

MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Brand Ambassador and Fanaticism on Purchase Decision of Indomilk X Seventeen with Brand Image as a Variable

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of brand ambassadors and fanaticism on the purchase decision of Indomilk x SEVENTEEN products with brand image as a mediating variable. This study is motivated by the modern marketing phenomenon that utilizes popular culture and the power of fandom as a brand communication strategy. The method used is a quantitative approach with a purposive sampling technique on 100 respondents who are members of the CARAT fandom and have purchased Indomilk x SEVENTEEN products. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS). The results showed that brand ambassadors and fanaticism have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. In addition, brand ambassadors and fanaticism also have a positive and significant effect on brand image. Brand image is proven to have a positive effect on purchase decisions and is able to mediate the relationship between brand ambassadors and fanaticism with purchase decisions. These findings indicate that the success of collaborative marketing strategies is not only influenced by the popularity of public figures, but also by consumers' emotional attachment that can form a positive brand image and encourage purchase decisions. This study provides implications for companies in designing marketing strategies that combine the use of brand ambassadors, fandom management, and strengthening brand image to improve consumer purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Brand Ambassador, Fanatisme, Purchase Decision, Brand Image.

JEL Code: M31, M37

I. Introduction

In recent years, marketing dynamics have undergone rapid change due to the development of digital technology, the increasing use of social media, and changes in consumer behavior in obtaining information and making purchasing decisions. Companies no longer rely solely on conventional promotions, but have begun to utilize various digital marketing strategies that can build emotional connections with consumers. One rapidly growing strategy is the use of brand ambassadors, individuals trusted to represent a brand's identity to increase product appeal, build brand credibility, and influence consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. This strategy is increasingly being implemented because it is considered to increase the effectiveness of marketing communications, particularly in reaching the younger generation who actively use digital and social media.

Along with the development of digital marketing, the Korean Wave (Hallyu) phenomenon has also had a significant influence on consumer behavior in various countries, including Indonesia. The Korean Wave not only encompasses music (K-Pop), dramas, and South Korean films, but has also developed into a cultural phenomenon that influences lifestyles, consumption preferences, and purchasing decisions. The popularity



of K-Pop artists, who have millions of fans worldwide, makes them one of the public figures often chosen by companies to become brand ambassadors. The presence of K-Pop idols in a marketing campaign is believed to be able to increase consumer attention, build emotional closeness, and create a more modern and relevant brand image for the target market. Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest number of K-Pop fans in the world, making it a potential market for various companies to implement celebrity endorsement-based marketing strategies. According to GoodStats data (2024), Indonesia ranks first as the country with the largest share of K-Pop music consumers in the world, at 18.47%. This high number of fans shows that Korean culture has become part of the lifestyle of Indonesians, especially the younger generation, so companies have a great opportunity to leverage the popularity of K-Pop artists as a means of building closer relationships with consumers.

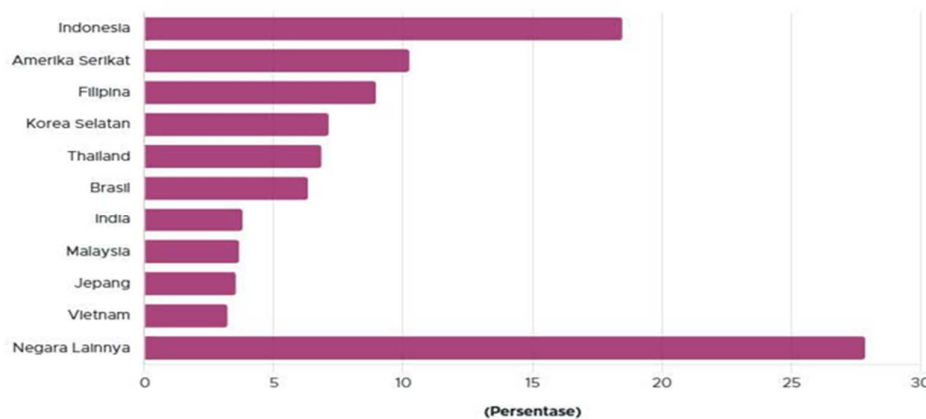


Figure 1K-pop Consumer Data in the World

Based on Figure 1, Indonesia has the largest proportion of K-Pop music consumers compared to other countries. This condition indicates that Indonesians are very enthusiastic about the South Korean entertainment industry. The high level of K-Pop content consumption not only impacts the entertainment industry but also provides an opportunity for companies to leverage the popularity of K-Pop idols as part of their marketing strategies. In this context, collaborations between companies and K-Pop artists are seen as capable of increasing consumer attention, strengthening emotional connections between consumers and brands, and driving purchasing decisions. One company implementing this strategy is Indomilk, a milk brand produced by PT Indolakto, a subsidiary of Indofood CBP. In 2024, Indomilk collaborated with the South Korean boy group SEVENTEEN, one of the K-Pop groups with the largest fan base in the world, including in Indonesia. This collaboration was realized through the launch of three new flavors of Indomilk special edition SEVENTEEN, introduced by three SEVENTEEN members, namely S.Coups, Wonwoo, and Vernon at the "Wave Here on 17 Dec" event. Through this collaboration, Indomilk seeks to expand its market reach while increasing the appeal of its products among the younger generation, especially SEVENTEEN fans known as CARATs (Kumparan.com, 2024).

