

Exploring the Influence of Korean Wave Brand Ambassadors on Marketplace Purchase Intentions through Brand Image and Online Reviews using the Theory of Planned Behavior Approach

Widyo Nugroho^{1*}, John R. S. P. K. M. Isa², Abiyyu Zharif Nugroho³

¹Department of Communication Science, Communication Science Faculty, University of Gunadarma, Depok, 16424, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: Widyo Nugroho

| Received: 14.04.2024 | Accepted: 18.05.2024 | Published: 21.05.2024 |

Abstract: This study examines the effects of Korean Wave brand ambassadors on consumer purchase intentions in online marketplaces, focusing on the mediating roles of brand image and online customer reviews. A quantitative approach involving a survey was used to collect data from a hundred respondents who are fans of the Korean Wave, employing purposive sampling based on criteria such as age, gender, and the intensity of Korean Wave content consumption. Findings indicate that while brand ambassadors significantly enhance brand image, they do not directly influence online reviews. However, brand image substantially affects online reviews, which in turn, significantly impact purchase intentions. Hence, the authors underscore the pivotal role of brand image and online reviews in boosting consumer trust and purchase intentions. Moreover, it highlights the profound influence of the Korean Wave on brand ambassadors, suggesting that popular culture is a potent tool in shaping brand image perception. These insights emphasize the importance of considering online elements like brand image and customer reviews in marketing strategies tailored to culturally influenced industries.

Keywords: Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, Online Reviews, Purchase Intention, Korean Wave, Online Marketplace, Planned Behaviour Approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Korean Wave, also known as Hallyu, refers to the global popularity and influence of South Korean culture, including K-pop music, Korean dramas, fashion, and various forms of entertainment (Jin & Yoon, 2017). The Korean Wave has gained significant momentum since its emergence in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Korean Wave began with the popularity of well-made television dramas in East Asia. These dramas captured the attention of audiences in countries such as China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, and sparked a widespread interest in Korean culture. One of the key factors contributing to the success of the Korean Wave is the incorporation of international influences and local Korean culture, creating unique content that appeals to a diverse global audience. According to the research conducted on North American fans of the Korean Wave, it was found that social media platforms played a crucial role in spreading and promoting hallyu (Jin & Yoon, 2016). It was observed that the combination of technological affordances of social media platforms and fans' sociality contributed to the rapid spread of hallyu as a set of impure cultural forms.

A common strategy employed by companies or brands is to collaborate with celebrities or idols, including those associated with the Korean Wave, as brand ambassadors. A brand ambassador is someone hired by a brand to represent it and help promote its products to consumers. In the context of the Korean Wave, these ambassadors are often popular and influential artists idolized by fans of Korean culture.

Korean Wave brand ambassadors have a significant potential to influence consumer behavior when purchasing products or services from the brands they endorse. The presence of a brand ambassador with a substantial fanbase can enhance brand exposure and forge emotional connections with consumers. Fans of the Korean Wave are typically very loyal to their idols, and this loyalty extends to products or services associated with them, often driving the desire to purchase. Previous research has shown the positive impact of brand ambassadors on consumer behavior, including increased brand awareness, enhanced brand image, boosted customer trust, and heightened purchase intentions (Chen *et al.*, 2019; Wang & Yang, 2008). Therefore, this study examines the influence of Korean Wave brand

Quick Response Code



Journal homepage:
<https://www.easpublisher.com/>

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution **4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)** which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

Citation: Widyo Nugroho, John R. S. P. K. M. Isa, Abiyyu Zharif Nugroho (2024). Exploring the Influence of Korean Wave Brand Ambassadors on Marketplace Purchase Intentions through Brand Image and Online Reviews using the Theory of Planned Behavior Approach. *Cross Current Int J Econ Manag Media Stud*, 6(3), 53-58.

ambassadors on shaping consumer purchase intentions in the marketplace.

