# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN KOREAN BRAND AMBASSADOR, PRICE, AND PRODUCT QUALITY TO CUSTOMER PURCHASE DECISION ON LOCAL SKINCARE PRODUCT

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, skincare has evolved into a social trend. People are competing to get the best suitable skincare, while local companies are competing to make skincare that is market-acceptable in terms of image, price, and quality. The usage of Korean brand ambassadors has been a topic in the local skincare industry with some of the recognized brands competing to partner with them. This paper aims to determine if the effort provides a positive relationship with customers' purchase decision compared to other factors, which are the price and product quality. Using a Likert scale questionnaire distributed to Korean wave fans from high school and college students with a random sampling method, the data is constructed using the regression model. The questionnaire collected 52 participants who have used at least one of the local skincare products that use Korean brand ambassadors. It is found that the brand ambassador and price variable is not significant for the model tested, while product quality positively affects the customers' purchase decision. The model shows that there is a market segmentation that does not consider the Korean brand ambassador even though they are fans of the Korean wave. Moreover, the market segmentation is also willing to spend more for the product that offers better quality. Therefore, the model suggests that local skincare brands focus more on improving the quality of their product.

Keywords: Skincare; Korean Brand Ambassador; Product Quality; Price; Purchase Decision

#### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, skincare has become atrend in society where everyone is competing to get the best product to take care of their skin. Not only the people, but local companies also fight with each other to produce the best skincare on the market (Faza et al., 2022). This trend is influenced by the Korean wave where Korean actors, idols, or even just local citizens have used skincare as their daily product. The Korean Wave itself can be interpreted as the spread of modern popular culture waves from South Koreanentertainment to the world in the form of popular music (K-Pop), drama series, films, animation, games, and culinary (Prasanti & Dewi, 2020). Those influences build a point of view of Indonesian that good skincare should reflect Korean beauty standards. It also increases the enthusiasm of Korean fans to try various kinds of skincare products, both local and non-local. It also stimulates the enthusiasm of Korean fans to try various kinds of skincare products from both local and non-local, which opens up opportunities for businesses to collaborate with Korean influencers to increase their sales.

Skincare can be defined as products that are used for several purposes such as cleansing, calming, healing, hydrating, and protecting the skin (Satria, 2021). There are many types of skincare, the basic ones are a facial wash, toner, serum, and moisturizer cream. Using that kind of product can be an alternative rather than going to a beauty doctor which will certainly cost more. However, not all skincare can be suitable for all skin types. People tend to try many kinds of skincare brands until they choose the right one thatsuits their skin (Faza et al., 2022). Some factors might affect their purchase decision on skin care such as product quality, brand ambassador, price, or brand loyalty.

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Due to the Korean wave and the rapid development of the skincare market, many local companies have collaborated with Korean actors or idols as their brand ambassadors. According to Hendayana and Afifah (2020), a brand ambassador (BA) is a person or a group of people that have a passion for a certain brand that can influence and invite people to buy and usethat product. Some local skincare brands that use Korean BA are Scarlett Whitening with actor Song Joong Ki, Somethinc with NCT Dream, Whitelab with EXO Sehun, Everwhite with actor Kim Seon Ho, MS Glow with Cha Eun Woo, and Azarine Cosmetics with actor Lee Min Ho. The use of Korean actors and idols as brand ambassadors for local products does have a greater appeal of 70.8% compared to other factors (Hendayana & Afifah, 2020). It is supported by Korean fans who have a strong loyalty level toward their idol, which proves that they without hesitation buy products marketed by their idols (Slamet et al., 2022). However, according to Andriani and Setiawan (2020), the reason consumers buy local skincare products is mostly because of the affordable price and the BPOM label which means the product is already safeto use. The result of the previous study might have varied due to the different samples surveyed. Other research also stated that price perception and product quality have a bigger significant effect on customer purchase decisions rather than the image of the brand ambassador (Rangian et al., 2022). Rahmadani and Anggraini (2021) also did similar research on the cosmetic industry and found that the Korean brand ambassador does not influence the decision of consumers, but rather the Korean culture. The different results can be influenced by the priority of the consumer, age, gender, and level of education. Therefore, the unconformity shows that there is a need for a more elaborated explanation and specified conditions between the Korean wave as a brand ambassador with the attempt to increase profit to maximize its potential. This paper aims to analyze the influence of Korean brand ambassadors, price, and product quality on consumers' decisions to buy local skincare products. It will begin by reviewing the literature related to how those variables influence consumer decisions in buying products, then analyze the relationship between the two variables. Thus, the research results can add insight and provide appropriate recommendations regarding marketing strategies for local skin care companies.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Theory of Reasoned Action**