In this promotional activity, Indomilk adopted the concept of "Ngertikan Rasa," which invites consumers to experience Korean flavors through the products marketed. The campaign received considerable attention on various social media and succeeded in increasing interaction between consumers and the brand. The presence of SEVENTEEN as brand ambassadors not only functions as a promotional medium, but also becomes a symbol that is able to build an emotional connection between the brand and its fans. This condition shows that the celebrity endorsement strategy is no longer only aimed at increasing brand awareness, but also building emotional attachments that are ultimately expected to increase consumer purchasing decisions. The success of this marketing strategy is also reflected in the performance of Indofood's dairy segment during the collaboration period. According to the company's performance report, dairy segment revenue increased from Rp2.3 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2023 to Rp2.7 trillion in the first quarter of 2024. Furthermore, the EBIT margin also increased from 10.5% to 13.1%, indicating increased profitability in the segment.

Table 1. Indofood Dairy Segment Performance Data

Quarter	Revenue Dairy (Rp Trillion)	QoQ Change	EBIT Margin
Q4 2023	2,300	+18.3% QoQ	10.5%
Q1 2024	2,700	+19.8% QoQ	13.1%

Table 1 shows that the dairy segment's revenue increased by 19.8% quarter-on-quarter, accompanied by an increase in the company's profit margin. One marketing strategy that gained widespread attention during this period was the launch of the Indomilk × SEVENTEEN collaboration product. However, this increase in sales cannot be fully explained solely by the presence of brand ambassadors. Consumer purchasing decisions are the result of a complex decision-making process and are influenced by various factors, both originating from the company's marketing characteristics and consumer psychology. Therefore, a scientific study is needed that can explain the mechanism by which the use of brand ambassadors can influence consumer purchasing decisions. In addition to the presence of brand ambassadors, the characteristics of consumers as members of fan communities are also interesting factors to study. K-Pop fans generally have a high level of loyalty and emotional attachment to their idols. This attachment is often manifested through various forms of support, including purchasing products promoted by their idols. This phenomenon is known as fanaticism, which is a form of strong emotional attachment to a particular individual or group that influences a person's attitudes and consumption behavior. In a marketing context, a high level of fanaticism can encourage consumers to make purchases not solely out of need for the product, but also as a form of support for the idols they admire.

On the other hand, the success of a marketing strategy is not only determined by the presence of brand ambassadors or high levels of consumer fanaticism, but also by how consumers form their perceptions of the marketed brand. This perception is reflected through brand image, a set of associations that arise in consumers' minds about a brand. A positive brand image will increase consumer trust in a product, thereby increasing the likelihood of a purchase decision. Thus, brand image is thought to be a crucial mechanism bridging the influence of brand ambassadors and fanaticism on purchase decisions. The success of a brand ambassador in influencing consumer behavior can be explained through the Source Credibility Theory proposed by Hovland and Weiss. This theory explains that the effectiveness of marketing communications is influenced by the level of credibility of the message source, which consists of three main dimensions, namely expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. The higher the credibility of a brand ambassador, the greater the likelihood of consumers trusting the information conveyed and forming a positive perception of the promoted product. In the context of the Indomilk × SEVENTEEN collaboration, the popularity and positive image of SEVENTEEN members are expected to increase consumer trust in Indomilk products while strengthening the perception that the products are of good quality and in line with the lifestyle of the younger generation.

Besides being influenced by the credibility of brand ambassadors, purchasing decisions are also influenced by psychological factors stemming from consumers' emotional connections with the social groups they participate in. This phenomenon can be explained through the Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner. This theory states that individuals tend to identify themselves as part of a particular social group, then adjust their attitudes and behaviors according to the norms and values adopted by that group. In the K-Pop fan community, identity as a fandom member not only reflects a shared interest in their idols but also creates a strong sense of belonging that encourages various forms of support for idols, including purchasing products promoted by them. Therefore, the higher a person's level of identification with their fan community, the greater their tendency to exhibit consumptive behavior as a form of loyalty to their idols. In the context of SEVENTEEN fans or CARATs, fanaticism is not only reflected in the intensity of following their idols' activities, but also manifested through the willingness to buy products related to SEVENTEEN, including products resulting from collaborations with various companies. This behavior shows that purchasing decisions are not always based on rational considerations regarding the function or quality of the product, but are also

influenced by emotional factors that arise from psychological closeness to the idol. Thus, fanaticism is seen as one of the factors that can encourage increased purchase decisions for Indomilk × SEVENTEEN products.

