



**EFFECT OF BRAND AMBASSADOR AND PRODUCT QUALITY ON PURCHASING DECISIONS WITH BRAND IMAGE AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE
(Case Study on Scarlett Whitening Product Users in Makassar City)**

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the effect of brand ambassadors and product quality on purchasing decisions with brand image as an intervening variable for users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City. This research is a quantitative research, the data used is primary data obtained from distributing questionnaires to research objects. The population in this study are users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City. The sampling technique used purposive sampling so that a sample of 385 respondents was obtained. The analytical method used in this study uses regression analysis through the PLS (Partial Least Square) method with the help of SmartPLS 3.0 Software. The results of the study show that (1) brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on Scarlett Whitening's brand image; (2) product quality has a positive and significant effect on Scarlett Whitening's brand image; (3) brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City; (4) brand ambassadors have a positive but not significant effect on purchasing decisions for users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City; (5) product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City; (6) brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions through brand image for users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City;

Keywords: brand ambassador, product quality, brand image, purchase decision.

A. PRELIMINARY

In the millennial era, skin care and body care products are considered one of the basic needs that must be met. Skin and facial health is very important to maintain and care for because these two things are things that really support appearance. Based on data from We Are Social & Hootsuite (2021), there are 8 categories of goods and services with the highest sales levels in e-commerce. Globally, beauty and clothing products occupy the first rank with sales of \$665.6 billion, a growth of 27% from the previous year (<https://wearesocial.com/>).

The high demand for beauty products in the market has triggered the emergence of various beauty brands that offer a variety of products, both local brands and international brands. One beauty brand that has recently become popular is Scarlett Whitening. Scarlett Whitening is a local brand founded in 2017 by Felicya

Angelista. Even though this local brand is still relatively new, it can develop very rapidly.

At the beginning of 2021, the total transaction value for the beauty care category on the online market has exceeded Rp. 20 Billion. The highest sales came from Scarlett Whitening with a market share of 57%, while in second place was won by Vaseline with a significant difference in sales of only 15%, followed by lifebuoy with 8%. Not only that, at the beginning of the following month, namely February 1-18 2021, Scarlett Whitening sales were able to break the Rp. 17.7 Billion. This sales figure increased dramatically compared to the previous month's sales of only Rp. 7 Billion. (<https://compas.co.id>)



Figure 1. Best-selling Local Skincare Brands in E-Commerce
Source: <https://compas.co.id>

The high level of consumer purchasing decisions for a product will have a good influence on the company's growth. Therefore, proper marketing communication is needed to introduce products to the public so that they are able to reach a wider range of consumers in the hope of increasing product sales and increasing consumer loyalty. One of them is by using brand ambassadors. Pamudyaning & Mudiantono (2016) states that a brand ambassador is a public figure who is entrusted with introducing a product to the public and is also believed to be one of the supporting factors from a psychological perspective that is able to influence consumer attitudes and beliefs in the product which ends in purchasing decisions. Based on previous research conducted Larasari et al. (2018) and Susilawati et al. (2021) obtained the result that the brand ambassador has no effect on purchasing decisions. While research conducted by Wang & Hariandja (2016), Yolanda & Soesanto (2017), Sriyanto & Kuncoro (2019) and Liya et al. (2021) states that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions

Another factor that can influence purchasing decisions is product quality. Mutiara & Wibowo (2020) defines product quality as the ability of a product to meet the desires or satisfy consumers. The higher the quality of the products/services offered by the company, the more satisfied consumers will be, so that consumers will be interested in making purchases of these products or services. Based on previous research conducted by Oktavenia & Ardani (2018) and Rosanti et al. (2021) states that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Otherwise Supriyadi et al. (2016) and Sukawati (2018) states that product quality has no effect on purchasing decisions.

For a company it is very important to create a good brand image for the public in order to gain the trust of consumers. Brand image is a perception or belief about a brand in consumer memory that can influence purchasing decisions, where brands

that are more know and easy to obtain will be chosen more often. Based on previous research conducted by Wang & Hariandja (2016), Supriyadi et al. (2016), Yolanda & Soesanto (2017), Larasari et al. (2018) and Liya et al. (2021) proves that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. However, contrary to research conducted by Liya et al. (2021) and Purwati & Cahyanti (2022) which states that brand image has no significant effect on purchasing decisions.