Brand image is the perception or image consumers have of a brand. It consists of specific attributes and characteristics associated with the brand in consumers' minds. A positive brand image can enhance a brand's appeal, strengthen emotional connections with consumers, and boost brand loyalty (Hung *et al.*, 2016). Conversely, a negative brand image can diminish consumer interest in purchasing a brand's products or services. In the context of the Korean Wave, brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' perceptions of products or services related to the Korean Wave. Fans tend to have a positive perception of brands endorsed by Korean Wave idols they admire. Several previous studies have shown the positive influence of brand image on consumer purchase intentions (Kim & Kim, 2005; Sirgy *et al.*, 1997). Therefore, this research will examine the influence of brand image as a mediating variable in the relationship between brand ambassador and consumer purchase intentions in the market.

Online customer reviews are opinions or comments posted by consumers about the products or services they have purchased and used. These reviews are published on various online platforms, including e-commerce websites, forums, social networks, or specialized review applications. Online customer reviews serve as a critical source of information for consumers when making purchasing decisions. Reviews from other consumers provide unbiased insights into their experiences with a product or service, highlighting both its advantages and disadvantages. Extant research indicates that online customer reviews can significantly impact consumer purchase intentions (Lee, 2013; Yu *et al.*, 2018). Positive reviews from other customers can enhance consumer trust in a brand and influence their buying decisions. Conversely, negative reviews may deter consumers from purchasing a brand's products or services. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the influence of online customer reviews as a mediating variable in the relationship between brand ambassadors and consumer purchase intentions in the marketplace.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a psychosocial model formulated by Icek Ajzen in 1991, has been extensively utilized to investigate consumer behavior, providing a framework for understanding the formation of purchase intentions. The Theory of Planned Behavior concentrates on the role of intentions as the primary predictors of behavior, including purchasing behavior. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, behavioral intentions are influenced by three principal factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes reflect an individual's evaluation of the behavior; a positive attitude towards a behavior increases the likelihood of intending to engage in that behavior. Subjective norms pertain to an individual's perception of significant others' views on the

behavior. If a person believes that important others expect or support the behavior, their intention to perform it is strengthened. Perceived behavioral control relates to the individual's belief in their capability to execute the behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior has been widely applied in consumer behavior research, including within the context of online shopping. Various studies have utilized TPB to delve into consumers' purchasing intentions in e-commerce settings (Ajzen, 1991; Kim *et al.*, 2020), providing valuable insights into how psychological factors drive consumer decisions in digital marketplaces.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Framework

2.1 The Impact of Brand Ambassadors on Purchase Intentions

The use of brand ambassadors as a marketing strategy has become prevalent across various industries today. Brand ambassadors can exert a significant influence on consumer purchase intentions, especially when they are associated with the products or services they endorse. Existing research indicates that brand ambassadors positively impact consumer purchase intentions. For instance, a study by Chen *et al.*, (2019) demonstrated that celebrity endorsements could enhance consumer purchase intentions by increasing brand trust and improving consumer attitudes towards the brand. Similarly, research by Wang and Yang (2008) found that brand ambassadors influence consumer perceptions of brand image, which in turn affects purchase intentions. In the context of this study, the Korean Wave brand ambassadors are anticipated to have a substantial impact on consumer purchase intentions in online marketplaces. Fans of the Korean Wave often develop a strong emotional connection with their idols or the artists of the Korean Wave. Therefore, the presence of these brand ambassadors is likely to enhance the interest and purchase intentions of their followers towards the endorsed products.