The relationship between brand ambassadors, fanaticism, and purchase decisions is also not direct, but is thought to be influenced by consumer perceptions of the promoted brand. In this case, brand image acts as a mediating variable that explains how consumers form positive perceptions of a brand before ultimately deciding to make a purchase. According to Hanaysha (2023), brand image is a collection of perceptions, beliefs, and associations embedded in consumers' minds about a brand. A positive brand image can increase consumer trust, reduce perceived risk, and increase the likelihood of a purchase decision. Therefore, if Indomilk's collaboration with SEVENTEEN can build a more positive brand image in the eyes of consumers, the influence of brand ambassadors and fanaticism on purchase decisions is expected to be even stronger. Various previous studies have examined the relationship between brand ambassadors, fanaticism, brand image, and purchase decisions. Research by Putri & Sabardini (2023) shows that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions through brand image as a mediating variable. This study explains that the presence of public figures with a positive image can improve consumer perceptions of a brand, thus encouraging purchase decisions. Similar results have been found by several other studies, stating that celebrity endorsements can increase brand credibility, strengthen emotional connections with consumers, and create loyalty to the promoted product.

Meanwhile, research on fanaticism also shows that consumers' emotional attachment to their idols influences purchasing behavior. Nurjana & El Ikhsan (2022) found that fanaticism positively influences purchase decisions when purchasing K-Pop merchandise. The study explained that the higher a fan's level of fanaticism, the greater their tendency to purchase products related to their idol as a form of support and self-identity. These findings indicate that emotional factors are a significant determinant of K-Pop fan consumption behavior. However, research findings on the influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions remain inconsistent. Rahmawati et al. (2022) found that brand ambassadors had no significant effect on purchase decisions. These results suggest that the presence of public figures may not necessarily drive purchase decisions if they are not accompanied by positive consumer perceptions of the promoted product. Similarly, research by Sudarwati et al. (2023) concluded that brand image was unable to significantly mediate the influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions. These differing research findings indicate that the relationship between brand ambassadors, brand image, and purchase decisions requires further testing in different research contexts.

Based on a review of previous research, several research gaps remain, which serve as the basis for this study. First, theoretically, most studies only explain the influence of brand ambassadors or fanaticism separately in influencing purchase decisions. Consequently, few studies have integrated these two variables into a single research model with brand image as a mediating mechanism. However, in modern marketing practice, consumer purchasing decisions are the result of the interaction between company marketing factors and consumer psychological factors, which influence each other. Second, empirically, research findings on the influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions have shown mixed results. Some studies indicate a positive influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions, while others show insignificant results. This inconsistency also applies to the role of brand image as a mediating variable. These differing results indicate that further research is needed to obtain empirical evidence regarding the mechanisms underlying the relationship between these variables.

Third, contextually, most previous research has been conducted on cosmetics, marketplaces, fashion products, and K-Pop merchandise. Research examining collaborations between local Indonesian brands in the food and beverage sector and international K-Pop artists is still relatively limited. This is despite the fact that food and beverage products have different consumption behaviors than fashion and merchandise products, allowing for different decision-making mechanisms. Therefore, research in the context of the Indomilk × SEVENTEEN collaboration is important to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. Based on this research gap, this study offers several novelties. First, this study integrates the variables of brand ambassador, fanaticism, brand image, and

purchase decision into one comprehensive research model, thereby explaining the relationship between the variables more fully. Second, this study examines brand image as a mediating variable that explains the mechanism by which brand ambassador and fanaticism influence purchase decision. Third, this study was conducted in the context of a collaboration between a local Indonesian milk brand and an international K-Pop group, namely Indomilk $\times$ SEVENTEEN, which until now has been very limited in previous research. Thus, this study is expected to enrich the study of celebrity endorsement, fandom marketing, and consumer behavior in the context of modern marketing.

Based on the description, this study aims to analyze the influence of brand ambassadors and fanaticism on the purchase decision of Indomilk $\times$ SEVENTEEN products with brand image as a mediating variable. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions in expanding the development of literature on celebrity endorsement, fandom marketing, and consumer behavior, particularly through testing the mediating role of brand image. In addition, this study is also expected to provide practical contributions for companies in designing marketing strategies that utilize collaboration with international public figures and understanding how the power of fan communities can be utilized to build brand image and improve consumer purchasing decisions.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior in making purchasing decisions is not only influenced by product characteristics, but also by marketing communication factors, emotional relationships with public figures, and brand perceptions. In the context of the collaboration between Indomilk and SEVENTEEN, this study uses four main theories as a conceptual basis, namely Source Credibility Theory, Meaning Transfer Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory. The Source Credibility Theory proposed by Hovland and Weiss (1951) explains that the effectiveness of a marketing message is influenced by the credibility of the message source, which consists of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. The higher the credibility of a brand ambassador, the more likely consumers are to trust the information conveyed and form a positive perception of the brand. Furthermore, the Meaning Transfer Theory (McCracken, 1989) explains that the image, values, and characteristics of a celebrity can be transferred to the brand they represent through endorsement activities. Therefore, these two theories serve as the basis for explaining the relationship between brand ambassadors, brand image, and purchase decisions.