Theory of reasoned action was introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1980, which stated that a behavior is determined by the individual's desire to do or not do something certain behavior. It also means that a consumer may only take a purchase decision when given a reasonable statement that there will be a desired result or benefit (Ng, 2020). Intention to do the specified behavior depends on three main factors, namely attitude, subjective norms, and perceived social pressure (Mahyarni, 2013). Attitude describes the person's dominant behavioral beliefs, while the subjective norm is an individual belief in accepting or rejecting certain behavior. The last is social pressure, which means behavior that is driven by external pressure.

## Theory of Buyer Behavior and Consumer Decision-Making

In general, consumer purchases behavior can be defined as the process of the customer taking a look, choosing, purchasing, using, and disposing of a product or services that they desire. According to the theory of buyer behavior by Sheth, the pattern of consumer decision in buying a product is repetitive, creating a purchasing routine based on customers' understanding and generalization to save time (Ohio University, 2022). The repetitive action can be based on motives, competitors, and personal preferences. The information used for a product can influence the decision to buy another product because the customer generalizes the

information for a different product that they do not have information about. For example, customers may buy a toaster based on their experience in using a smartphone because they lack information about toaster specifications.

#### **Country of Origin**

Consumer perception of a country of origin can be described as a mental association or belief that is influenced by a country (Listiana, 2012). This perception can affect the customer's decision or intention in choosing and purchasing some products. Korea is well known for its beauty products, as well as skin care due to the high standard of beauty in their society. Itis the reason why the COO's perception of Korean skincare is at a high level, people believe that Korean skincare is the best one rather than any products that come from other countries. Local companies are still also considering the COO perception of skincare products, so they like to use Korean actors or idols to be their brand ambassadors (Syauki & Avina, 2020). This strategy will make consumers believe that the product has already been trusted and recognized by Koreans.

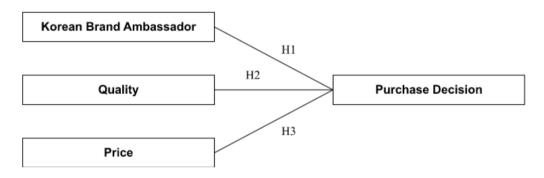


Figure 1. Framework Model

H1: Korean brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on Customer Purchase Decisions

Brand Ambassador is a person or group of people that come from a popular public figure or key opinion leader (KOL) with the aim to advertise a brand (Dewi et al., 2020). According to Pratami and Sari (2020), the brand ambassador should have 4 characteristics to be fulfilled which are visibility, credibility, attraction, and power. It means that a brand ambassador needs to have popularity and also be attractive enough to amaze the consumers and lead the customer's intention to buy that product.

According to Wardani and Nugraha (2022), brand ambassadors have a significant effect on customer purchase decisions on skincare products. However, there are a few differences in the results of the 2 products studied which prove that the gender of the brand ambassador also affects customer intention and decision. Male brand ambassadors tend to be more attractive to consumers, especially women. The result is the same as the study by Sagia and Situmorang (2018), where brand ambassadors have a significant influence and are positive on purchasing decisions. It shows that brand ambassadors can support the psychological side of consumers which can influence consumer attitudes and beliefs in making purchasing decisions. Brand ambassadors with a good image can represent the product well. With abetter celebrity image, consumer interest will be higher.