Based on the literature facts and research gaps above, this study aims to show the influence of brand ambassadors and product quality on purchasing decisions with brand image as an intervening variable.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Ambassadors

Brand ambassadoris someone who is chosen to represent a product or company to present the product or company so that it can have a positive impact on the product or company represented (Osak & Pasharibu, 2020). Brand ambassadors can be used as a reference for consumer ratings and overall brand perception.

Product Quality

Product quality is the ability of a product to show results or performance that meet or even exceed consumer expectations (Mutiara & Wibowo, 2020). Oktavenia & Ardani (2019) said that companies with the best product quality will grow rapidly, and in the long run these companies will be more successful than other companies.

Brand Image

Fera & Pramuditha (2021) states that brand image is a guide used by consumers to evaluate a product or service when they have no knowledge of the product or service. A good brand image plays a very important role when consumers want to choose a product in the decision-making process because if consumers have a positive image of the brand, the consumers are more likely to buy the product.

Buying Decision

Sari Dewi et al. (2020) defines purchasing decisions as a process when a consumer tries to identify a problem, seek information about a particular product or brand and then identify how well the product can meet their needs so that it ends in a purchase decision. The decision to buy a product, both goods and services, arises because of an emotional impulse from within and influences from outside. The buying decision process is a basic psychological process that plays an important role in understanding how consumers actually make their buying decisions (Mutiara & Wibowo, 2020).

C. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Relationship between Brand Ambassador and Brand Image

Several previous studies have shown a link between brand ambassadors and brand image. Research conducted by Wang & Hariandja (2016) proves that using celebrities or public figures who have many fans and have a positive image for the community as brand ambassadors can have a positive influence in increasing the brand image of a product. The same results were obtained in Yolanda & Soesanto's research (2017), this study shows that brand ambassadors who have good physical appearance, have many talents, and have a good reputation and credibility in society are able to make consumers feel confident to use supported products. by the brand

ambassador, so as to create a good image in the minds of consumers about the product. Based on the description above, the hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on brand image
Relationship between Product Quality and Brand Image

The quality of a product is closely related to the brand image of a brand. This is evidenced by research conducted by Yolanda & Soesanto (2017) and Oktavenia & Ardani (2019) obtained results that product quality has a positive and significant influence on brand image. Therefore, companies need to maintain and even improve the quality of their products so that they always have a good image for consumers. Based on the description above, the hypothesis can be formulated:

H2: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image
Relationship between Brand Image and Purchase Decision

Brand image product can be a benchmark for consumers in making choices or making purchasing decisions. The better the brand image of a product, the higher the probability that consumers will make purchases of the product. This is supported by research conducted by Wang & Hariandja (2016), Supriyadi et al. (2016), Yolanda & Soesanto (2017), Larasari et al. (2018) and Liya et al. (2021) which proves that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Based on the description above, the hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions
Relationship between Brand Ambassador and Purchasing Decisions

Research by Wang & Hariandja (2016) states that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. To attract consumers' attention, a company will use well-known brand ambassadors as bait to assist consumers in carrying out the decision-making process. The same results were obtained by Sriyanto & Kuncoro (2019) and Liya et.al. (2021) in his research which shows that there is a positive and significant influence between brand ambassadors and purchasing decisions. Based on the description above, the hypothesis can be formulated:

H4: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions

Relationship between Product Quality and Purchasing Decisions

Product quality greatly influences consumers in making purchasing decisions. Consumers will make a purchase when they have assessed a quality product compared to a product that is considered to be of less quality. This is supported by the research results of Oktavenia & Ardani (2019) and Rosanti et al. (2021) which shows that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. The higher the quality of a product, it can be an incentive for consumers to buy or own the product. Based on this description, the hypothesis can be formulated:

H5: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions

Relationship between Brand Ambassador and Purchasing Decisions through Brand Image

Choosing the right brand ambassador can create or enhance a positive brand image in the minds of consumers. The better the image of a brand, the greater the consumer's confidence in the product, so as to encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions. This is supported by the research results of Yolanda & Soesanto