Meanwhile, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) explains that individuals tend to form identities based on the social groups they follow. In the context of K-Pop fandom, fans who have a high level of fanaticism will show loyalty to their idols, including through purchasing products promoted by the idol. In addition, Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) explains that external stimuli, such as brand ambassadors and fanaticism, will influence the psychological processes of consumers (organisms) which are reflected through brand image, then produce a response in the form of a purchase decision. Based on these theories, this study views that brand image plays a role as a mechanism that bridges the influence of brand ambassadors and fanaticism on purchase decisions.

2.2. Brand Ambassador

Brand ambassadorship is a marketing strategy widely used by companies to build effective communication with consumers through public figures who possess high popularity, credibility, and appeal. Based on Source Credibility Theory, a brand ambassador's effectiveness is influenced by their level of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Meanwhile, Meaning Transfer Theory explains that the image and values inherent in a celebrity can be transferred to the brand they represent, thus forming a positive consumer perception of the product. Therefore, selecting the right brand ambassador not only increases

consumer attention but also strengthens the brand image and drives purchasing decisions. (Ardani & Wati, 2024) . Various studies show that brand ambassadors have a positive influence on consumer behavior. Brestilliani & Suhermin (2020) stated that the use of brand ambassadors can increase the effectiveness of marketing communications and encourage purchasing decisions. Furthermore, Putri and Sabardini (2023) showed that the influence of brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions is strengthened through the formation of brand image. However, several other studies report different results, where the influence of brand ambassadors is not always significant in every product context or consumer characteristic. These different findings indicate that the effectiveness of brand ambassadors still needs further study, especially in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) products that collaborate with international K-Pop artists such as Indomilk × SEVENTEEN.

2.3. Fanaticism

Fanaticism is a form of strong emotional attachment to a particular individual, group, or object that influences a person's attitudes and behavior. In the context of fandom-based marketing, fanaticism describes the tendency of fans to support their idols, including through purchasing products associated with them. This phenomenon can be explained through Social Identity Theory (Hidayat, 2021), which states that individuals tend to construct identities based on their membership in a social group. The stronger a person's identity as part of a fandom, the greater their tendency to exhibit behaviors that support that group, including in consumption activities. Various studies have shown that fanaticism influences consumer behavior. Nurjana and El Ikhsan (2022) found that high levels of fanaticism can increase purchase decisions for products related to idols due to emotional attachment and fan loyalty. Research by Nurjaya et al. (2021) also showed that fanaticism can shape positive perceptions of brands associated with public figures. However, most research still focuses on the purchase of merchandise, albums, or entertainment products, while studies on the influence of fanaticism on purchasing decisions for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) products, particularly collaborations between local brands and international K-Pop artists, are still relatively limited. Therefore, this study reexamines the role of fanaticism in influencing brand image and purchase decisions for the Indomilk × SEVENTEEN product.

2.4. Brand Image

Brand image is the perception and associations formed in the minds of consumers about a brand based on experience, information, and marketing communication activities. A positive brand image will increase consumer trust, strengthen brand differentiation, and reduce the perception of risk in the decision-making process. From the perspective of Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory, brand image acts as an organism, namely a psychological process that arises after consumers receive various marketing stimuli, such as the use of brand ambassadors or emotional closeness to idols. Previous research has shown that brand image is a factor that consistently influences purchase decisions. Nikmah et al. (2022) stated that consumers tend to choose brands with a positive image because they are associated with better quality, trust, and value. Putri and Sabardini (2023) also found that brand image can mediate the influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions. However, research on the mediating role of brand image in the relationship between fanaticism and purchase decisions is still relatively limited, especially in the context of local brand collaborations with K-Pop groups.

2.5. Purchase Decision

The purchase decision is the final stage of the consumer evaluation process in determining a choice between a product or brand. This decision is influenced by various factors, both originating from product characteristics and psychological and social factors that shape consumer perceptions. In this study, the

purchase decision is viewed as the consumer's final response after evaluating marketing stimuli and forming brand perceptions, as explained in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory. Various studies have shown that purchase decisions are influenced by the credibility of brand ambassadors, the level of consumer fanaticism, and the brand image of a brand. However, previous research results still show inconsistencies, especially regarding the magnitude of the influence of each variable and the relationship mechanisms between them. Therefore, this study develops a model that integrates brand ambassadors, fanaticism, and brand image to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence purchase decisions for products resulting from the Indomilk × SEVENTEEN collaboration.