2.2 Reconciliation of Brand Image in the Relationship between Brand Ambassadors and Purchase Intentions

Brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions of brand quality and identity. As an intermediary variable, brand image can influence the relationship between brand ambassadors and consumer purchase intentions. In this study, brand image reflects consumer perceptions of brands endorsed by Korean Wave brand ambassadors. Existing literature suggests that brand image can serve as a mediating variable in the relationship between brand ambassadors and consumer purchase intentions. For example, a study by Hung *et al.*, (2016) examined brand loyalty within banking, finding significant mediation effects. Similarly, research by Sirgy *et al.*, (1997) demonstrated that brand image mediates the relationship between self-image and purchase intentions. It is hypothesized in this study that the influence of brand ambassadors on consumer purchase intentions in the marketplace will be moderated

by the brand image associated with the Korean Wave brand ambassadors. Fans of the Korean Wave tend to hold positive perceptions of brands endorsed by their idols or Korean Wave artists. Therefore, a positive brand image is expected to enhance the impact of brand ambassadors on shaping consumer purchase intentions in the market.

2.3 Brand Image Mediation in the Relationship between Brand Ambassadors and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Brand perception holds a critical role in shaping consumers' views regarding the quality and identity of a brand. As a mediating factor, brand perception can significantly influence the relationship between brand ambassadors and consumers' purchase intentions. Within the scope of this research, brand perception is interpreted as consumer views on brands endorsed by Korean Wave brand ambassadors. Prior studies have indicated that brand perception can act as a mediating factor in the relationship between brand ambassadors and consumer purchase intentions (Hung *et al.*, 2016; Sirgy *et al.*, 1997). For instance, research by Hung *et al.*, (2016) identified brand perception as a mediator between brand personality and brand loyalty within the banking sector. Furthermore, the study by Sirgy *et al.*, (1997) demonstrated that brand perception mediates the relationship between self-congruity and purchase intentions. In the context of this study, it is posited that the influence of brand ambassadors on consumer purchase intentions in the marketplace will be moderated by brand perceptions associated with the Korean Wave brand ambassadors. Korean Wave fans who hold positive views about brands endorsed by their admired Korean Wave artists are likely to have their purchase intentions shaped by these positive brand perceptions, thereby strengthening the influence of brand ambassadors in the marketplace.

2.4 The Mediating Role of Online Customer Reviews in the Relationship between Brand Ambassadors and Purchase Intentions

In addition to brand image, online customer reviews serve as a pivotal intermediary variable in the relationship between brand ambassadors and consumer purchase intentions. Online customer reviews, which are firsthand accounts from consumers, play a critical role when others are making purchasing decisions. These reviews impartially reflect others' experiences with a product or service, highlighting both the advantages and drawbacks. Prior research has demonstrated that online customer reviews can significantly influence consumer purchase intentions (Lee, 2013; Yu *et al.*, 2018). Positive reviews can enhance consumer trust in a brand and subsequently affect their buying intentions, whereas negative reviews may deter consumers from purchasing a brand's products or services. This study posits that the impact of brand ambassadors on consumer purchase intentions within the marketplace could be influenced by online reviews from other Korean Wave fans. Fans of the

Korean Wave often rely on reviews from fellow enthusiasts to validate the quality and reliability of products or services endorsed by their favorite brand ambassadors. Consequently, positive online customer reviews are likely to amplify the influence of brand ambassadors on shaping consumer purchase intentions in the market.

2.5 The Interplay among Brand Ambassadors, Brand Image, Online Customer Reviews, and Purchase Intentions

In light of the variables discussed earlier, this study proposes hypotheses regarding the effects of Korean Wave brand ambassadors on consumer purchase intentions in marketplaces, mediated by brand image and online customer reviews.

- H₁: The influence of brand ambassadors on consumer purchase intentions will be mediated by brand image. A positive brand image is expected to strengthen the impact of brand ambassadors in shaping consumer purchase intentions.
- H₂: The impact of brand ambassadors on consumer purchase intentions will be mediated by online customer reviews. Positive reviews from other Korean Wave fans are anticipated to bolster the influence of the brand ambassador in forming consumer purchase intentions.
- H₃: The influence of brand ambassadors on consumer purchase intentions will be simultaneously mediated by brand image and online customer reviews. A combination of positive brand image and positive online reviews is likely to enhance the effect of brand ambassadors in shaping consumer buying intentions.
- H₄: The effect of brand image on consumer purchase intentions will be mediated by online customer reviews. Positive reviews are expected to strengthen the impact of brand image in forming consumer purchase intentions.
- H₅: The impact of online customer reviews on consumer purchase intentions will be mediated by brand image. A positive brand image will enhance the effect of online reviews in shaping consumer purchase intentions.

