognize, appraise quality, mitigate purchase risks, and derive satisfaction through product differentiation. Based on the analysis of this explanation, the following is the formulation of the hypothesis made by the researcher:

H1: Brand Ambassadors has a positive influence on Purchase Decision

Product Quality and Purchase Decision

Product quality denotes a characteristic inherent in a product or service, contingent upon its capacity to fulfill explicitly articulated or tacit customer requirements (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008, 272). Consumers are inclined to opt for products of superior quality, assuming that such products confer augmented value compared to their lower-quality counterparts (Rangian et al., 2022). Products distinguished by high quality and reliability are more apt to capture consumer attention. Consequently, a company's focal point should be ensuring product quality, as heightened quality correlates positively with elevated consumer purchasing decisions. Based on the analysis of this explanation, the following is the formulation of the hypothesis made by the researcher:

H2: Product Quality has a positive influence on Purchase Decision

Brand Ambassador and Brand Image

Brand image is an opinion about consumer associations and beliefs about a particular brand (S. Fiani & Japariato, 2012). Consumers will have their thoughts about the brand of a specific product; these beliefs can be in the form of advantages that the product has and can be in the form of deficiencies that certain products have. A study by (Mukherjee, 2009) revealed that consumers report a stronger self-brand connection for brands with a consistent and robust image with celebrities they admire, especially when the celebrity's image is aligned with the brand because brand ambassadors can influence public perception. The selection of an exemplary brand ambassador can boost the company's brand image and bring consumers closer to the products offered. Based on the analysis of this explanation, the following is the formulation of the hypothesis made by the researcher:

H3: Brand Ambassador has a positive influence on Brand Image

Product Quality and Brand Image

Product quality encompasses endeavors aimed at meeting or surpassing customer expectations, involving aspects such as the quality of products, human services, processes, and environmental considerations—a dynamic state subject to continuous evolution (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016, 59). Products characterized by commendable quality instill confidence in consumers, fostering repeat purchases (Ananda & Jamiat, 2021). The elevated quality of a product contributes to the enhancement of the company's brand image, thereby instilling increased consumer faith in the offerings, a sentiment derived from both the superior quality and the enduring positive impression associated with the brand. Based on the analysis of this explanation, the following is the formulation of the hypothesis made by the researcher:

H4: Product Quality has a positive influence on Brand Image

Brand Image and Purchase Decision

Consumers tend to select products associated with a brand image firmly embedded in their memory, and they express a commitment to procure such products consistently (Hien et al., 2020). The heightened quality and robustness of the brand image associated with a product engender increased consumer interest in purchasing. This inclination arises from the consumer perception that a product carrying a favorable brand image is reliable and imparts a sense of security in its utilization. Consequently, an elevated brand image correlates positively with heightened product sales (Pradana & Hudayah, 2017). Based on the analysis of this explanation, the following is the formulation of the hypothesis made by the researcher:

H5: Brand Image has a positive influence on Purchase Decision

Brand Image mediates the relationship between the Brand Ambassador and the Purchase Decision

Consumer demand is an essential factor in the selection of brand ambassadors; companies must know what consumer demand is like to choose the exemplary brand ambassador for the product to be marketed (Prasetyo, 2016). The selection of the ideal brand ambassador, according to the target consumers, is expected to influence and become a trendsetter for the company's products. In addition, strong brand ambassadors also affect marketing communication to be more effective and efficient (Nurazhari & Putri, 2022). Research (Wulandari et al., 2019) states that the more famous and robust the image of the chosen brand ambassador, the higher the consumer's interest in buying the advertised product. In addition, the experience and skills of brand ambassadors in delivering messages from advertised products and presenting advertisements are also crucial in influencing consumer decisions to make purchases. The findings from a preceding study conducted by Probosini et al. (2021) demonstrate a positive and statistically significant correlation between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions, with brand image as a mediating factor. Based on the analysis of this explanation, the following is the formulation of the hypothesis made by the researcher:

H6: Brand Image mediates the relationship between the Brand Ambassador and the Purchase Decision

Brand Image mediates the relationship between Product Quality and Purchase Decision

According to research (Rangian et al., 2022), consumers tend to choose high-quality products because they believe that high-quality products will provide added value compared to low-quality ones. Therefore, companies must improve the quality of their products to survive in the market and remain competitive. Products that have good quality can provide confidence for consumers who will buy the product (Ananda & Jamiat, 2021). The outcomes of the investigation conducted by Budianto & Budiarmo (2019) reveal a positive and statistically significant impact of

product quality on purchase decisions, with brand image acting as a mediating factor. Based on the analysis of this explanation, the following is the formulation of the hypothesis made by the researcher:

H7: Brand Image mediates the relationship between Product Quality and Purchase Decision

The conceptual framework of the research below is designed based on the literature review overhead, which illustrates the relationship between the variable to be studied.