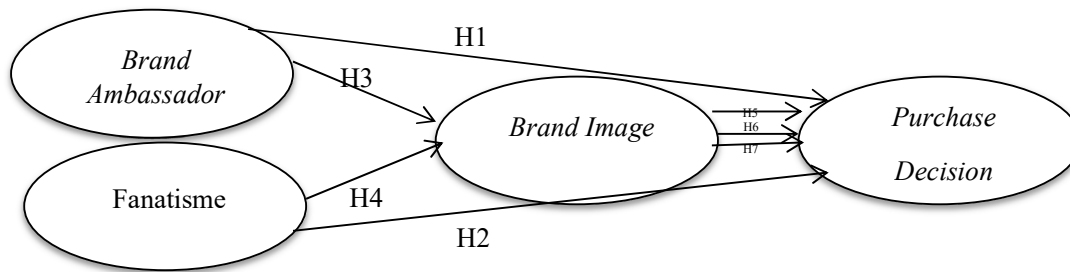


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

2.6. Hypothesis Development

a. The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Purchase Decisions

Based on Source Credibility Theory, consumers tend to trust information conveyed by sources with high credibility. A brand ambassador with expertise, charm, and a high level of trustworthiness can increase consumer confidence in the promoted product. Furthermore, Meaning Transfer Theory explains that a celebrity's positive image can be transferred to a brand, thereby improving consumer evaluation of the product. Several studies have shown that brand ambassadors have a positive influence on purchase decisions (Ardani & Wati, 2024; Brestilliani & Suhermin, 2020). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H1: Brand Ambassador has a positive and significant influence on Purchase Decision.

b. The Influence of Fanaticism on Purchase Decisions

According to Social Identity Theory, individuals who strongly identify with a group will exhibit behaviors that reflect loyalty to that group. In the context of K-Pop fandom, fans with high levels of fanaticism tend to purchase products associated with their idols as a form of support and self-identity. Findings by Nurjana and El Ikhsan (2022) indicate that fanaticism positively influences purchase decisions for idol-related products. Based on this theoretical foundation and research results, the following hypothesis is formulated.

H2: Fanaticism has a positive and significant influence on Purchase Decision.

c. The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Brand Image

Source Credibility Theory explains that a brand ambassador's credibility not only influences consumer trust in a product but also shapes brand perceptions. The more positive a brand ambassador's image, the greater the likelihood that consumers will develop positive associations with the promoted brand. Research by Putri and Sabardini (2023) and Ardani and Wati (2024) shows that brand ambassadors positively influence brand image. Based on this description, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Brand Ambassador has a positive and significant influence on Brand Image.

d. The Influence of Fanaticism on Brand Image

According to Social Identity Theory, fans' emotional attachment to their idols can influence how they evaluate brands associated with them. Fans with high levels of fanaticism tend to form positive perceptions of brands used or promoted by their idols. Research by Nurjaya et al. (2021) shows that fanaticism has a positive effect on brand image. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Fanaticism has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image.

e. The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decisions

Based on Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory, brand image is a form of internal evaluation (organism) formed after consumers receive various marketing stimuli. A positive brand image will increase consumer confidence in product quality, thereby driving purchasing decisions. Research by Nikmah et al. (2022) shows that brand image has a positive effect on purchase decisions. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H5: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision.

f. The Mediating Role of Brand Image in the Relationship between Brand Ambassadors and Purchase Decisions

Based on Meaning Transfer Theory, a celebrity's image and values do not directly influence purchasing decisions but are first transferred to the brand, forming its brand image. Furthermore, a positive brand image will increase consumer confidence and drive purchase decisions. Thus, brand image acts as a mechanism explaining how a brand ambassador's influence translates into purchasing decisions. Research by Putri and Sabardini (2023) supports the mediating role of brand image in this relationship. Based on this description, the following hypothesis is formulated.

H6: Brand Image mediates the positive and significant influence of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision.

g. The Mediating Role of Brand Image in the Relationship between Fanaticism and Purchase Decision

According to Social Identity Theory and Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory, fanaticism as a stimulus does not always result in a direct purchase decision. Fans' emotional attachment to their idols first forms a positive perception of the brand, which then influences purchase decisions. Thus, brand image becomes a psychological mechanism that explains how fanaticism can translate into purchasing behavior. The findings of Nurjana and El Ikhsan (2022) also indicate a relationship between fanaticism and purchase decisions, which are influenced by brand perceptions. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H7: Brand Image mediates the positive and significant influence of Fanaticism on Purchase Decision.

III. Research Method

This study uses quantitative research methodology through survey techniques to collect data on beliefs, opinions, characteristics, behaviors, and relationships of variables from samples selected from a predetermined population using data collection methods such as observation, interviews, or questionnaires. This study used *purposive sampling*, a method of selecting samples based on specific, predetermined criteria. This *purposive sampling technique* allows researchers to select samples that align with the research objectives

and more effectively evaluate hypotheses about sociological and psychological factors (Suliyanto, 2018:226). The following characteristics were established as sample criteria for this study:

1. Have you ever made a purchase of Indomilk x SEVENTEEN (at least 2 times)
2. Fandom CARAT is over 12 years old
3. The sample size is determined according to the criteria and this study used 100 respondents to increase the stability of the model.

This study used two data sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected directly from respondents through a questionnaire sent to CARAT Fandom members who had purchased IndomilkxSEVENTEEN at least twice. Secondary data was also obtained from indirect sources, including literature, scientific journals, the internet, and other written materials that corroborated the primary data. This study used a questionnaire as a data collection method, in which participants were given a series of written questions to answer (Sugiyono, 2017:225). Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares (PLS) 4, a multivariate statistical method capable of simultaneously examining correlations between complex variables. PLS was chosen because of its suitability for evaluating models with complex relationships between variables. PLS analysis will be conducted using recognized protocols, specifically:

1. Designing a Formative Model (*Outer Model*)

In designing a formative model in PLS, the steps taken are to determine the construct, indicators, direction of the relationship, and evaluate the validity and reliability of the tool.