These hypotheses aim to comprehensively understand the synergistic effects of brand ambassadors, brand image, and online customer reviews on the purchase behavior of consumers in online marketplaces, particularly within the context of the Korean Wave.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study implements a quantitative approach using a survey design to gather data. The survey aims to collect responses from participants on several key variables: the influence of Korean Wave brand ambassadors, brand image, online customer reviews, and consumer intentions to purchase in the marketplace. The

collected data will be subjected to statistical analysis methods to test the formulated research hypotheses.

The population for this study comprises active marketplace users who are also fans of the Korean Wave. The sample will be selected through purposive sampling, targeting respondents based on specific criteria such as age, gender, and the frequency of their engagement with Korean Wave content. The target sample size for this research is approximately 100 respondents. This method ensures that the data collected will be representative of

the population interested in the Korean Wave, thus providing insights into the consumer behavior within this unique demographic.

4. RESEARCH FINDING

The Variant Test (R^2) or Determination Test is employed to ascertain the extent of influence that the independent variables exert on the dependent variable. The values of the coefficient of determination are presented in the table below.

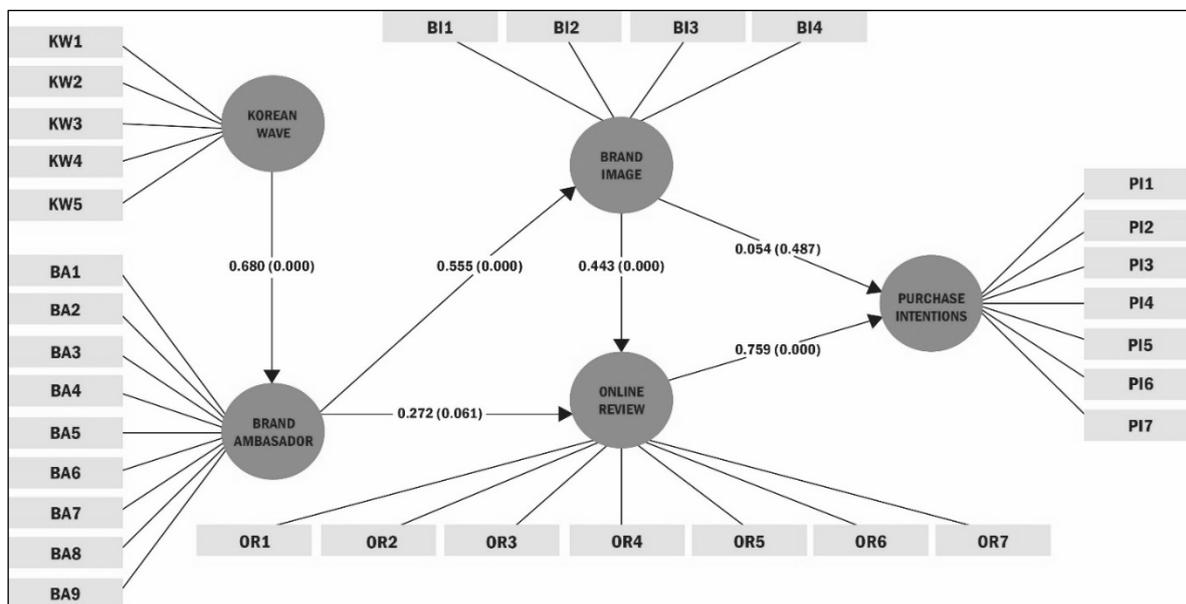
Table 1: R Square Value

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Ambassador	0.462	0.457
Brand Image	0.308	0.301
Purchase Intentions purchase intentions	0.628	0.621
Online Review	0.403	0.391