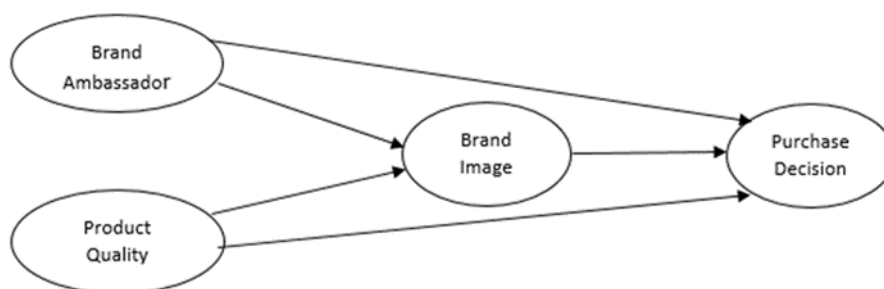


Figure 1. Research Framework

This study employs a quantitative research approach with a causal associative research design. Causal associative research investigates relationships between two or more variables (Sugiyono, 2016). Data collection involves the distribution of online questionnaires through various social media platforms to respondents who meet predetermined criteria. The questionnaire employs a 5-point Likert scale to measure respondents' agreement levels (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Moderately Agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree). Purposive sampling is utilized, as respondents must meet specific criteria the researcher sets to provide relevant information (Indawati et al., 2023). The sample comprises 211 individuals, all Indonesian citizens who have purchased Scarlett Whitening products and viewed advertisements featuring Korean celebrities. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 24 statistical software is employed to analyze and evaluate the measurement and structural models of research constructs. Model fit is assessed using various index parameters such as chi-square (χ^2), CMIN/DF, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Root Mean Squared Residual (RMR), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Normed Fit Index (NFI). Validity is evaluated based on Standardized Factor Loading (SFL) with a threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014), and construct reliability relies on the tabulated results of Construct Reliability (C.R.) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. Additionally, the validity assessment includes the standardized loading factor (SLF) value, which must be 0.50. SEM is utilized for structural model analysis to ascertain the validity of the study's hypotheses. SEM analysis provides t-values for each coefficient, with a relationship deemed significant if the t-score $\geq$ t-table (1.96) at a significance level of 0.05. The Sobel test is employed to determine the indirect effect of the mediating variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

Respondent Characteristics

The analysis of respondent profiles in this study is grounded in characteristics encompassing gender, age, highest educational attainment, place of residence, past purchase of Scarlett Whitening products within the past year, monthly expenditures on body care and skincare, and monthly income of the respondents.

Table 1. Characteristics of Responden

Category	Item	f	%
Gender	Male	25	11,8
	Female	186	88,2
	Total	211	100
Age	15 - 21 years	156	73,9
	22 - 25 years	53	25,1
	26 - 29 years	1	0,5
	>30 years	1	0,5
	Total	211	100
Last Education	Elementary	0	0,0
	Junior High School	2	0,9
	High School	149	70,6
	Diplomat	14	6,6
	Bachelor	46	21,8
	Master	0	0,0
	Doctor	0	0,0
	Total	211	100
Domicile	Pontianak	97	46,0
	Jakarta	22	10,4
	Bandung	10	4,7
	Yogyakarta	6	2,8
	Surabaya	8	3,8
	Denpasar	5	2,4
	Semarang	4	1,9
	Makassar	8	3,8
	Palembang	4	1,9
	Medan	6	2,8
	Batam	5	2,4
	Pekanbaru	4	1,9
	Malang	3	1,4
	Manado	6	2,8
	Banjarmasin	5	2,4
	Yang lain:	18	8,5
	Total	211	100
Intensity of buying Scarlett Whitening products in the last 1 year	2 times	125	59,2
	3 times	38	18,0
	4 times	22	10,4
	5 times	6	2,8
	>5 times	20	9,5
	Total	211	100
Amount of money spent on skincare and bodycare products in a month	< Rp300.000	128	60,7
	Rp300.000 - Rp500.000	57	27,0
	Rp500.000 - Rp1.000.000	19	9,0
	Rp1.000.000 - Rp2.000.000	6	2,8
	>Rp2.000.000	1	0,5
	Total	211	100
Monthly Income	<Rp1.000.000	94	44,5
	Rp1.000.000 - Rp3.000.000	65	30,8
	Rp3.000.000- Rp5.000.000	34	16,1
	Rp5.000.000- Rp10.000.000	15	7,1
	>Rp10.000.000	3	1,4
	Total	211	100