2. Designing Structural Model (*Inner model*)

Structural models in PLS are assessed using *adjusted R- square* to measure variations in the dependent variable caused by changes in the independent variables, and path coefficients or t-values to evaluate the relevance between constructs. A higher *adjusted R- square value* indicates a better predictive model. A significant path coefficient value is determined by a t- *statistic* > 1.96 for *two-tailed* or > 1.64 for *one-tailed* at $\alpha = 5\%$ and 80% power. (Ghozali and Hengky, 2015:41)

3. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing in PLS uses p-values with a significance level of 0.05. Decision-making criteria:

- a. $P\text{-value} \leq 0.05$: H_0 is rejected, H_a is accepted
- b. $P\text{-value} > 0.05$: H_0 is accepted, H_a is rejected

4. Mediation Hypothesis Test

Testing of the mediation hypothesis is based on P-values with the following criteria:

- a. A P value < 0.05 indicates that the mediator variable substantially mediates the influence of the exogenous variable on the endogenous variable (indirect impact).
- b. If P-values > 0.05, then the mediator variable does not significantly mediate the influence of the exogenous variable on the endogenous variable (direct influence).

This section outlines the research categories: qualitative (Sugiyono, 2014), quantitative (Sugiyono, 2014), and *mixed methods* (Yusuf, 2016). It outlines the methodology used and describes the stages of data collection

and processing, along with the analytical techniques used to analyze the research findings throughout the discussion and conclusion stages.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Analysis Result

a. Measurement Model Testing (Outer Model)

The following figure presents the PLS Algorithm Model used in the measurements (*outer model*) in this study:

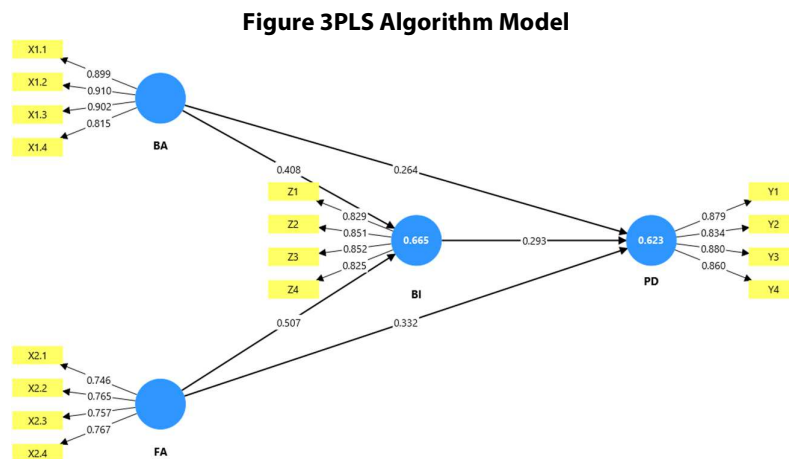


Image Source: SmartPLS 4

Testing The measurement model (outer model) is carried out through several stages as follows:

1) Convergent Validity Test

This study assesses convergent validity by analyzing the outer loading values of each indicator. The following table presents an overview of the test results:

Table 1 Outer Loading Values

Construct	Outer loadings value	AVE	Information
X1.1	0.899	0.779	Valid
X1.2	0.910		
X1.3	0.902		
X1.4	0.815		
X2.1	0.746	0.705	Valid
X2.2	0.765		
X2.3	0.757		
X2.4	0.767		
Y1	0.879	0.576	Valid
Y2	0.834		
Y3	0.880		
Y4	0.860		
Z1	0.829	0.746	Valid

Z2	0.851		
Z3	0.852		
Z4	0.825		

Quantitative research findings provide results as calculations obtained from data analysis using SPSS or similar software. The table is presented as follows:

Table 3. Data Summary Table

Variables	Average Variance Extracted
Purchase decision (Y)	0.576
Brand image (Z)	0.746
Brand Ambassador (X1)	0.779
Fanaticism (X2)	0.705

According to the table above, all outer loading values are above 0.60, while the AVE value exceeds 0.50. The data indicates that all items across the variables used in this study meet validity criteria and are considered appropriate.

2) Discriminant Validity Test

In testing discriminant validity, it is required that the Fornell-Larcker Criterion value for each construct has a value above 0.70 as an indicator of the fulfillment of discriminant validity.

Table 2Fornell Larcker Criterion

	BA	BI	FA	PD
BA	0.882			
CM	0.704	0.839		
FA	0.584	0.745	0.759	
KP	0.665	0.727	0.705	0.863

According to Table 2, the cross-loading value for each variable exceeds 0.70. This indicates that each concept in this study meets the validity criteria.