From the Adjusted R Square table, it is evident that the Korean Wave variable explains 45.7% ($R^2 = 0.457$) of the variance in the Brand Ambassador variable, with the remaining 54.3% accounted for by other variables not included in this study. Similarly, the Brand Ambassador variable accounts for 30.1% ($R^2 = 0.301$) of the variance in the Brand Image variable, with the other 69.9% explained by external factors not considered in this study. Together, the Brand Ambassador and Brand

Image variables explain 39.1% ($R^2 = 0.391$) of the variance in Online Reviews, leaving 60.1% to be explained by other factors. Lastly, the combination of Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, and Online Reviews elucidates 62.1% ($R^2 = 0.621$) of the variance in Purchase Intentions, with the remaining 37.9% influenced by variables outside the scope of this investigation.

4.1 Research Model



4.2 Path Coefficients Results

Table 2: Path Coefficients Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Brand Ambassador → Brand Image	0.555	0.550	0.102	5.450	0.000
Brand Ambassador → Online Review	0.272	0.271	0.145	1.875	0.061
Brand Image → Purchase Intentions	0.054	0.057	0.078	0.695	0.487
Brand Image → Online Review	0.443	0.418	0.128	3.466	0.001
Korean Wave → Brand Ambassador	0.680	0.674	0.075	9.111	0.000
Online Review → Purchase Intentions	0.759	0.743	0.088	8.629	0.000

- From the table above it can be seen that the p-value for the brand ambassador variable on brand image has a value of $0.000 < 0.05$ with a T statistic value of $5.450 > 1.96$. This means that H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted, which means that brand ambassadors have a significant influence on brand image.
- From the table above it can be seen that the p-value for the brand ambassador variable for online reviews has a value of $0.061 > 0.05$ with a T statistic value of $1.875 < 1.96$. This means that H₀ is accepted and H₁ is rejected, which means that brand ambassadors have no influence on online reviews.
- From the table above it can be seen that the p-value for the brand image variable on purchase intention has a value of $0.487 > 0.05$ with a T statistic value of $0.695 < 1.96$. This means that H₀ is accepted and H₁ is rejected, which means that brand image has no influence on purchase intention.
- From the table above it can be seen that the p-value for the brand image variable for online reviews has a value of $0.001 < 0.05$ with a T statistic value of $3.466 > 1.96$. This means that H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted, which means that brand image has a significant influence on online reviews.
- From the table above it can be seen that the p-value for the Korean wave variable for brand ambassador has a value of $0.000 < 0.05$ with a T statistic value of $9.111 > 1.96$. This means that H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted, which means the Korean wave has a significant influence on brand ambassadors.
- From the table above it can be seen that the p-value for the online review variable on purchase intentions has a value of $0.000 < 0.05$ with a T statistic value of $8.629 > 1.96$. This means that H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted, which means that online reviews have a significant influence on purchase intentions.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are significant dynamics among the variables of brand ambassador, brand image, online customer reviews, and consumer purchase intention. These findings provide insights into the influence of variable interactions on purchasing behavior in a marketing context affected by the Korean Wave.

Firstly, the significant influence of the Korean Wave on the role of the brand ambassador (p-value = 0.000, T statistic = 9.111) indicates that the popularity of Korean culture positively enhances the effectiveness of a brand ambassador. This result strengthens the understanding that the phenomenon of the Korean Wave can be leveraged as an effective marketing strategy in influencing the image and acceptance of brand ambassadors in the market.

Secondly, brand ambassadors significantly impact brand image (p-value = 0.000, T statistic = 5.450), affirming that the presence and activities of brand ambassadors contribute to the formation of a positive brand perception among consumers. However, despite this influence, the resulting brand image does not directly affect consumers' purchase intentions (p-value = 0.487, T statistic = 0.695), suggesting that other factors might be more dominant in influencing purchasing decisions.

