A Quantitative Analysis of Brand Ambassador Effectiveness:
The Lemonilo and NCT Dream Case

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Abstract *Objective This study aims to analyze the influence of NCT Dream as brand ambassadors on organic instant noodle Lemonilo buying decisions and intention to purchase Lemonilo, and to determine the effect of intention on purchasing decisions from Lemonilo. Methodology This research uses quantitative methods with a quantitative descriptive analysis approach. The type of research is explanatory research which aims to explain the relationship between research variables. The research samples were taken randomly from the population. Data collection was carried out through an online survey using Google Forms. Findings The findings demonstrated that Lemonilo buying decision is positively and significantly impacted by NCT Dream as brand ambassadors and consumers' buying interest, and consumers' buying interest is positively and significantly influenced by NCT Dream as brand ambassadors. Novelty The quantitative analysis of the influence of brand ambassador on buying decisions and purchase intention speficially for the Lemonilo brand is the novelty of the research.*

Keywords: *Brand Ambassador, Purchase Intention, Buying Decision, Organic Instant Noodle*

I. INTRODUCTION

The growing trend of health and environmental awareness has led to the extensive growth of organic food as it is perceived to be healthier to humans and the environment (Pangaribuan et al., 2020). This is due to the fact that instant noodles are inexpensive, convenient to serve, and available in a wide variety of tastes. Another factor contributing to instant noodles' high popularity among Indonesians is its readily assimilated flavor. Although very popular with the Indonesian people, instant noodle can cause various diseases if consumed too often. Various diseases that are at risk if consuming instant noodles too often: High Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Miscarriage, Headaches, Obesity. So many bad impacts on health that can occur if eating Instant Noodles too often and excessively. However, Indonesia has a brand that is claimed to be healthier, namely Lemonilo Mie Instan, which is instant noodles that is free from dangerous synthetic ingredients because they are made from organic spinach and are also equipped with spices that are free from Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), and Hydrolyzed Vegetables Protein (HVP), preservatives, flavors and artificial colors. Not only that, Lemonilo Noodles are also low in gluten and low in calories, unlike other Instant Noodles. Lemonilo noodles were created because of the desire to support the health value of Indonesian families. Lemonilo also has a vision for the Indonesian nation to be healthier so that it provides healthy products at affordable prices.

In recent years, Korean culture has been very popular with the Indonesian people, whether in the world of film, drama, fashion, music, or food from Korea (Prasanti & Dewi, 2020). The followers began to imitate only their idols as a result of the appearance of Korean

celebrities who served as the ambassadors or models (Muskitta et al., 2022). The impact of Korea in Indonesia is so great that many companies are competing to use South Korean artists as promotional materials for their products in order to win the hearts of consumers to sell their products (Fuadi et al., 2023). One of the companies that uses Korean artists to promote its products is Lemonilo. In January 2022, Lemonilo officially announced that NCT Dream became its newest Brand Ambassador. NCT Dream, which consists of 7 members named Mark, Jeno, Renjun, Haechan, Jaemin, Jisung and Chenle, who debuted on August 25, 2016 under the auspices of the SM Entertainment agency. NCT Dream has a fan base called NCTzen. NCTzen is a group of young people who have high spirits and are enthusiastic to support NCT Dream. Collaborating with NCT Dream as a brand ambassador, Lemonilo wants to have a positive impact not only for young people but can be accepted by all groups.

Based on the background that has been described, the problems that the researcher wants to know in this study are: 1. How does NCT as a brand ambassador affect Lemonilo's buying interest? 2. How does NCT as a brand ambassador affect Lemonilo's buying decision? 3. How does buying interest affect Lemonilo's buying decision?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Buying Decision

Consumer decisions in buying something are usually influenced by financial economics, technology, politics, culture, products, prices, locations, promotions, physical evidence, people and processes, thus forming attitudes in consumers to process all information and draw conclusions in the form of responses that arise.

Purchase decisions are the selection of two or more alternative consumer choices to buy (Septiano & Sari, 2021). Purchase decisions are one of the main components of consumer behavior. Consumer purchasing decisions are the stages used by consumers when buying goods and services.

According to Dewi et al. (2020), purchasing decisions are the stage where consumers recognize problems, seek information about a product, evaluate how well each alternative can solve their problems leading to purchasing decisions. One of the factors that can increase a consumer's purchasing decision is the brand ambassador and the price offered (Lestari et al., 2018). Research from Siskhawati and Maulana (2021) mentioned that using the strategy of using advertising as a promotional medium can be one way to trigger consumer purchasing decisions. The large number of similar products or services makes companies compete with each other to win consumers.