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## H2: Price has a positive and significant effect on Customer Purchase Decision

Price is one of the most significant elements of customer perception and purchase decision on a product. According to Levrini and Santos (2021), the price can be the indicator of product quality where the higher price means that the more excellent the quality is. Not only the quality, but consumers also consider the benefits they will get with the price they spend. If the benefits are equal or more worth than the price, consumers tend to be willing to spend more on that product or service (Imalia & Aprileny, 2020). Especially with the boom of e-commerce, product prices can be reduced because the seller can reduce fixed assets needed such as the store rent and electricity bills. Price is proven to be significant in buying a certain cosmetic product through e-commerce Tokopedia, with price variable as the most dominant influence factor for customers in their purchase decision (Yudistira & Nugroho, 2021). This shows that price is still one ofthe most important considerations in customers with their purchasing decision.

# H3: Product Quality has a positive and significant effect on Customer Purchase Decision

According to Kartikasari and Albari (2019), product capacity to fulfill certain functions or benefits which can consist of durability, reliability, resulting accuracy, and ease of use. High-quality products tend to be more popular because consumers tend to consider that good product quality will provide additional value compared to low-quality products (Rangian et al., 2022). Companies need to increase product quality to survive and remain competitive, it will also eventually result in customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hassan et al., 2013). According to research from Surabaya, Indonesia, product quality significantly affects not only the purchase decision but also the satisfaction of buying Wardah Cosmetics products (Tjahjono et al., 2021). Therefore, the better the quality of the product, the more attractive the product is for customers to decide on their purchase.

## RESEARCH METHOD

#### **Scale Measurement**

This study employs a random sampling and quantitative method with a questionnaire survey as the primary medium. The population of this study ranges from high school to undergraduate students aged 15 to 25. The sampling technique used in this study was nonprobability sampling, which means that the sample selection criteria were determined by the researcher. The survey is divided into three sections: filtering questions, respondent profile, and survey item statement. The goal of the filtering question is to filter the respondents so that the majority of them have at least usedone of the skin care products listed and are interested in Korean trends such as Kpop, Kdrama, and Korean culture. There are three independent variables: the Korean brand ambassador, the price, and the quality. In this study, the dependent variable is the purchase decision. Eachvariable has 4 to 5 survey items. A 5-point Likert scale was used to assess all scales. A value of one indicates strongly disagree, while a value of five indicates strongly agree.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## **Demographic Analysis**

According to the survey's profile section, 63.5% of respondents are aged 19 to 25. The majority of them are undergraduate students, with the remainder being high school students.

The final profile is about occupation level, with 40.4% having a monthly income of Rp. 1,000,000 to Rp. 2,000,000, 36.5% having less than Rp. 1,000,000, and the rest having more than Rp. 2,000,000.

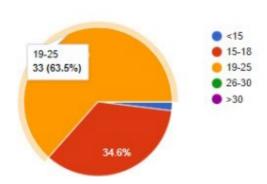


Figure 2. Respondents' Age Profile

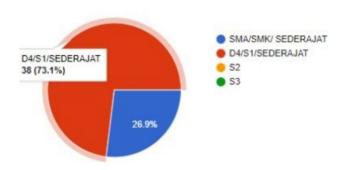


Figure 3. Respondents' Level of Education Profile

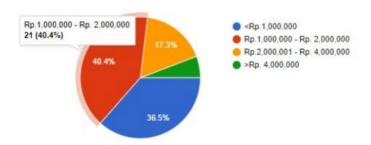


Figure 4. Respondents' Monthly Income Profile

#### **Descriptive Analysis**

Appendix 2 shows the distribution of each survey item answer. The survey answers for the Korean brand ambassador variable and survey item related to the Korean brand ambassador shows a majority of the neutral answer, which shows that the respondents are moderate in considering the Korean brand ambassador image before making their purchase decision. The price, quality, and purchase decision variable show a majority of agree answers, meaning the respondents consider the price and quality before making their purchase decision.

## **Indicator Loadings**

The indicator loadings are used to assess the internal consistency, specifically using the commonality of each survey item. Generally, the ideal commonality using the rule of thumb is at least 0.5 (Ahrens et al., 2020). The commonality of each survey item can be seen in Table 1.