(2017) and Larasari et al. (2018) states that brand image is able to mediate the relationship between brand ambassadors and purchasing decisions. Based on this description, the hypothesis can be formulated:

H6: Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions with brand image as an intervening variable

Relationship between Product Quality and Purchase Decision through Brand Image

The quality of a product or service is closely related to brand image. Products with good quality will have a positive image in the minds of consumers. Therefore, Companies must be able to maintain and even improve product quality so that they always have a positive brand image in the minds of consumers. This is supported by research results Yolanda & Soesanto (2017) and Oktavenia & Ardani (2019) which state that brand image can play a role in mediating the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions. Based on this description, the hypothesis can be formulated:

H7: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions with brand image as the intervening variable

D. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

In this study researchers used a quantitative approach. This approach was chosen because it is a type of research that has its specifications, namely systematic, planned and clearly structured from the beginning to the research design, both regarding research objectives, research subjects, research objects, data samples, data sources and methodology.

Population and Sample

The population of this study are all users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City. Deep sampling technique. This research uses the technique Purposive sampling with criteria determined by the researcher. Because The number of populations in this study is unknown and is included in the infinite population category, so the Cochran formula is used to determine the number of samples (Nurliati & Mardian, 2021). Based on calculations using the Cochran formula is obtained the number of samples in this study were 384.16 respondents and rounded up to 385 respondents.

Method of Collecting Data

Data collection in this study was carried out using an open questionnaire in which respondents were asked to answer questions by selecting the answers that have been provided using a Likert scale which contains 5 (five) levels of answer choices regarding the respondent's agreement with the statements put forward. Respondents filled out statements via the Google Form link which were distributed via social media.

Data Analysis Technique

This study uses data analysis using SmartPLS 3.0 software. PLS (Partial Least Square) is a variant-based structural equation analysis that can simultaneously test the measurement model as well as test the structural model.

E. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis Method with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The analytical method used in this study is Partial Least Square (PLS) with the help of the SmartPLS version 3.0 application. PLS is a component- and variant-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) model. PLS is able to analyze latent variables, indicator variables, and measurement errors directly.

PLS-SEM analysis generally consists of two sub-models, namely a measurement model which is often called the outer model and a structural model which is often called the inner model.

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

a. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity used to test the validity of each construct variable used in the study. Convergent validity can be seen from the standardize loading factor. The indicator can be said to be significant if the loading factor value is above 0.7. Thus if the loading factor value is below 0.7 it will be excluded from the model. Based on the results processing using SmartPLS, there is one construct that has a loading factor value below 0.7 so it is excluded from the model.

Convergent validity testing is continued by looking at the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of each construct. The model is said to meet convergent validity if it has an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value > 0.5 .

Table 1 AVE Value

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Ambassadors (X1)	0.681
Product Quality (X2)	0.628
Brand Image (Z)	0.710
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.628

Source: Primary Data, 2022. (processed)

Based on the results of the PLS analysis in the table above, it shows that all indicators in each construct have met the required convergent validity criteria where the AVE value is > 0.5 .