Stability of a Product

Consumers often seek products that are dependable and meet their expectations over time. This focus on consistency and reliability is a key factor in customer satisfaction and loyalty (Grace et al., 2021). For instance, a customer who consistently purchases the same brand of coffee may do so because they find it to be of high quality and consistent taste, which meets their expectations every time.

Habits in Buying Products

Consumers often develop habits in their buying decisions, making it easier to choose products or services that they are familiar with (Petcharat & Leelasantitham, 2021). This routine or pattern of consumer purchasing behavior can influence their choices, even if there are other options available. For example, a customer who always buys milk from the same grocery store because it's on their way home may do so out of habit, rather than actively considering other options.

Giving Recommendations to Others

Consumers may recommend products or services to friends and family based on their personal experiences and satisfaction (Patil & Rane, 2023). This influence of consumer opinions can significantly impact the purchasing decisions of others. For example, a customer who recommends a new restaurant to their friends because they enjoyed their meal there may encourage them to try it for themselves, potentially leading to increased business for the restaurant.

Making Repeat Purchases

Repeat purchases are often driven by satisfaction with the product or service, loyalty to the brand, or convenience (Rane et al., 2023). This likelihood of a consumer purchasing a product or service again is a key indicator of customer satisfaction and retention. For example, a customer who subscribes to a monthly beauty box may do so because they enjoy trying new products and find the subscription to be convenient, leading to repeat purchases over time.

Buying Interest

According to Ramadoni (2020), interest is something that is personal and also related to attitudes, individuals who are interested in an object will have the strength or drive to carry out a series of behaviors to approach or obtain the object. Meanwhile, according to Kotler and Keller (2012), the definition of consumer buying interest is consumer behavior where consumers have a desire to buy or choose a product, based on experience in choosing, using and consuming or even wanting a product. According to Ferdinand (2014), buying interest can

be identified through the following indicators: transactional interest, referential interest, preferential interest, and explorative interest.

Transactional Interest

The need for an instantaneous exchange of commodities or services is what motivates transactional interests (Durand & Kozak, 2009). Those with transactional interests frequently base their purchases on need or self-interest. For example, a customer might buy groceries at a supermarket because they need food for their family.

Referential Interest

The desire to gain knowledge from the experiences and viewpoints of others motivates referential interests (Morris et al., 2022). Before making decisions, people with referential interests frequently ask friends, family, coworkers, or internet sources for advice or information. For example, a consumer might research online reviews of a product or service before making a purchase.

Preferential Interest

A strong affinity for a specific good, service, or brand fuels preferential interests (Lee & Jin, 2019). Those with preference interests frequently base their purchases on loyalty, ideals, or personal taste. For example, a fan might purchase merchandise from their favorite musician because of their admiration for the artist and their desire to support their work.

Explorative Interest

Curiosity, novelty, or a need for diversity are the driving forces behind explorative interests (Kidd & Hayden, 2015). People that are interested in exploration frequently look for novel goods, services, or encounters. For example, a tourist might visit a new destination to explore different cultures and customs.

Brand Ambassador

Marketing strategies using brand ambassadors are nothing new. An advertisement supported by someone attractive such as a famous celebrity will attract more audience attention and be easy to remember so that brand ambassadors can have an effect on brand image because their character can influence brand identity (Fitrianingsih et al., 2020). Research from (Fitrianto et al., 2020) Brand Ambassador is a person or celebrity who is familiar with advertising and promotion, promoting a product or service. Brand Ambassadors are used by companies to shape and implement the external image of the Brand and communicate their message to the public. Marketing companies use Brand Ambassadors for campaigns that answer questions, attract audiences, and add value to the brand. Meanwhile, according to Priantana and Istiyanto (2019), Brand Ambassador is a tool used by companies to communicate and connect with the

public, in the hope of increasing sales. Furthermore, Brand Ambassador can also be interpreted as someone who is trusted to represent a particular product. The use of brand ambassadors is carried out by companies to influence or invite consumers to use a product, the selection of brand ambassadors is usually famous celebrities. In Nguyen's (2021) research, it is explained that celebrity endorsements can be a double-edged sword so it is very important for companies to find adequate solutions to choose endorsers who are truly suitable for running branding. Purnandika et al. (2022) explains that brand ambassadors have several characteristics, namely (1) popularity/visibility, (2) credibility, (3) attraction, and (4) power.

Popularity

Popularity or visibility is an indicator of how well-known a celebrity is. The popularity of a celebrity can be seen from how many audiences or fans the celebrity has, while appearance can be assessed by how often they appear in public (Lunardo et al., 2015).