**Brand Ambassador** Price **Purchase Decision** Quality BA1 0.846 BA2 0.897 BA3 0.943 **PD15** 0.872 **PD16** 0.818 **PD17** 0.743 PR<sub>6</sub> 0.901 PR7 0.857 QL12 0.839 QL13 0.538 QL9 0.891

**Table 1. Indicator Loadings** 

Table 1 shows that the commonality of the Korean brand ambassador, price, quality, and purchase decision has exceeded 0.5. This means that each of the survey items listed above has sufficient explanatory contribution power for the model tested. However, survey items BA4, PR5, PR8, QL10, QL11, and PD14 have a commonality score under 0.5. This means that those survey items have low explanatory contributions to the model that lower the reliability and validity of the model. Therefore, for the model testing, this research omits those survey items to stabilize the reliability of variables included for the hypothesis testing.

# Reliability and Validity Tests

Reliability and validity of the variables can also be measured through Cronbach's alpha score. Cronbach's alpha is the most common method to measure the reliability of the variable (Bonett & Wright, 2014). The minimum rule of thumb of Cronbach's alpha score that is considered good is 0.7. However, a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.6 is also generally

acceptable (Mat Nawi et al., 2020).

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Tests

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand ambassador	0.894	1.094	0.924	0.803
Price	0.708	0.723	0.872	0.773
Purchase decision	0.740	0.749	0.853	0.660
Quality	0.657	0.767	0.809	0.595

The table above shows that the Cronbach's alpha for the brand ambassador, price, quality, and purchase decision variable is 0.89, 0.71, and 0.74 respectively. Each of the variables Cronbach's alpha score has exceeded 0.6, which means that each variable is reliable.

## **Multicollinearity Test**

The variance inflation factor (VIF) determines the strength of the correlation between independent variables. VIFs have no upper limit and begin at 1. Based on table 3, all of the independent variable items have VIFs between 1 and 5, indicating a moderate correlation.

**Table 3. Multicollinearity Test** 

	BA1	BA2	BA3	PD15	PD16	PD17	PR6 PR7	QL12 QL13	QL9
VIF	3.145	3.193	2.23	1.826	1.677	1.287	1.43 1.43	1.591 1.118	1.565

## Model Summary (R2)

Based on table 4, the R-squared adjusted value is 56.8%. The adjusted R-squared value indicates that independent variables influence 56.8% of purchase decisions, with the remaining 43.2% influenced by different factors that were not used in this study.

**Table 4. Determination Coefficient** 

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Purchase Decision	0.593	0.568

# **Hypothesis Testing**

H1: Brand Ambassador has a positive and significant effect on Customer Purchase Decision

According to the findings, Korean brand ambassadors (=0.894, t = 1.09, p > 0.005) has no effect on purchase decisions. The findings contradict previous research by Wardani and Nugraha (2022) and Sagia and Situmorang (2018), which found that brand ambassadors have a significant impact on customer purchase decisions for skincare products. The most likely cause of this contradiction is a difference between the sample and the product used. In their study, they use a specific productor brand, whereas, in this study, the product has some options. Many brand options will be the best explanation for why Korean brand ambassadors do not significantly influence customer purchase decisions in this case. Thus, it means that H1 is rejected.

**Table 7. Hypotheses Results** 

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Stati ( O/ST		P Values
Brand Ambassador → Purchase Decision	-0.142	-0.119	1	0.130	1.090	0.276
Price → Purchase Decision	0.144	0.166		0.135	1.066	0.287
Quality → Purchase Decision	0.690	0.689	ı	0.077	8.913	0.000*

<sup>\*</sup>Significant at alpha 5%

H2: Price has a positive and significant effect on Customer Purchase Decision

The same as the brand ambassador, the price variable (=0.708, t = 1.066, p > 0.005) is reliable but does not significantly influence purchase decisions. As the results show, the p-value of the price is greater than the alpha, which is 5%. This also differs from the previous study by Yudistira & Nugroho (2021) and Marcellina (2022), which found that price has a positive and significant effect on customer purchase decisions. The reason is likely because the majority of the participants in this study are young adults (63,5% of 19-25 years old) who already have their occupation (40,4% have a monthlyincome between Rp. 1,000,000 to Rp. 2,000,000), implying that they tend to prefer high-quality products without regard for price. It was concluded that H2 is rejected.