b. Discriminant Validity

Table 2 Discriminant Validity Value of Cross Loading

Item	Brand Ambassador (X1)	Kualitas Produk (X2)	Brand Image (Z)	Keputusan Pembelian (Y)
X1.1	0.777	0.550	0.486	0.418
X1.2	0.814	0.588	0.513	0.473
X1.3	0.844	0.599	0.540	0.522
X1.4	0.787	0.564	0.541	0.569
X1.5	0.869	0.607	0.588	0.526
X1.6	0.864	0.595	0.576	0.497
X1.7	0.815	0.617	0.579	0.533
X1.8	0.827	0.638	0.588	0.546
X2.1	0.620	0.738	0.589	0.564
X2.2	0.533	0.781	0.649	0.649
X2.3	0.563	0.796	0.641	0.615
X2.4	0.626	0.829	0.678	0.673
X2.5	0.524	0.793	0.652	0.659
X2.6	0.516	0.803	0.686	0.659
X2.7	0.611	0.831	0.635	0.583
X2.8	0.531	0.807	0.680	0.668
X2.9	0.590	0.840	0.675	0.618
X2.10	0.620	0.826	0.687	0.624
X2.11	0.584	0.745	0.614	0.525
X2.12	0.585	0.771	0.654	0.561
X2.13	0.587	0.777	0.679	0.607
X2.14	0.572	0.741	0.644	0.579
X2.15	0.558	0.812	0.727	0.698
X2.16	0.556	0.789	0.750	0.709
Z1.1	0.601	0.650	0.812	0.635
Z1.2	0.561	0.671	0.824	0.652
Z1.3	0.592	0.748	0.877	0.725
Z1.4	0.518	0.736	0.837	0.766
Z1.5	0.581	0.753	0.873	0.720
Z1.6	0.542	0.687	0.831	0.695
Y1.1	0.536	0.713	0.744	0.833
Y1.2	0.565	0.766	0.807	0.836
Y1.3	0.559	0.690	0.725	0.808
Y1.5	0.520	0.666	0.730	0.850
Y1.6	0.495	0.638	0.683	0.832
Y1.7	0.371	0.455	0.501	0.701
Y1.8	0.377	0.472	0.484	0.712
Y1.9	0.525	0.683	0.686	0.721
Y1.10	0.412	0.484	0.506	0.738
Y1.11	0.495	0.594	0.604	0.838
Y1.12	0.447	0.559	0.587	0.774

Source: Primary Data, 2022. (processed)

Discriminant validity used to ensure the results of convergent validity. The model is said to meet discriminant validity if the cross loading value is > 0.7 for each item. Table 2 shows the results of the discriminant validity of the research model by looking at the cross loading value.

Based on the Table 2, the cross loading value of each variable indicator is > 0.7, so it is known that the indicator meets the discriminant validity requirements.

c. Composite Reliability

The construct can be said to be reliable if the value of composite reliability is > 0.7. Another way that can be used to test reliability is to use Cronbach's alpha method. The construct is declared reliable if the value of Cronbach's alpha > 0.7.

Table 3 Reliability Test Results of Latent Variables

Variable	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Composite Reliability</i>	Information
Brand Ambassadors (X1)	0.933	0.945	<i>reliable</i>
Product Quality (X2)	0.960	0.964	<i>reliable</i>
Brand Image (Z)	0.918	0.936	<i>reliable</i>
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.939	0.947	<i>reliable</i>

Source: Primary Data, 2022. (processed)

Table 3 shows that all latent variables measured in this study have Cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability > 0.7, so that all constructs are declared reliable.

Structural Model (Inner Model)

Testing of the structural model is carried out by looking at the R-Square value which is a goodness-fit model test. Based on the data processing that has been done using the smartPLS 3.0 program, the R-Square value is obtained as follows:

Table 4 R-Square Test Results

Variable	<i>R-square</i>	<i>R-square Adjusted</i>
<i>Brand Image(Z)</i>	0.717	0.715
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.721	0.719

Source: Primary Data, 2022. (processed)

The goodness of fit assessment is known from the Q-Square value. To determine the Q-Square value, the formula is used: $Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R^2_1) \times (1 - R^2_2)$. Based on the calculation results, a Q-Square value of 0.921 is obtained. This shows that the diversity of the research data that can be explained by the research model is 92.1%. While the remaining 7.9% is explained by other factors that are outside this

research model. Thus, from these results, this research model can be stated to have good goodness of fit.

Hypothesis test

Table 5 Direct Effect of Research Variables (*Direct Effects*)

<i>Path Analyze</i>	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample Means (M)</i>	<i>Standard Deviations (STDEV)</i>	<i>T Statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P Values</i>
BA (X1) -> BI (Z)	0.131	0.135	0.050	2,627	0.009
KP (X2) -> BI (Z)	0.747	0.744	0.046	16,300	0.000
BI (Z) -> KP (Y)	0.560	0.554	0.064	8,716	0.000
BA (X1) -> KP (Y)	0.031	0.034	0.049	0.635	0.526
KP(X2) -> KP(Y)	0.298	0.301	0.072	4,124	0.000

Source: Primary Data, 2022. (processed)

The hypotheses in this study were tested using the SEM full model analysis with the help of the SmartPLS 3.0 application. Hypothesis testing can be seen directly through bootstrapping and then it will be displayed on the path coefficients by looking at the t-statistic value which shows > 1.96 . The t-table value for alpha 0.05 is 1.96, so the hypothesis is declared accepted or proven if the t-statistic $>$ t-table (1.96).