Credibility

A celebrity is related to two important things, objectivity and expertise. Objectivity can be interpreted by how much the celebrity is trusted by consumers of the product in representing the brand, while expertise can be interpreted as how relevant the celebrity is to the product they endorse (Hudha & Hidayat, 2009).

Attraction

The acceptance of messages advertised by brand ambassadors can be well received if the brand ambassador has good attraction. Consumers can change their perceptions and purchasing behavior through the influence of attraction (Kim & Kim, 2022). Attraction can generally be in the form of physical appearance, intellectual, lifestyle, and others.

Strength

This strength can be interpreted as the charisma of celebrities that can influence consumers to buy the products they represent (Lee, 2015).

Based on our framework (see Figure 1) and data collection methods, we set the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Brand Ambassador has a significant effect on Buying Interest.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Brand Ambassador has a significant effect on Buying Decision.

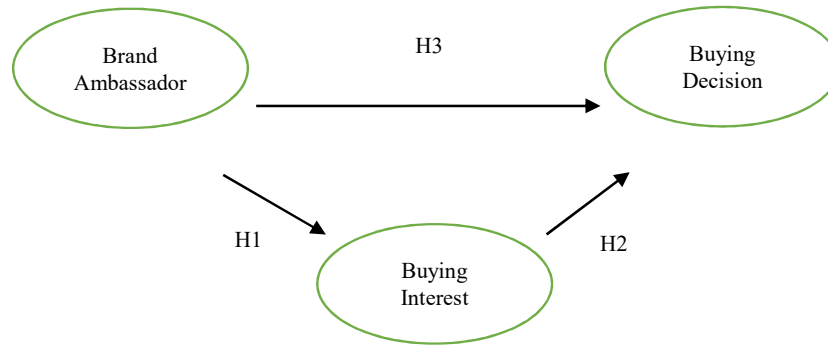*Hypothesis 3 (H3): Buying Interest has a significant effect on Buying Decision.*

Figure 1 Proposed Conceptual Model

3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher used a quantitative correlational method, which aims to determine the relationship between a person or the existence of others, or correlational research which essentially aims to determine and determine how much variation in a factor is related to variation in one or several other factors based on the correlation coefficient such as distributing questionnaires. The researchers compile variables and components for his research methodology in Table 1.

Table 1 Measurement Scale

Construct	Indicator	Sample Items
Buying Decision (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Osak & Pasharibu, 2020)	Consistency in buying products	Lemonilo contains natural and harmless ingredients, thus influencing me in my purchasing decisions.
	Habits in buying goods	Lemonilo products come to mind when you first want to buy instant noodles.
	Giving recommendations to others	Lemonilo is recommended for people who want to live a healthy life.
	Making repeat purchases	Buying Lemonilo products continuously.
Buying Interest (Ferdinand, 2014)	Transactional Interest	Buying Lemonilo products because they are familiar with Lemonilo products.
	Referential Interest	Buying Lemonilo products and then recommending the products to others.
	Preferential Interest	Lemonilo products are liked by the buyer personally.
	Explorative Interest	Buying Lemonilo products because they are curious about Lemonilo products.
Brand Ambassador	Popularity	NCT Dream's popularity can attract attention.

(Iswanto & Sanaji, 2021)	Credibility	Many other products use NCT Dream's services so NCT Dream can be trusted as a Brand Ambassador.
	Attractiveness	NCT Dream has a strong appeal.
	Power	NCT Dream has a big influence.

All of the participants in this study were users who had made purchases through TikTok Shop. Furthermore, users of TikTok Shop between the ages of 17 and 30 who are interested in buying products from a known brand on the platform are the target audience for this research. The link between marketing content and TikTok Shop brand awareness, which affects the rise of user purchase interest, is the focus of this study. Quantitative methodologies are used in the data collecting process. Quantitative descriptive analysis is the method employed, and the research is explanatory in nature. A survey is the approach used in this study to collect data.

The criteria for respondents are Jakarta residents aged 17 years and over and who have used the TikTok Shop application to shop online. The minimum age criterion was set because researchers wanted respondents who gave answers to really know why they were shopping, so that the answers they got were the correct answers.

Respondents get access to the online survey on Google Forms through a link in the questionnaire. This study's data gathering method is seen to be appropriate as it can quickly and affordably reach remote respondents. We employ random sampling, which involves selecting samples at random from a predefined population.