H3: Product Quality has a positive and significant effect on Customer Purchase Decision

Product quality (=0.657, t = 8.913, p < 0.005) is the only variable that has a positive significant impact on customer purchases of local skincare products. This result also indicates that the higher thequality, the more likely customers are to purchase that product. Based on theresult, H3 is accepted.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The results and discussion show that two of the variables used have no significant

effect on the dependent variable. This finding contradicts previous research, which discovered that brand ambassadors (variable 1) and price (variable 2) have a significant impact on customer purchase decisions (Yudistira & Nugroho, 2021; Wardani & Nugraha, 2022). It clearly shows that not all customers, particularly those in this sample study, are concerned with who the brand is and how expensive the product is. Korean brand ambassadors might not be considered by some percentage of customers in their skincare purchase decision, even if they are intrigued with Korean entertainment and culture. Moreover, there is a segment of customers who are willing to spend more on skincare as long as it comes with higher quality and better results. In conclusion, the study generates a recommendation for the local skincare company to concentrate on the consistency of skincare quality because it is the most important factor that consumers consider.

## **Limitations and Future Studies**

The model in this paper only explains a part of a specific condition in a certain community as the respondents participating in the data construction are limited to 52, which will need more data collection to reflect the population's behavior. Moreover, this paper only accounts for direct variables, which is not exploring the possible indirect effects. In addition, this paper does not explain the reason for the Korean brand ambassador's variable insignificancy towards purchase decisions, although the survey respondents have been filtered based on their interest in the Korean wave. Besides, the paper only discusses three variables, while there are more variables that can be included, such as gender, religiosity, peer information, discount, and motivation. For example, this paper does not consider gender as the variable, which resulted in different purchase decisions behavior (Fitriani, 2019). The undiscussed variables might explain the remaining 43.2% of factors that influence the local skincare purchase decision.

Based on the limitations, we suggest future research to explore more about the factors that retain Korean wave fans from considering their idol in their purchase decision. One of the factors is the emotional intelligence factor (Kidwell et al., 2008). This would develop a moreclear distinction between Korean wave fans, which could help enhance the businesses' understanding of their market segmentation. Moreover, the result of price insignificance in this paper is against the result of some previous research, which needs more elaboration on the reason, such as motivation (Gunawan, 2015). The result can be used to determine which aspect of the product should be prioritized between the quality and price, especially for a particular brandmarket research and development. Therefore, future research can choose to focus on a particular brand instead of using several local brands.

#### **APPENDIX**

#### **Appendix 1. Questionnaire Items**

Variables	Authors	Original Questionnaire Items	Code	Adapted Questionnaire Items
Korean Brand Ambassador	Fithri (2021)	Saya menjadi yakin menggunakan produk Nature Republic karena NCT 127 adalah Brand Ambassadornya	BA1	Saya menjadi yakin menggunakan produk skincare lokal ketika Brand Ambassadornya adalah Aktor/Idol Korea

		Member NCT 127 memiliki visual wajah yang tampan dan kulit bersih terawat	BA2	Ciri fisik Aktor/Idol Korea yang baik (wajah tampan, kulit terawat, jiwa muda) membuat saya yakin menggunakan produk skincare lokal yang dipromosikan
		Saya meyakini profesionalisme anggota NCT 127	BA3	Popularitas dan profesionalisme Brand Ambassador Korea membuat saya yakin menggunakan produk skincare lokal yang dipromosikan (meskipun bukan aktor/idol Korea favorit saya)
	Sagir et al. (2021)	Red Velvet menyampaikan informasi keunggulan tentang produk Etude House dengan baik	BA4	Aktor/Idol Korea dapat dipercaya ketika mempromosikan produk skincare lokal, karena produk skincare yang terkenal kebanyakan berasal dari Korea.
Price	Andayani (2017)	Saya berani membayar lebih bila dibanding merek lain	PR1	Saya akan mencoba skincare lokal yang dipromosikan Aktor/Idol Korea meski harganya lebih mahal dari skincare saya biasanya
	Putri (2018)	Saya membeli Wardah Cosmetics karena harganya terjangkau.	PR2	Saya merasa skincare lokal memiliki harga yang lebih terjangkau dibanding skincare non-lokal
		Saya membeli Wardah Cosmetics karena harga Wardah sesuai dengan	PR3	Saya tidak masalah membeli skincare lokal dengan harga yang mahal selama

