

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE KOREAN WAVE AND BRAND AMBASSADOR ON PURCHASE INTENTION THROUGH BRAND IMAGE OF THE Y.O.U BRAND IN MAKASSAR CITY

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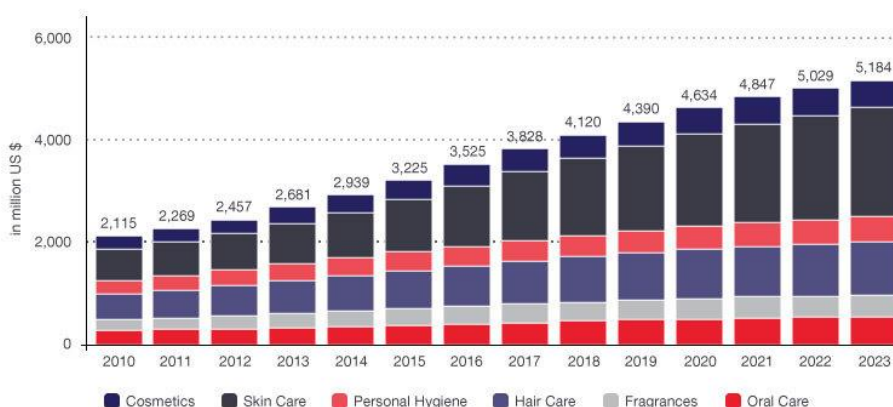
### **Abstract**

*Korean culture is increasingly developing and attracting interest in various countries, including Indonesia. The spread of that culture is increasingly supported by the development of technology and information at this time. The Korean Wave has successfully introduced various aspects of its culture through music, drama, and film. There are many factors that can influence purchase intentions, one of which is interest in a particular culture. With the increasing interest in South Korean culture, it has become a new trend for companies in formulating their marketing strategies. The purpose of this research is to determine the influence of the Korean Wave and Brand Ambassador on Purchase Intention through Brand Image. The sample used in this study consists of 120 cosmetic and skincare users in the city of Makassar. Data were processed using the Structural Equation Modeling method. (SEM). The results of this study indicate that (1) the Korean Wave has a direct influence on Purchase Intention, (2) the Brand Ambassador does not have a direct influence on Purchase Intention, (3) Brand Image mediates the relationship between the Korean Wave and Purchase Intention, (4) Brand Image mediates the relationship between the Korean Wave and Purchase Intention, (5) Brand Image cannot mediate the relationship between the Brand Ambassador and Purchase Intention.*

**Keywords:** Korean Wave, Brand Ambassador, Purchase Intention, Brand Image.

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, competition in the business world is increasingly intensifying in various fields such as industry, trade, and services. This happens because, over time, science and technology continue to develop rapidly. One of the industries experiencing rapid development at the moment is the beauty and cosmetics industry. This is happening because of the growing awareness among people about the importance of taking care of facial skin. Not only that, in various situations, humans always want to feel confident and look attractive in front of the public.



**Figure 1.1 Growth of the Cosmetics Market Value in Indonesia**

Source: Pasxmedia Holding (2020)

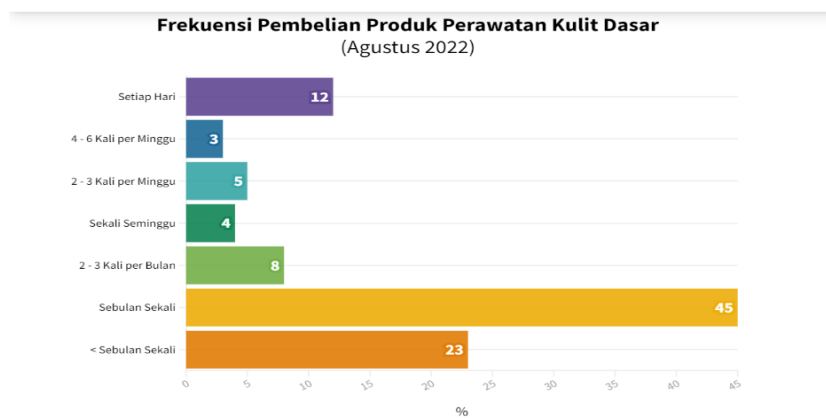
Based on Figure 1.1, it can be seen that the beauty and cosmetics industry in Indonesia consists of 6 categories: cosmetics, skincare, personal hygiene, hair care, fragrances, and oral care, with the skincare segment experiencing significant growth each year. This is driven by the number of people who care about their appearance, amounting to 130 million individuals or half of Indonesia's total population of 268 million. (Pasxmedia Holding, 2020). This has attracted foreign brands to enter the Indonesian market. As a result, not only local brands are thriving in the market, but many foreign brands have also entered the Indonesian beauty industry. (Pasxmedia Holding, 2020).

Care from the face to the entire body is also done to avoid various skin problems such as acne, dull skin, dark spots, and wrinkles due to premature aging. Therefore, they use skincare to boost their confidence while also taking care of themselves to appear brighter and healthier. The abundance of facial care products emerging everywhere in Indonesia, both local and international, makes consumers need to be more discerning in choosing products that are truly suitable for their skin type.