3) Reliability Test

The reliability of the instruments in this study was assessed using two methods: composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. The results are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha Values

Construct	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
BA	0.930	0.904	Reliable
BI	0.963	0.860	
FA	0.943	0.756	
PD	0.945	0.886	

Table Source: SmartPLS 4, (2025)

Table 4 shows that all latent variables in this study demonstrated composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70. This indicates that all variables or instruments used as measuring instruments in this study are reliable and consistent.

b. Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

1) Goodness of Fit (GoF)

The Goodness of Fit (GFI) value in this study was used to evaluate the extent to which the constructed model fits the collected data. The results of the GoF calculation in this study are presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Goodness of Fit (GoF) Value

Construct	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.065	0.065
NFI	0.838	0.838

Based on table 5, the value of the Goodness of Fit (Gof) test in this study is 0.838 and is included in the strong criteria, namely > 0.36 , so it can be concluded that there is a good match between the model built and the actual data, based on the comparison of observed and expected values.

2) Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

The R-Square value (R-Square) is used to determine the extent of the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. An R-Square value of 0.67 is categorized as a strong influence, a value of 0.33 indicates a moderate influence, and a value of 0.19 indicates a weak influence. The results of the calculation of the coefficient of determination (R-Square) in this study are presented in Table 6 below:

Table 5. Value (R-Square)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
BI	0.665	0.658
PD	0.623	0.612

Referring to Table 6, the R-square value for the purchase decision variable was 0.623, with an adjusted R-square value of 0.612. This indicates that all exogenous constructs simultaneously influence variable Y by 62.3%, which is categorized as a moderate influence. The remaining 37.7% is explained by factors other than the variables and indicators used in this study.

c. Hypothesis Testing Results

1) Direct Effect Testing

The direct effect was tested using the original sample values and the t-statistic. An effect was considered significant if the t-statistic exceeded 1.66 at the 5% significance level. The path coefficient values for each direct relationship in the model can be seen in Table 6 below:

Table 6. Path Coefficients (Direct Effect)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
BA -> PD	0.264	0.271	0.090	2,927	0.002
FA -> PD	0.332	0.337	0.096	3,479	0.000
BA -> BI	0.408	0.410	0.084	4,873	0.000
FA -> BI	0.507	0.506	0.087	5,851	0.000
BI -> PD	0.293	0.282	0.123	2,381	0.009

Based on Table 7, the results of testing the direct effect *can* be explained as follows:

a) Influence Brand Ambassador on Purchase decisions



The original sample value of 0.264, with a t-statistic of $2.927 > 1.66$, indicates that the first hypothesis is accepted. This means that *brand ambassadors* have a positive and significant direct influence on *purchase decisions*. This means that the better *the brand ambassador's image and role* in promoting a product, the higher the likelihood of consumers making a purchase. This finding is in line with marketing communication theory, which states that public figures or trusted figures can influence consumers' perceptions of product quality and credibility (Purwati & Cahyanti, 2022). *Brand ambassadors* not only act as communication intermediaries between companies and consumers but also represent brand values and identity. In the context of this study, the presence of *Brand Ambassadors* has been shown to increase consumer interest, build trust, and create emotional drives that drive purchase decisions.

b) Influence Fanaticism towards Purchase decision

The original sample value of 0.332, with a t-statistic of $3.479 > 1.66$, indicates that the second hypothesis is accepted. This means that fanaticism has a positive and significant direct influence on *purchase decisions*. This means that the higher the level of consumer fanaticism towards a brand, the greater their tendency to make a purchase, even without considering other alternatives. This finding is in line with consumer behavior theory, which states that emotional loyalty and strong attachment to a brand will form a tendency to continue choosing and purchasing products from that brand (Wardani & Dermawan, 2023). Fanaticism not only reflects loyalty, but also includes psychological aspects such as pride, self-identity, and social attachment inherent in consumers. In the context of this study, consumers who are fanatical about a brand tend to make repeat purchases, recommend products to others, and are more resistant to competitors.

c) The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Brand Image

The original sample value of 0.408, with a t-statistic of $4.873 > 1.66$, indicates that the third hypothesis is accepted. This means that brand ambassadors have a direct positive, and significant influence on brand image. This means that the better a brand ambassador represents a product, the more positive the brand image is in the eyes of consumers. Brand ambassadors play a crucial role as the "face" of the company, conveying the brand's values, personality, and message to the public. The success of a brand ambassador lies not only in their popularity but also in the credibility, attractiveness, and fit between the brand ambassador's character and the brand identity. When consumers perceive a brand ambassador as attractive, trustworthy, and relevant to the product, this positive perception will stick to the brand they represent. This finding supports the opinion (Hardiana & Sitio, 2023) that brand image is built through consistent marketing communication stimuli, one of which is through endorsers. Effective brand ambassadors are able to build trust, increase emotional connection, and strengthen brand personality, which ultimately impacts brand image.

d) The Influence of Fanaticism towards brand image

The original sample value of 0.507 with a t-statistic of $5.851 > 1.66$ indicates that the fourth hypothesis is accepted. This means that fanaticism has a positive and significant direct influence on brand image. This means that the higher the level of consumer fanaticism towards a brand, the more positive the brand image formed in the minds of consumers, in line with research by (Hanaysha, 2023). Fanaticism not only describes consumer loyalty but also involves emotional attachment, pride, and self-identity associated with a brand. Fanatic consumers will see the brand as part of their lifestyle and identity. This condition strengthens the perception that the brand has added value, so that the brand image in the eyes of consumers becomes stronger. This finding supports the brand equity theory which states that emotional attachment and consumer loyalty contribute directly to the formation of brand image. Brand image is not only built through marketing communications but also through the psychological relationship between consumers and the brand.