Table 1 illustrates that most respondents were female, comprising 186 individuals or 88.2%, whereas male respondents amounted to 25 individuals or 11.8%. Dominated by respondents aged 15-21 years with a total of 156 or 73.9%, then respondents aged 22-25 years, as many as 53 or 25.1%, and as many as 1 or 0.5% of respondents aged 26-29 years to age 30 and above. Most of the respondents came from Pontianak with a total of 97 or 46.0%, followed by Jakarta with a total of 22 or 10.4 respondents, then Bandung 10 or 4.7%, Surabaya and Makassar 8 or 3.8%, Yogyakarta,

Medan and Manado 6 or 2.8%, Denpasar, Batam and Banjarmasin 5 or 2.4%, Semarang, Palembang and Pekanbaru 4 or 1.9%, Malang 3 or 1.4% and other domiciles 18 or 8.5%. For the intensity of buying Scarlett Whitening products within 1 month, 125 or 59.2% of respondents bought 2 times, 38 or 18.0% 3 times, 22 or 10.4% 4 times, 6 or 2.8% 5 times, and 20 or 9.5% more than 5 times. For the amount of funds spent on buying skincare and body products in a month, 128 or 60.7% of respondents spend less than IDR 300,000, then 57 or 27.0% of respondents spend IDR 300,000 - IDR 500,000, 19 or 9.0% of respondents spend IDR 500,000 - IDR 1,000,000, 6 or 2.8% of respondents spend IDR 1,000,000 - IDR 2,000,000 and 1 or 0.5% of respondents spend more than IDR 2,000,000 to buy skincare or bodycare. Finally, for monthly income, 94 or 44.5% of respondents earned less than Rp1,000,000, 65 or 30.8% of respondents earned Rp1,000,000 - Rp3,000,000, 34 or 16.1% of respondents earned Rp3,000,000 - Rp5,000,000, 15 or 7.1% of respondents earned Rp5,000,000 - Rp10,000,000 and 3 or 1.4% of respondents earned more than Rp10,000,000.

Measurement Models

The assessment of model performance refers to the standard goodness-of-fit values, while the validity test examines the standardized loading factor (SLF) values. Additionally, the reliability test evaluates the acquisition of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values and constructs the Composite Reliability (CR).

Table 2. Measurement Models

	Items	SLF	CR	AVE
Brand Ambassador	I become confident in using Scarlett Whitening products when the Brand Ambassador is a Korean celebrity.	0,878	0,975	0,756
	I remember Scarlett Whitening products from Korean celebrities who are its Brand Ambassadors.	0,875		
	Korean celebrities can be trusted when promoting Scarlett Whitening products, because most famous skincare products come from Korea.	0,909		
	The good physical characteristics of Korean celebrities (handsome/beautiful face, well-groomed skin, young soul) make me confident in using the promoted Scarlett Whitening products.	0,888		
	The popularity and professionalism of the Korean Brand Ambassador makes me confident in using the promoted Scarlett Whitening product (even though she is not my favorite Korean celebrity)	0,866		
	Rumors about Korean celebrities have an impact on their credibility and persuasiveness in becoming Scarlett Whitening Brand Ambassadors.	0,799		
	I buy Scarlett Whitening products because the composition and quality are what I expected	0,808		
Product Quality	Scarlett Whitening always pays attention to quality standards in each of its products.	0,833	0,98	0,79
	I believe Scarlett Whitening products are definitely of good quality.	0,756		
	Scarlett Whitening products have better quality than competitors	0,756		
	Scarlett Whitening has a wide range of product variants with different benefits	0,786		
	Scarlett Whitening has product packaging with durable durability	0,802		
Purchase Decision	I really want to buy Scarlett Whitening products after knowing that the brand ambassador is a Korean celebrity.	0,831	0,982	0,812
	I feel happy with my decision to buy Scarlett Whitening products.	0,831		
	I feel Scarlett Whitening products are worth buying	0,793		
	I would positively recommend Scarlett Whitening products to others	0,826		
	I intend to buy Scarlett Whitening products again in the future	0,811		