In today's era, skincare has become a daily necessity aimed at helping to maintain skin health, providing benefits such as brightening the face, helping to reduce acne, removing acne scars, and also repairing the skin barrier. Based on the JAKPAT Beauty Trends Report (2021), eight out of ten respondents, consisting of both women and men, believe that using skincare products is a form of investment for skin

health. (Redaksi, 2022).

The growth of the cosmetic industry phenomenon in Indonesia can be seen with the increasing number of cosmetic industries, which reached 21.9% (913 companies) in 2022, and by mid-2023 increased to 1,010 companies. Even the national cosmetics industry can penetrate the export market with a product value for cosmetics, fragrances, and essential oils amounting to U\$ 770.8 million. Meanwhile, the largest market segment is dominated by personal care with a market volume of U\$3.18 billion, followed by skincare with a value of U\$2.05 billion and cosmetics with U\$1.61 billion. (Perekonomian, 2024). In Indonesia, there are several brands that are highly favored by consumers, leading to an increase in skincare usage and a significant rise in sales.

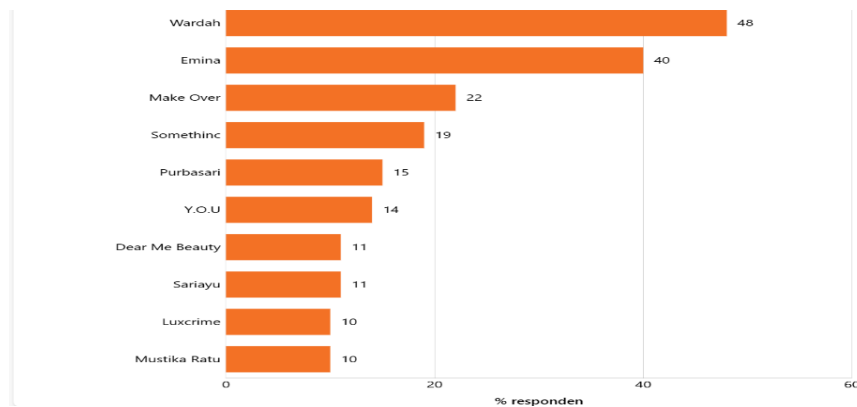


**Figure 1.2 Frequency of Skincare Product Purchases**

Source: Data Indonesia (2022)

Based on Figure 1.2, we can see the frequency of skincare product purchases among the Indonesian population. The survey was conducted with 1,000 respondents across Indonesia, aged between 18 and 55 years. 45% of respondents made a purchase once a month, and 23% of respondents bought once a month. Even 12% of respondents buy it every day, which indicates the high usage of skincare in Indonesia. This is happening due to the increasing awareness of the Indonesian people about taking care of their skin.

The high interest in skincare use is also occurring in South Sulawesi, particularly in the city of Makassar, based on Google Trends over the past five years, which has significantly increased. If in 2018 the topic of skincare in South Sulawesi province only reached 28%, then in 2019 it increased to 54%, in 2020 it reached a high of 92%, and peaked at the beginning of 2023 with a total of 100%. (Mursyid & Julita, 2024). Specifically in the Makassar area, the interest of beauty enthusiasts experienced a significant increase of almost 3 times over a period of 2 years from 2019 to 2021.



**Figure 1.3 10 Most Used Local Cosmetic Brands**

Source: databoks (2022)

Y.O.U is a cosmetics and skincare brand under the umbrella of PT Hebe Beauty Style, and it began to make its mark in the Indonesian cosmetics market in 2018. Y.O.U stands for Youthful Outstanding Unique, and through its products, it is committed to helping every woman find the best version of herself. Based on image 1.3, Y.O.U is in sixth place with 14% of users. This is due to the intense competition in the cosmetics and skincare industry in Indonesia, which is highly competitive, as well as the presence of many large brands that have previously dominated the market and have strong customer loyalty.

The low usage of Y.O.U products is also due to the distribution and availability of products in several areas that are still not widely spread, which can limit accessibility for potential consumers. This indicates that the strategy used by Y.O.U is still not optimal, so there is still a need to improve its sales strategy. Y.O.U is a brand with a Modern Glam concept that upholds the brand philosophy of "Long Lasting Beauty," which is always committed to continuous innovation by offering innovative technology products that absorb the goodness of nature.

Before the consumer purchase process occurs, they will first consider the product to be bought, its benefits, and its advantages compared to other brands. There are various factors that influence consumer decisions, namely economics, promotion, politics, technology, culture, price, location, physical evidence, labor, and process. (Alma, 2016). After considering the various information obtained, it will ultimately result in a decision regarding which product to purchase.

Currently, many skincare companies or brands are taking advantage of the opportunity to enhance the existence of their products through the Korean Wave phenomenon that is trending in Indonesia to attract the attention of potential consumers. The Korean Wave in Indonesia began to spread through the airing of K-dramas on various Indonesian television channels. The popularity of Korean culture has been increasing due to the high ratings of its dramas and films. Thus, making the public increasingly interested in various things from South Korea. Besides dramas, K-Pop has also become one of the things that are highly popular among the people in Indonesia. (Putri dkk., 2019).



