



The influence of NCT dream as something brand ambassador on the fandom purchase decision

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

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The massive expansion of Korean culture, which is more representable as the Korean Wave in Indonesia since the early 2000s with its TV series and now with their food, make-up style, fashion style, and music make many brands use K-Pop stars as their brand ambassador. Brand ambassador itself is a tool for companies to communicate their brand with customers and increase sales. Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as the theoretical approach, this research was conducted to find out about the impact of NCT Dream as the brand ambassador from Something on purchasing decisions using quantitative analysis. After 100 respondents of NCTZen who follow @nctzenbase on Twitter were collected through an online questionnaire, simple linear regression was used to analyze the data. The results of this research showed that NCT Dream, as the brand ambassador, has an impact on the purchasing decisions of Something by 24,8% which is relatively low compared to the other 75,2% factors. Hence, the researcher suggests Something to maximize their promotion in social media marketing, using a beauty influencer, or using a different brand ambassador who has a bigger fan base in Indonesia and for future studies to define the other factors that can influence the purchase decision, such as brand image, E-WOM, and sales promotion.

1. Introduction

Korean Wave or Hallyu Wave stands for the massive cultural expansion from South Korea in terms of films, music, and drama series in the world (Jonghoe, 2012), including in Indonesia. The early 2000s especially with its drama series, called Winter Sonata in 2002 until The Heirs in 2014, was the starting point for Korean Wave to thrive in Indonesia (Rahmawati, 2020). In addition, the increase in the number of people who want to learn the Korean Language and the increase of tourists from Indonesia in South Korea are proof that Indonesia is not excluded from the Korean Wave expansion in the world (Putri et al., 2019). Besides that, a lot of people in Indonesia also starting to like the food, make-up style, skincare, and even how the Koreans style up themselves, which is more noticeable as Korean style (Setyowati, 2021).

Discussing about Korean Wave wouldn't be enough if we were not talking about the genre music that has been popular around the world, which is called Korean pop or K-Pop. K-Pop is a genre from South Korea that started to take a scene in their country in the 1990s, with Lee Soo Man (the founder of SM Entertainment) as the pioneer. He is known as someone who created the trainee system before he establishing a new group under his agency. Because of his successful trainee system, a lot of agencies in South Korea followed his system before they created a new group (Shim, 2006).

The popularity of K-Pop music in Indonesia itself can't be separated from the existence of Korean series broadcast on television. Korean series which are identic with their soundtrack make a lot of people start to love the genre, moreover there are many television channels and radio stations that have their own special segments for K-Pop or even special programs for K-pop were two of the many

reasons why the genre is so popular in Indonesia (V. K. Putri & Reese, 2018). Aside from television and radio segments or even programs, social media that has been used by the people is also one of the reasons why the genre is so popular in Indonesia. According to We Are Social's data, at the beginning of 2021, more than half of the people in Indonesia have used social media, with an average usage time of more than three hours per day (Stephanie, 2021) and even from Twitter's data, from the 1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021, Indonesia has come to number one in terms of tweeting about K-pop (Javier, 2021). From that, it can be concluded that social media is one of the reasons why K-pop is so popular in Indonesia. Even though Twitter is one of the social media that has a part in spreading K-Pop, YouTube is also one of the social media that provide people with a lot of videos, including the music video of K-Pop artists. From YouTube, people can watch the latest videos about their favorite Korean artists, music video of their favorite idols for free, and even learn the meaning behind one song from the subtitle (Jung & Shim, 2014).