Brand Image	I will be more likely to buy Scarlett Whitening products among similar products	0,777		
	I can easily recognize Scarlett Whitening among other competing brands.	0,811		
	Some characteristics of Scarlett Whitening come to my mind quickly	0,802		
	I can quickly remember the Scarlett Whitening symbol or logo	0,81	0,817	0,805
	Scarlett Whitening has a good reputation so its products can be trusted	0,824		
	Scarlett Whitening has high credibility in creating each of its products.	0,777		

By the findings presented in Table 2, the results of the validity and reliability tests indicate that the model indicators constructed conform to the criteria of validity and reliability. The Standardized Loading Factor (SLF) values for all indicator variables within the comprehensive model exceed 0.50. Reliability assessments yield satisfactory outcomes, affirming the reliability of all instruments in gauging the overall structure of the resultant model. This affirmation is substantiated by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value surpassing 0.50 and the Construct Reliability (C.R.) value exceeding 0.70.

Measurement Models

The following table shows the value of the Goodness of Fit (GOF) measurement as follows:

Tabel 3. Goodness of Fit Index

Goodness of Fit Indexes	Cut off Value	Results	
X2	Expected to be low	379,292	
Df		224	
X2 - Significance Probability	≥ 0.05	0.000	
CMIN/DF	≤ 3.00	1.693	Good Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.057	Good Fit
RMR	< 0,05	0.029	Good Fit
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.348	Bad Fit
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.566	Bad Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.466	Bad Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.527	Bad Fit

As indicated by the Goodness of Fit (GOF) Index presented in Table 3, it can be inferred that the model satisfies the fit criteria and is deemed suitable. Three measurements demonstrate a favorable fit. When 3-4 measures are exhibiting a satisfactory fit or surpassing the designated cut-off value, the configuration of the research model can be deemed satisfactory and acceptable.

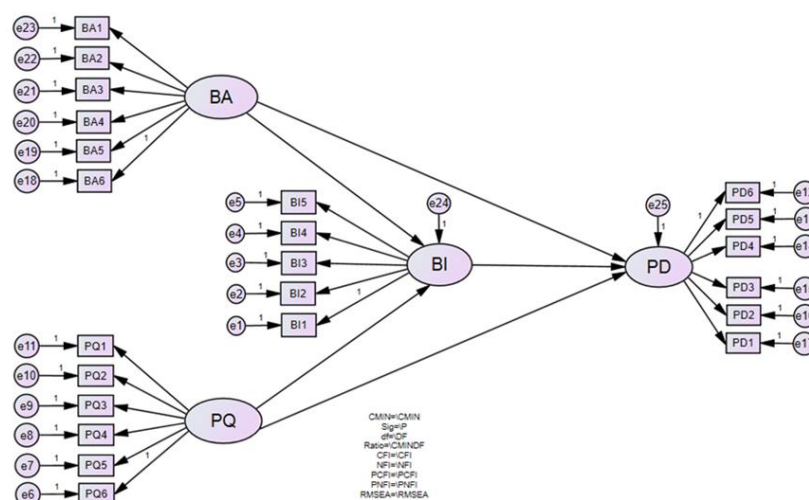


Figure 2. Full Model Testing

Hypothesis Testing

The results of testing the effect of the relationship between variables in the study configuration built in this study can be presented as follows.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	S.E.	C.R.	P-Values	Description
H1	BA $\rightarrow$ PD	0,217	0,134	1,618	0,106	Rejected
H2	PQ $\rightarrow$ PD	0,263	0,13	2,019	0,043	Accepted
H3	BA $\rightarrow$ BI	0,394	0,165	2,386	0,017	Accepted
H4	PQ $\rightarrow$ BI	0,581	0,151	3,853	***	Accepted
H5	BI $\rightarrow$ PD	0,441	0,094	4,674	***	Accepted

Based on the findings presented in Table 3, the measurements align with the stipulated hypotheses. The t-score value for the influence of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision is 1.618, falling below the t-table value (1.96). With a p-value of 0.106, exceeding 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$), this outcome indicates the rejection of the first hypothesis, as Brand Ambassador is not demonstrated to have a positive and significant impact on Purchase Decision. Conversely, in the second hypothesis, the t-score value for the impact of Product Quality on Purchase Decision is 2.019, with a p-value of 0.043, below 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$), establishing that Product Quality exerts a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision. The findings of the third hypothesis are also corroborated: Brand Ambassador exhibits a positive and significant effect on Brand Image. The t-score value of Brand Ambassador on Brand Image is 2.386, surpassing the t-table value (1.96), and the p-value is below 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). Similarly, the fourth hypothesis is substantiated; the t-score value for the impact of Product Quality on Brand Image is 3.853, and the p-value is below 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). These results signify that Product Quality positively and significantly influences Brand Image. The outcomes of the fifth hypothesis are also validated: Brand Image manifests a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision, with a t-score of 4.674, exceeding (1.96), and a p-value below 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Tabel 4. Sobel Test-Significance of Mediation