1. Based on Table 5, the test results regarding the influence of brand ambassadors on brand image obtained a P value of 0.009 with a t-statistic value of 2.627. These results indicate that the value of the t-statistic (2.627) $>$ t-table (1.96) and a significance value of $0.009 < 0.05$. The original sample value is 0.131, so the influence of brand ambassadors on brand image is positive. Thus H1 is accepted, meaning that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on the brand image of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City.
2. Based on Table 5, the test results regarding the effect of product quality on brand image obtained a P value of 0.000 with a t-statistic value of 16.300. These results indicate that the t-statistic value (16.300) $>$ t-table (1.96) and a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$. The original sample value is 0.747, so the effect of product quality on brand image is positive. Thus H2 is accepted, meaning that product quality has a positive and significant effect on the brand image of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City.
3. Based on Table 5, the test results regarding the effect of brand image on purchasing decisions obtained a P value of 0.000 with a t-statistic value of 8.716. These results indicate that the t-statistic value (8.716) $>$ t-table (1.96) and a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$. The original sample value is 0.560, so the influence of brand image on purchasing decisions is positive. Thus H3 is accepted, meaning that brand image has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decision of Scarlett Whitening product users in Makassar City.

4. Based on Table 5, the test results regarding the influence of brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions obtained a P value of 0.526 with a t-statistic value of 0.635. These results indicate that the value of the t-statistic (0.635) > t-table (1.96) and a significance value of 0.526 > 0.05. The original sample value is 0.031, so the influence of brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions is positive. Thus H4 is rejected, meaning that brand ambassadors have no significant effect on purchasing decisions of Scarlett Whitening product users in Makassar City.
5. Based on Table 5, the test results regarding the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions obtained a P value of 0.000 with a t-statistic value of 4.124. These results indicate that the t-statistic value (4.124) > t-table (1.96) and a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05. The original sample value is 0.298, so the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions is positive. Thus H5 is accepted, meaning that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions of Scarlett Whitening product users in Makassar City.

Table 6 Indirect Effect of Research Variables (*Indirect Effects*)

Path Analyze	Original Sample (O)	Sample Means (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
BA (X1) -> BI (Z) -> KP (Y)	0.073	0.074	0.028	2,589	0.010
KP (X2) -> BI (Z) -> KP (Y)	0.418	0.412	0.055	7,597	0.000

Source: Primary Data, 2022. (processed)

6. Based on Table 6, the test results regarding the influence of brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions through brand image obtained a P value of 0.010 with a t-statistic value of 2.589. These results indicate that the t-statistic value (2.589) > t-table (1.96) and a significance value of 0.010 < 0.05. The original sample value is 0.073, so the influence of brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions through brand image is positive. Thus H6 is accepted, meaning that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions through brand image for users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City.
7. Based on Table 6, the test results regarding the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions through brand image obtained a P value of 0.000 with a t-statistic value 7,597. These results indicate that the value of the t-statistic (7,597) > t-table (1.96) and a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05. The original sample value is 0.418, so that the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions through brand image is positive. Thus H7 is accepted, meaning that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions through brand image for Scarlett Whitening product users in Makassar City.

F. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that (1) brand ambassadors and product quality have a positive and significant effect on brand image for Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City; (2) Product quality and brand image have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for users of Scarlett Whitening products in

Makassar City; (3) Brand ambassadors have a positive but not significant effect on purchasing decisions for users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City; (4) Brand ambassadors and product quality have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for users of Scarlett Whitening products in Makassar City through brand image mediation. Thus it can be seen that brand image is able to mediate the influence of brand ambassadors and product quality on purchasing decisions.

In this study, the brand ambassador variable is not significant for purchasing decisions, therefore Scarlett Whitening is expected to use brand ambassadors who can represent their products well so that they not only have an impact on increasing brand image but also have an impact on purchasing decisions.

In the research that has been done, of course there are still some limitations and deficiencies in the preparation of this research. It is hoped that future research will be able to complete this research. As choose a wider coverage area and add other variables related to purchasing decisions so that the research results are more generalizable.

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