K-pop which has been very popular in Indonesia, makes a lot of people to get involved in a fandom of one or two specific Korean idols, which leads to many companies use K-pop idols as the brand ambassador of their products (Rahma, 2021). Numerous South Korean idols and actors have turned into a brand ambassador of Indonesian products, a few examples of that are BTS for Tokopedia, Park Seo Joon for BliBli, Lee Min Ho for Lazada, and several others. The successful outcome of using Korean idol as brand ambassador can be seen when BTS became the brand ambassador for Tokopedia and made the event called "*Waktu Indonesia Belanja*" as a trending topic in Twitter (Mediaindonesia.com, 2021). After the successful outcome of Korean actors and K-pop idols as brand ambassador for e-commerce brands, a lot of cosmetics brands such as Scarlett with its brand ambassador, Song Joong Ki and Twice; Azarine with its brand ambassador, Red Velvet; Everwhite with its brand ambassador, Kim Seon Ho; MS Glow with its brand ambassador, Cha Eun Woo, etc (Annedeane, 2022). Somethinc is one of the brands which uses K-pop idols as their brand ambassador. Somethinc is a local beauty product from Indonesia that produces skincare, make-up, and body care. Even though Somethinc is considered a young brand, as it just started its journey in the industry in 2019 (C. N. Putri, 2021), Somethinc proved their quality after being the hot-selling item in e-commerce in 2022 (Compas.co.id, 2022; Rukmana, 2022; Sutiani, 2022).

NCT Dream, a well-known K-pop idol in Indonesia and throughout the globe, has been selected to represent Somethinc as their new brand ambassador. With seven members, NCT Dream is an SM Entertainment group that began their adventure at a very young age. As a group that has been active in the South Korean and international entertainment scenes for more than five years, they have achieved the title of triple million seller for the first-length album "Hot Sauce" and the repackaged album "Hello Future" that they sold in physical form in 2021 (Subyakto, 2021). Following their remarkable career with "Hot Sauce" and "Hello Future," in their most recent comeback with a new album named "ISTJ," NCT Dream once again proved that they are one of the groups that still continue to be the top group in the entertainment industry as they sold 3.6 million copies in its first week on the market (E. Cha, 2023).

NCT Dream is also has a large fan base and is considered as a successful group in Indonesia. This could be seen by the 36000 attendees of their concert in Indonesia in March 2023, which took place at ICE BSD for three consecutive days (Angelina et al., 2023). The group was selected to be Somethinc's brand ambassadors because, according to the company's spokesperson, Somethinc and NCT Dream share a dream, where Somethinc hopes to introduce a high-quality product that would enable people to live out their dream of having flawless skin. The same passion, growth, and loyalty that characterize Somethinc products also characterize NCT Dream, which is another factor that led Somethinc to select them as brand ambassadors (Simamora, 2022).

Regarding the concept of collaboration between Somethinc and NCT Dream, Somethinc itself acquired the idea of NCT Dream as a high school student from the numerous alternate universe stories in which NCT Dream serves as the main character. Somethinc hopes that by applying this idea, NCT Dream fans will be able to enjoy more of contents that Somethinc has to provide (Oktaviani, 2022). The use of NCT Dream as their brand ambassador, Somethinc also employed a pre-order method that caused NCTZen or NCT Dream fans, to go crazy trying to find the items. In addition, their plan of creating photo cards to go along with their package worked well in encouraging NCTZen to bid against Somethinc for beauty product packages (Ermaningtiastuti, 2022). Offering an opportunity for fans to

interact with their idol is another reason why NCTZen invades the packages supplied by Somethinc while using NCT Dream as their brand ambassador (C. N. Putri, 2022).

Prior research on brand ambassadors was carried out by Fajri et al., (2022), who analyzed the connection between Scarlett Whitening's brand image and their brand ambassador, Song Joong Ki. As indicated in the research study, Song Joong Ki, as the brand ambassador, has an intense connection to the Scarlett Whitening brand image. Another research was conducted by Sadrabadi et al., (2018), where they discussed the role of brand ambassador in social media. A brand ambassador can affect the Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), the brand ambassador's effect can be strengthened by brand image and the rise of brand awareness was the result of the research.