Thirdly, although brand ambassadors do not significantly influence online customer reviews (p-value = 0.061, T statistic = 1.875), brand image is proven to significantly affect online customer reviews (p-value = 0.001, T statistic = 3.466). This indicates that a positive brand image can facilitate the generation of positive reviews from consumers, which can further influence the perceptions of other consumers.

Fourthly, the analysis also shows that online customer reviews have a very significant impact on purchase intention (p-value = 0.000, T statistic = 8.629). This underscores the importance of online reviews in today's e-commerce ecosystem, where such reviews have become one of the primary determinants in consumer purchasing decisions.

Overall, this analysis confirms the importance of integrating an effective brand ambassador strategy with the utilization of a strong brand image and optimizing the power of online reviews to influence consumer purchasing intentions. This strategy is particularly relevant in the marketing context influenced by the popularity of the Korean Wave, which has proven to be a significant driving factor in brand dynamics and consumption.

REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347-356.
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179-211.
- Chen, S., Yang, J., & Chou, S. Y. (2019). Effects of celebrity endorsement on customers' purchase intentions and brand trust: A mediation approach. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 49, 31-41.
- Chen, Y. S., Chen, K. T., & Chang, C. H. (2017). Influence of celebrity endorsement in advertising on brand image among Chinese adolescents. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 45(4), 577-590.
- Hair Jr, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2014). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Hung, K. H., Chang, C. H., & Yu, S. Y. (2016). Examining the effect of brand personality on customer loyalty in the banking industry. *Service Business*, 10(1), 69-92.

- Jin, D. Y., & Yoon, K. (2016, January 1). The Social Mediascape of Transnational Korean Pop Culture: Hallyu 2.0 as Spreadable Media Practice. https://www.academia.edu/35845358/The_Social_Mediascape_of_Transnational_Korean_Pop_Culture_Hallyu_2_0_as_Spreadable_Media_Practice
- Jin, D. Y., & Yoon, T. (2017, May 23). The Korean Wave: Retrospect and Prospect — Introduction. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/6296>
- Kim, W. G., & Kim, D. J. (2005). The effects of customer satisfaction and switching barrier on customer loyalty in Korean mobile telecommunication services. *Telecommunications Policy*, 29(10-11), 903-917.
- Kim, J. Y., Kim, Y. K., & Park, J. E. (2020). Understanding consumers' online purchase intentions in social commerce: An integrative approach of TPB and TAM. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 105, 106216.
- Kotler, P., Keller, K. L., Ang, S. H., Leong, S. M., & Tan, C. T. (2012). *Marketing management: An Asian perspective* (6th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Lee, K. (2013). The influence of online brand community characteristics on community commitment and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 17(4), 47-71.
- Lee, K., & Youn, S. (2009). Electronic word of mouth (eWOM): How eWOM platforms influence consumer product judgement. *International Journal of Advertising*, 28(3), 473-499.
- McColl-Kennedy, J. R., & Sparks, B. A. (2003). Application of the brand concept to the voluntary sector. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 12(7), 446-467.
- Park, J. K., Park, S., & Lee, E. J. (2017). The relationship between celebrity attachment and customer equity of fans: The mediating role of attachment-related outcomes. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 96-102.
- Phau, I., & Lau, K. L. (2001). Brand personality and consumer self-expression: Single or dual carriageway? *Journal of Brand Management*, 8(6), 428-444.
- Schiffman, L. G., & Kanuk, L. L. (2010). *Consumer behavior* (10th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.
- Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T. F., Park, J., Chon, K. S., Claiborne, C. B., & Johar, J. S. (1997). Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-image congruence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(3), 229-241.
- Wang, C. L., & Yang, C. F. (2008). The impact of celebrity endorsement on brand personality: The moderating role of passion. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 17(5), 272-281.
- Yu, T. Y., Dean, A., & Youn, S. (2018). Can love and respect for a celebrity influence consumers' love and respect for a brand? Examining the role of consumer-celebrity identification and celebrity brand congruence. *Journal of Brand Management*, 25(3), 259-270.