e) Influence Brand image on Purchase decisions

The original sample value of 0.293 with a t-statistic of $2.381 > 1.66$ indicates that the fifth hypothesis is accepted. This means that brand image has a positive and significant direct influence on purchase decisions. This indicates that the better the brand image formed in the minds of consumers, the greater their tendency to purchase the product. Brand image reflects consumers' perceptions of the identity, quality, and superiority of a product. According to (Puspita & Rahmawan, 2021), a strong brand image can create trust, differentiation, and consumer loyalty. Consumers tend to choose brands that have a positive image because they believe the brand can meet their emotional and functional needs. In the context of this study, brand image plays an important role in influencing consumer behavior from the consideration stage, preference, to the final decision to purchase.

d. Indirect Test Results (Specific Indirect Effect)

The mediation (indirect) effect in this study was analyzed using the original sample value and the t-statistic for the specific indirect effect. These values were obtained using bootstrapping techniques, the results of which are shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7 Specific Indirect Effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
BA -> BI -> PD	0.120	0.117	0.059	2,017	0.022
FA -> BI -> PD	0.149	0.142	0.067	2,230	0.013

Referring to Table 8, the results of the analysis of the indirect effect can be explained as follows:

1) The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Purchase Decisions through Brand Image

The original sample value of 0.120 with a t-statistic of $2.017 > 1.66$ indicates that the sixth hypothesis is accepted. This means that brand image is proven to indirectly mediate the relationship between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions. Thus, brand image acts as an intermediary variable that strengthens this relationship. This means that the presence of a Brand Ambassador does not immediately make consumers decide to buy a product. The presence of a Brand Ambassador first fosters a positive customer view of the brand image, which then influences purchasing choices. Brand ambassadors who demonstrate attractiveness, credibility, and alignment with the target demographic can increase emotional value and positive customer views of a brand. This view fosters brand identity. A strong and trustworthy brand image that aligns with consumer identity increases their motivation to purchase. This finding is in line with brand equity theory (Putri & Sabardini, 2023) which states that brand ambassadors as an external stimulus will strengthen (brand image), and a strong brand image is a major factor in influencing purchase decisions. The impact of Brand Ambassadors on purchasing choices functions through brand image as a mediating variable.

2) The Influence of Fanaticism on Purchase decisions through Brand image

The original sample value of 0.149 with a t-statistic of $2.230 > 1.66$ indicates that the sixth hypothesis is accepted. This means that brand image is proven to indirectly mediate the relationship between fanaticism and purchase decisions. Thus, brand image acts as an intermediary variable that strengthens this relationship. This means that high consumer fanaticism towards a brand does not immediately drive purchase decisions. However, this fanaticism first forms a positive perception of the brand image, which then influences the purchase decision. Fanaticism reflects emotional loyalty, a sense of belonging, and the attachment of consumers' self-identity to a brand. When consumer fanaticism is high, they will evaluate the brand positively, thus strengthening the brand image. Furthermore, a strong brand image increases consumers' trust, pride, and desire to purchase the product. This finding is in line with brand equity theory (Aisyah et al., 2024), which emphasizes that positive consumer perceptions of a brand (brand image) are an important factor influencing purchase decisions. Thus, brand image functions as a "bridge" between fanaticism and purchasing behavior.

V. Conclusion

Based on the objectives and findings of the study, it can be concluded that a marketing strategy that combines brand ambassadors, fanaticism, and brand image has proven effective in driving purchase decisions for the Indomilk x SEVENTEEN collaboration product. This study shows that purchasing choices are influenced by rational elements and emotional and psychological aspects derived from consumer affiliation with public figures and fandom communities. Brand ambassadors serve as important icons of brand representation, capable of fostering positive customer attitudes toward Indomilk. Meanwhile, CARAT fandom has proven to be a social and emotional force that strengthens consumer engagement with the product. These two factors work more optimally when mediated by brand image, which serves as a perceptual bridge between marketing stimuli and purchasing behavior.

The strength of this research lies in its integrated model, which combines brand ambassadorship and fanaticism within a single conceptual framework with brand image as a mediating variable, particularly in the context of local brand collaborations with international artists. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding than previous research, which generally examined variables partially. However, this study has limitations, including its focus on respondents from one specific fandom (CARAT) and its use of a quantitative approach that failed to delve deeply into the psychological aspects and symbolic meaning of consumption. Furthermore, other variables outside the research model still have the potential to influence purchasing decisions. This research shows that companies need to build a consistent and authentic brand image, not just rely on the popularity of brand ambassadors or fandom loyalty. Collaborating with public figures will have a long-term impact if it strengthens the brand image and aligns with consumers' values.

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