In order to receive a persuasive message, some individuals use critical thinking to process the message and some individuals use much less critical thinking to process the message, the communication theory that discusses how people process a persuasive message is the Elaboration Likelihood Model or ELM (Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017). Information that is processed by the central route is often provided by how much the audience takes the information, a reasonable excuse, and proof to support the conclusion of the information (Dainton & Zelle, 2019), but it's not enough if the audience doesn't have a personal interest in the information. The audience often discovers that the issue is relevant to them in order to process a message in the central route (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The more the audience gets absorbed in the information, the more they get affected by the information than the character of the communicator (Griffin, 2012). Even if the information is processed in a central route by the audience, this does not guarantee that it will positively influence their opinions. Occasionally, it can have the opposite effect on the audience if the communicator's argument is considered to be weak, but it may additionally lead the audience to develop a sense of indifferent in regards to the communicator's message (Griffin, 2012), which is why the audience's desire to comprehend the message is not enough. In order for the audience to fully comprehend the information, the audience must first be in a position to fully comprehend the message (Dainton & Zelle, 2019).

Besides the central route, there is another route called the peripheral route where the audience processes the information simpler and tends to easily give a judgment towards the information (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The audience's tendency to collectively form quick opinions regarding the message refers to the fact that the behavior change is just momentary. The peripheral route is often used when the audience finds the communicator is credible, liked by the people, and someone who is considered as an expert, if the communicator meets the criteria, their message will simply have a persuasive impact on the audience (Griffin, 2012).

A peripheral communication may exhibit the following symptoms: authority, where the communicator in order to persuade the audience to embrace the ideas or actions they represent, the communicator appeals to their sense of power; commitment, where the communicator draws attention to the audience's devotion to a certain product, social cause, organization, political party, etc.; contrast, where the contrast effect requires the communicator to create unequal comparison; liking, where the communicator uses the audience's favorite public figure to deliver ideas with the hopes that the audience would find the ideas appealing if they like the public figure; reciprocity, where the communicator draws attention to a give-and-take relationship in an attempt to convince the audience; scarcity, when the communicator acknowledged the audience's concerns over missing something; and social proof, where it refers to the way that a message spreads and has the ability to persuasively persuade listeners because of the idea that "everyone is doing it" (Dainton & Zelle, 2019).

Brand ambassador itself is a tool by the company to communicate and get connected to the public in order to increase their sales (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). According to Andersson and Ekman in Sadrabadi et al., (2018), it is undeniable that using a brand ambassador alone is a more successful marketing tactic than using an advertisement. Another definition of a brand ambassador is that brand ambassador is someone who is passionate about a certain brand and has the ability to convince the customers to purchase or make use of that particular brand (Firmansyah, 2019).

A corporation may use a more likable and well-respected brand ambassador as part of a strategy aimed at altering how customers think about their products. Using a well-known and well-respected celebrity as a brand ambassador can help the brand to gain press attention because reporters are constantly looking for news about the artists the public admires. This will eventually end up resulting in free, substantial press coverage for the brand. In addition, a celebrity assigned to represent a

particular brand will provide an entirely fresh angle to the business as, depending on the market, a brand ambassador will both represent the brand and draw in new clients. Following that, the brand ambassador will also provide a new dimension to an already-running campaign that certain brands have (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

There are three qualities that define a brand ambassador: credibility, where a brand ambassador is considered as someone who is credible by the public eyes, as they easily gain the audience's trust as they considered to be someone who is trustworthy or because they are someone who has an expertise in the subject that is being represented by a brand ambassador; attractiveness, where the brand ambassador is considered as attractive by the customers when they find the brand ambassador have something in common or because the customers find that they like brand ambassador regardless; and power, where the word of power refers to the charisma or charms that the brand ambassador have to influence their audience (Shimp & Andrews, 2018).