		kualitasnya.		kualitasnya bagus
	Kokoi (2011)	Which of these following matters are important to you when purchasing facial skin care products? List threemost important.	PR4	Saya merasa harga adalah faktor paling penting sebelum membeli skincare lokal
Product Quality	Anggraeni (2021)	Saya membeli produk The Emina Bright Stuff karena fungsinya sesuaiharapan saya		Saya membeli produk skincare lokal karena komposisi dan kualitasnya sesuai dengan yang saya harapkan
	Pratama (2021)	Kualitas produk Nacific memiliki kesesuaian dengan yang dipromosikan melalui konten Jang Hansol.	QL2	Saya percaya produk skincare lokal yang direkomendasikan Aktor/IdolKorea sudah pasti memiliki kualitas yang bagus
	Siahaan (2021)	Skincare Emina memiliki penjelasan ingredients pada setiapproduknya	QL3	Saya selalu mengecek komposisi bahan skincare sebelum membeli skincare lokal
		Konsumen bangga menggunakan produk Emina karena produk ini berkualitas dan digunakan banyak orang	QL4	Saya merasa kualitas skincare lokal sudah sebanding dengan skincarenon-lokal
	Kokoi (2011)	Which of these following matters are important to you when purchasing facial skin care products? List threemost important.	QL5	Saya merasa kualitas produk adalah faktor terpenting sebelum membeli skincare lokal
Purchase Decision	Lestari (2018)	Konsumen memutuskan untuk membeli produk Innisfree setelah mengetahui Im Yoon Ah merupakan brand ambassador dari brand Innisfree.	PD1	Saya membeli skincare lokal karena tertarik dengan brand ambassador Korea yang mereka pakai.
	Fithri (2021)	Saya membeli produk Nature Republic karena membutuhkan perawatan kulit yang terjamin ingredientnya	PD2	Saya membeli skincare lokal karena membutuhkan perawatan kulit dengan bahan yang terjamin

	Saya akan melakukan pembelian ulang karena merasa puas dengan hasil yang saya dapatkan	PD3	Saya berniat melakukan pembelian ulang karena merasa puas dengan hasil yang saya dapatkan
Rauf (2022)	Saya melakukan pembelian ulang karena cocok di kulit saya dan harganya juga terjangkau dengan ukuran yang cukup besar	PD4	Saya membeli skincare lokal karena harganya terjangkau untuk saya.

**Appendix 2. Survey Descriptive Analysis** 

Survey Item	Answer				Total Score	Mean	Result	
	SS	S	N	TS	STS	-		
BA1	7	12	15	11	7	52	3.0	Neutral
BA2	7	16	11	11	7	52	3.1	Neutral
BA3	7	13	16	10	6	52	3.1	Neutral
BA4	7	11	10	22	2	52	3.0	Neutral
PR5	11	19	8	9	5	52	3.4	Neutral
PR6	17	18	9	6	2	52	3.8	Agree
PR7	22	23	5	0	2	52	4.2	Agree
PR8	18	17	11	6	0	52	3.9	Agree
QL9	23	21	6	1	1	52	4.2	Agree
QL10	7	17	8	16	4	52	3.1	Neutral
QL11	25	17	7	3	0	52	4.2	Agree
QL12	15	18	15	3	1	52	3.8	Agree

0 0	52 4.7	Strongly Agree
11 8	52 3.1	Neutral
2 0	52 4.3	Agree
1 0	52 4.5	Agree
4 0	52 4.2	Agree
1	11 8 2 0 1 0	11 8 52 3.1 2 0 52 4.3 1 0 52 4.5

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