According to Hair et al. (2019), determining the minimum sample size for the Structural Equation Model (SEM) is: (Number of indicators + number of latent variables) x (5 to 10 times) Based on these guidelines, the maximum sample size for this research is: (9 indicator x 6) = 54 respondents. Based on this formula, the number of samples in this study was 54 respondents who were Tiktok Shop users.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Survey Participants

Respondent characteristics based on gender in this study were dominated by women with a total of 24 people and a percentage of 61.5% and the characteristics of male respondents were 15 people with a percentage of 38.5% of the total sample of respondents in this study as many as 39 people.

Respondent characteristics based on age were dominated by respondents with an age range of 17-24 years with a frequency of 37 people and a percentage of 94.9%. Continued with

an age range of 24-30 years and> 30 years with a frequency of 1 person each and a percentage of 2.6%.

Validity/Reliability

The test results carried out by the study were obtained if the significance value was less than 0.05 and the calculated value was greater than the table (0.316). It can be seen that the highest *r* count value is in item 20 with a value of 0.836 and the lowest is in item 10 with a value of 0.175. Thus, it can be concluded that there is one instrument that does not meet the requirements, but the overall average of the instruments meets the validity requirements.

The results of the reliability test for each variable and the overall total. Because the Cronbach's Alpha value for the Brand Ambassador variable is 0.749, the Buying Decision variable is 0.752, and the Buying interest variable is 0.748 and the overall total is 0.758. So it can be concluded that the data obtained meets the reliability requirements.

The result of a descriptive test where 39 respondents have values above average. It can be seen that the minimum value filled in by the respondents is 32 and the highest is 132 with an average value of 78.26 and the Standard Deviation in this study is 22.301.

Multicollinearity

This test should not have multicollinearity between variables. Symptoms of multicollinearity can be identified by using the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) value. If VIF> 10.00 then it can be concluded that the variable has a multicollinear relationship. Based on the Collinearity Statistics test, it is known that the tolerance value of all related variables is 1,000> 0.10 while the VIF of all related variables is 1,000 <10. then it can be concluded that there are no symptoms of multicollinearity in the regression model.

Hypothesis Testing

From the results in Table 2, it can be seen that the *P* value of the Brand Ambassador variable (X) is $0.000 < 0.05$ and the calculated T of the Brand Ambassador variable (X) is $5.353 > 2.026$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Brand Ambassador variable (X) has an influence on the Buying Decision variable (Y). From the results, it can be seen that the Sig. of the Brand Ambassador variable (X) is $0.000 < 0.05$ and the calculated T value of the Brand Ambassador variable (X) is $7.377 > 2.026$. Thus, it can be concluded that the Brand Ambassador variable (X) has an influence on the Buying Interest variable (Z). The results also shows that the Sig. value of the Buying Interest variable (Z) is $0.000 < 0.05$ and the calculated T value of the Buying Interest variable (Z) is $11.242 > 2.026$. Thus, it can be concluded that the Buying Interest (Z) variable has an influence on the Buying Decision (Y) variable.

Table 2 Hypothesis Testing

Path	Tolerance	VIF	β	t Statistics	P Value	Result
Brand Ambassador → Buying Decision	1.000	1.000	0.579	5.353	0.000	Accepted
Brand Ambassador → Buying Interest	1.000	1.000	1.165	7.377	0.000	Accepted
Buying Interest → Buying Decision	1.000	1.000	0.510	11.242	0.000	Accepted

The results of this study indicate the influence of Brand Ambassador on Buying Decision and Buying Interest and the influence of Buying Interest on Buying Decision. It can be seen from the 3 regression test results that the influence of Brand Ambassador has a positive effect on Buying Decision and Buying Interest and the influence of Buying Interest has a positive effect on Buying Decision. The greater the Brand Ambassador factor, the greater the Buying Decision and Buying Interest. Buying Interest is an additional factor influenced by Brand Ambassador and influences Buying Decision. So the higher the Brand Ambassador, the higher the Buying Interest, so that it influences the Buying Decision which is also high. Likewise, the lower the Brand Ambassador, the lower the Buying Interest, so that the Buying Decision is also low.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that brand ambassador has an influence on buying decision and buying interest from the Lemonilo brand with NCT Dream as the ambassadors. These results show that using a brand ambassador can increase buying interest and buying decision. Therefore, the brand Lemonilo should continue to form strategic partnerships with popular and credible brand ambassadors who align with the brand values and target audience. Moreover, the brand should utilize brand ambassadors' social media platforms and influence to reach a wider audience and increase brand awareness. Finally, the brand is advised to ensure that brand ambassadors are perceived as credible and authentic sources of information about Lemonilo's products.

The online survey approach is known for its limit in directly establishing causality among the study constructs. The future research is recommended to observe other brands of organic instant food and different brand ambassadors.

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