The purchase decision is included in the consumer behavior study. The study of consumer behavior focuses on the way individuals make a decision as they look for, assess, buy, and make use of goods, and services that they feel it going to fulfill their necessity (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Purchase decision itself is a condition when customers are faced with two or more options (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). That means the purchase decision is not the same thing as the actual buying process, but the purchase decision is based on the desire to buy, followed by the attributes and characters of a brand in a selection process (Belch & Belch, 2018). The indicators for purchase decisions are product choice, brand choice, dealer choice, purchase amount, purchase timing, and payment methods (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Somethinc, being an Indonesian beauty product company with quality that can compete with both local and international beauty products, certainly has its own goals in using NCT Dream as their brand ambassador, such as raising sales and attracting new customers. Therefore, as previously explained, the purpose of this study was to implement quantitative explanatory research to determine how NCT Dream, as the brand ambassador of Somethinc, affected the fandom purchase decisions.

2. Method

This research used quantitative method, where the researcher do an examination in a certain population or certain sample and the research tools are used for the data gathering, while statistics are used for data analysis to test existing hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2022). Moreover, explanatory quantitative research approaches will be used particularly for this study. Explanatory study involves determining the correlation between two or more variables (Kriyantono, 2014). In other words, this approach is employed by researchers attempting to gain insight into the factors influencing a specific state. The purpose of this study was to find out more precisely how brand ambassadors affect consumers' decisions to buy a certain product.

Researchers have identified specific features of a population that should be investigated and conclusions taken from (Sugiyono, 2013). Twitter users who follow the @nctzenbase account were used as the research sample. However, several samples that potentially represent a population will be taken because the selected population is big. Since the study findings obtained from samples will eventually reflect a population, sampling from a population must be really representative.

The sample is a portion of the quantity and features of the population (Sugiyono, 2013). The number of participants in this study is already known, there were 835,546 followers of the @nctzenbase account on Twitter. The Yamane formula (Sugiyono, 2022) with a 10% margin of error will be applied to the computations as the population utilized in this study is known. Based on the computation, the researcher ought to gather 100 followers for the purpose of collecting study samples.

This study adopted a probability sampling technique to determine the sample, meaning that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected for the sample (Sugiyono, 2022). Furthermore, the study made use of simple random sampling for the collection of samples, which takes away the necessity for the researchers to consider taking into careful consideration the present state of the population as a whole because it has been considered to be homogenous (Sugiyono, 2022).

In order to analyze the results that have been processed by SPSS Version 27, simple linear regression, t-test, and coefficient of determination were used as the data analysis technique (Sugiyono, 2022)

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Presenting the Results

Table 1 Simple Linear Regression Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	10.080	8.578		1.175	.243
Brand Ambassador	1.430	.252	.489	5.679	.000

Simple linear regression was used to determine whether there were any possible differences in the purchase decisions variable if brand ambassador variable changed. According to the result of Simple Linear Regression, $Y=10,080+1,430$ where the consistent value of the purchase decision variable is 10,080 and the regression coefficient number of the brand ambassador variable is 1,430. That means each additional worth of the brand ambassador will affect the purchase decision variable by 1,430 and the direction of the brand ambassador's influence on the purchase decision is positive.

Table 2 t-test Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	10.080	8.578		1.175	.243
Brand Ambassador	1.430	.252	.489	5.679	.000

T-test was used to test the hypotheses, according to the result above, the significance value is 0,000 which is smaller than 0,05 and the t-test value is 5,679 which is larger than the t-table value which is 2,629. In other words, the hypothesis that NCT Dream, as the brand ambassador of Something, influences consumers' purchasing decisions is accepted. The explanation ultimately results in the conclusion that the brand ambassador variable contributes to the purchase decision variable.

Table 3 Coefficients of Determination Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.498 ^a	.248	.240	5.618

The Coefficient of Determination was used to determine how much influence the brand ambassador variable had on the purchase decision variable in percentage form. According to the result, 0,248 was obtained from the R Square, which means that NCT Dream as the brand ambassador of Something can influence the customers' purchase decision by 24,8%, while the other 75,2% can't be found in this research.