Hypothesis	Path	Sobel Test		Description
		t-Stat	P-Values	
H6	BA $\rightarrow$ BI $\rightarrow$ PD	2.12	0.033	Accepted

H7	PQ → BI → PD	2.97	0.002	Accepted
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Referring to the Sobel test outcomes in Table 4, the sixth hypothesis demonstrates mediation between Brand Ambassador and Purchase Decision facilitated by Brand Image, evidenced by a t-score of 2.12 and a p-value of 0.033. These findings signify that the statistical value from the Sobel test exceeds the t-table threshold (1.96) with a p-value of 0.033, indicating its significance below 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). In the context of the seventh hypothesis, the Sobel test's statistical value is 2.97, accompanied by a p-value of 0.002 below 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). These results suggest the existence of mediation between Product Quality and Purchase Decision through the intermediary of Brand Image.

Discussion

The research outcomes indicate that the first hypothesis, positing that brand ambassadors contribute to increased purchase decisions, needs to be substantiated. This suggests that, in this study, brand ambassadors represent merely one of several factors consumers consider when making purchase decisions (Rahmawati et al., 2022). Conversely, the findings of the second hypothesis validate the accepted relationship between the variables of product quality and purchase decisions. Hence, continuous enhancements and innovations in product quality are discerned to positively influence consumer interest in making purchases, as corroborated by Muliasari (2019), Hadi Brata et al. (2017), and (Wang et al., 2019). The third hypothesis is supported by the results, indicating that the brand ambassador variable significantly impacts the brand image variable, as noted in studies by (F. Wang & Hariandja (2016) and Fasha et al. (2022). Furthermore, the fourth hypothesis underscores that superior product quality improves the brand image, aligning with prior research by Situmorang (2017) and Gircela & Wati (2022). The fifth hypothesis demonstrates that brand image has a proven positive impact on purchase decisions, consistent with the findings of previous studies conducted by Malini (2021), Ambolau et al. (2015), and Listiana & Faris Fakhri (2021). The sixth hypothesis posits that brand image is a mediator in the relationship between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions, as evidenced by the study results and in agreement with Purnama & Novitasari (2022) and Malini (2021). Lastly, the seventh hypothesis establishes that brand image is a mediator in the relationship between product quality and purchase decisions, as supported by research conducted by Islamiah et al. (2023) and Anisa & Telagawathi (2022).

CONCLUSION

This study examines the effect of brand ambassadors and product quality variables on purchase decisions, with brand image as a mediating variable. The results showed that brand ambassadors were not proven to increase purchasing decisions, but the product quality was able to increase purchasing decisions. Researchers have yet to succeed in proving that Korean celebrities as brand ambassadors of Scarlett Whitening can influence consumer purchasing decisions. The research results conclude that the driving factor for consumers in buying Scarlett Whitening products is product quality, which is the material of their consideration. In addition, brand ambassadors and product quality positively affect Scarlett Whitening's brand image. Suppose Korean celebrities as brand ambassadors are not proven to affect purchasing decisions. In that case, Korean celebrities as part of ambassadors are proven to have a positive impact on the brand image of Scarlett Whitening products. For mediating variables, the results show that brand image can mediate the relationship between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions. Likewise, the relationship between product quality and purchase decision is proven mediated by brand image. Brand image is one of the brand management efforts to get a deep impression and stick in consumers' memories. The utilization of Korean celebrities as brand ambassadors has proven effective in cultivating a favorable brand image for Scarlett Whitening, as evidenced by the outcomes of hypothesis testing indicating the

influence of brand ambassadors on brand image. Establishing a positive brand image by endorsing brand ambassadors contributes to diminished hesitancy among consumers in their purchasing decisions. Consequently, beyond fostering a positive brand image, the sustained and consistent quality of the product in terms of safety, design, price, and benefits must align with the assertions made for each product. This ensures that consumers maintain their interest and willingness to purchase products from Scarlett Whitening repeatedly. The research findings contribute to reinforcing prior studies supporting this journal and advancing understanding of the four crucial variables in this research. For researchers, it is anticipated that the results of this study will serve as a reference and comparative literature for subsequent researchers to develop comprehensive and in-depth research studies, including the incorporation of other variables that may impact purchase decisions.

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