3.2. Create a Discussion

Based on the data results which are being processed with SPSS version 27, the brand ambassador variable can affect the purchase decision variable. That means the persuasive message from Something which is carried out by NCT Dream as the face of their brand, affects the purchase decision of NCT

Dream's fans, which is called NCTzen especially those who follow @nctzenbase on Twitter. In the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), communicants usually process a persuasive message in two routes, those routes are the central route and the peripheral route.

According to Petty and John Cacioppo in Littlejohn et al. (2017), the audience uses a central route when the messages they receive are close to them, so they can process the messages with critical thinking, while the audience who use a peripheral route process the messages they receive with less critical thinking and tends to give a fast judgment towards the messages they got. In order to communicate their products to the customers, which is NCTZen who follow @nctzenbase on Twitter, Somethinc chooses the peripheral route of the audience to influence their purchase decisions. The action was done to make the customers fast in making a decision, even though this change will not last long (Griffin, 2012). The communicator usually targets the audience's peripheral route because it relies on the audience's emotional engagement (Dainton & Zelle, 2019), in this case, Somethinc aims for the NCTZen's emotions as they have the emotional connection towards Somethinc's brand ambassador, NCT Dream.

In order to aim for the customers' peripheral route, Somethinc uses NCT Dream's credibility, attractiveness, and power. In the Elaboration Likelihood Model, those three factors that are owned by the brand ambassador are the signs of how the communicator aims for the audience's peripheral route (Griffin, 2012). Even though credibility is considered as a factor where the audiences would use their central route, sometimes if the communicator is someone who is considered as someone who is credible by the audience, the audience tends to focus on the communicator's credibility and go straight to believe the communicator's messages without considering about the truth behind the message which has been carried out by the communicator.

There are three signs of peripheral messages that Somethinc uses to influence the customers' purchase decisions through their brand ambassador, NCT Dream. The three signs are authority, liking, and reciprocity (Dainton & Zelle, 2019), the sign of authority can be shown with the use of NCT Dream as their brand ambassador as they have the power to influence their fans, which is NCTZen who follow @nctzenbase on Twitter, purchase decisions; the sign of liking can be seen from how they use NCT Dream, with the hope that NCTZen will also like their products as their idol is the one who represented the brand; and the sign of reciprocity is by highlighting the rewards that the consumers will get if they buy Somethinc's products. In this particular situation, Somethinc made packages containing their products and handed the customer who bought the package a box of photo cards featuring the members of NCT Dream.

Convincing customers to make purchases also involves proof from society. Peer pressure is experienced by those who reject the behavior that the majority of a population engages in. This type of phenomenon is known as social proof (Dainton & Zelle, 2019). The people who posted on @nctzenbase stating that they had purchased Somethinc's products in order to support their idol as the brand ambassador of Somethinc have been putting pressure on NCTZen, especially those who follow @nctzenbase on Twitter and do not have a tendency to buy Somethinc's products. As a consequence of that, those who read the message will feel compelled to purchase the products.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results and the explanation, the conclusion from this research was NCT Dream as the brand ambassador has an influence on the purchase decision of Somethinc. The result was supported by the t-test where the significance value is $0,000 < 0,05$. In the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the persuasive message delivered by Somethinc's brand ambassador, NCT Dream, to customers is thought to be processed in the peripheral channel. The peripheral route is a shortcut for the communicator to ensure that the audience accept their perspective quickly, whereas Somethinc seeks for their customers' peripheral route to facilitate them to make a purchase decision quickly.

Besides that, the value of NCT Dream's influence as the brand ambassador on the purchase decision of Somethinc is 24,8% whereas the other 75,2% factor can't be defined by this research. As the percentage of the brand ambassador's impact on the purchase decision is rather low compared to the other factors, the researcher suggests the future studies to define other factors that can affect the purchase decision variable, such as brand image, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), or sales

promotion. The researcher also suggests something to maximize their promotion on social media marketing, using a beauty influencer, or using a different brand ambassador who has a bigger fan base in Indonesia.

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