**Figure 1.4 Asia Pacific Countries with the Highest Consumption of Korean Content**  
Source: Data Indonesia (2023)

Based on Figure 1.4, Indonesia ranks second as the country with the second-highest consumption of Korean content in the Asia Pacific. The data was obtained by the Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange (KOFICE) through a survey of 25,000 respondents aged 15-59 in 26 countries. Indonesian society spends 22 hours per month watching South Korean content, ranging from dramas, entertainment, to music. This indicates that the Korean Wave phenomenon in Indonesia has spread and is widely enjoyed by people of various age groups.

The existence of this trend has led many brands to choose celebrities and K-pop idols as their product Brand Ambassadors. Korean fans are considered loyal to anything related to the celebrities they like and are devoted to everything associated with their favorite K-pop idols. (Tristan & Yulianto, 2024).

The selection of brand ambassadors as one of the means to promote sales in order to attract consumer purchase intentions. Brand ambassadors play a role in conducting marketing activities both locally and globally (Putra et al., 2023). Through these brand ambassadors, they will also indirectly help to enhance the company's image through a strong emotional connection between the company's brand and the consumers. It is through these brand ambassadors that consumer purchase intentions towards the offered products will be influenced. (Royan, 2014).

**Table 1.1 List of Y.O.U Brand Ambassadors**

No	Name	Country of Origin	Year of Appointment
1.	Vanesha Perscilla	Indonesian	2018 – 2019
2.	Prily Latuconsina	Indonesian	2019 - 2022
3.	Sandra Dewi	Indonesian	2020 – 2021
4.	Kim Soo Hyun	South Korea	2022 – present
5.	Amanda Manopo	Indonesian	2022 – present

Source: Data processed by the researcher (2024)



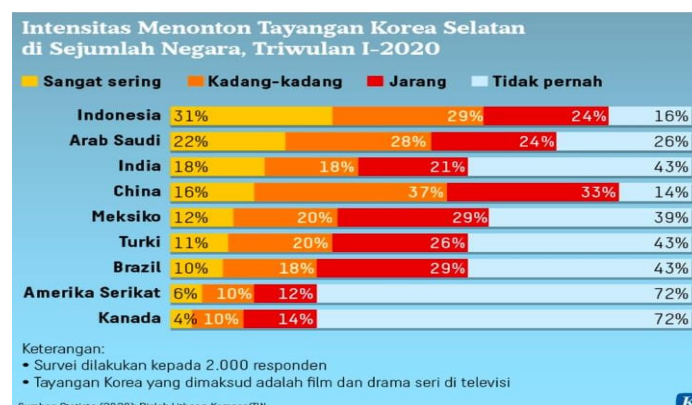
To attract consumer intent, a brand ambassador with great public appeal, talent, and positive public perception is needed. (Sterie dkk., 2019). Celebrities with high popularity have a good image and many fans who can become their target market. (Kristian dkk., 2021). Based on Table 1.1, from 2018 to 2021, Y.O.U selected several Indonesian celebrities to become brand ambassadors, starting with Vanesha Prescilla, Prilly Latuconsina, and Sandra Dewi. This was well received by the public and Y.O.U users, as they are Indonesian actresses with a plethora of achievements. With the good image they possess, it will influence the public's perception of Y.O.U.

Consumer perception of a brand is known as brand image, and this perception will be stored in the consumer's memory and reflected in brand associations. (F. M. Rahmawati, 2024). Brand image becomes one of the aspects that a consumer considers before buying or choosing a product. Therefore, a product must have a positive reputation or image so that consumers will continue to use it even though many similar products are newly emerging.

A brand with a good image will influence consumers' intentions to make a purchase. This is because consumers consider a brand with a good image to be a guarantee that the quality of the product is indeed good. Brand image must be positively received by consumers, therefore the company must continuously place the brand image with the aim of being remembered by consumers. Thus, this can provide a significant opportunity for purchasing decisions.

Brand image can influence how consumers respond to a brand both emotionally and rationally. In this case, brand image can act as a mediator that connects the influence of the Korean wave and brand ambassador with purchase intention. When consumers see that a brand has a brand image that aligns with the Korean wave trend and is represented by a popular brand ambassador, their purchase intention will increase.

Basically, the purchase intention of a product is influenced by how a brand markets it, whether through advertisements or by selecting a brand ambassador. With the increasing spread of the Korean wave phenomenon in Indonesia, it can be used as a marketing strategy to either boost sales or enhance a brand's image. Y.O.U has become one of the Indonesian cosmetic brands that has a brand ambassador from South Korea.



**Figure 1.6 Intensity of Watching South Korean Shows**

Source: Kompas (2021)

Seeing the high consumption of Korean cultural products, especially K-dramas, Y.O.U chose Kim Soo Hyun as their brand ambassador. Kim Soo Hyun is known as a top-tier actor in South Korea with a plethora of achievements and is one of the highest-paid actors. With high popularity and a good image, it is expected to influence the purchase intention of Y.O.U products. This is interesting to research, as it raises the question of

whether Y.O.U's still low market share can leverage the popularity of its brand ambassador to influence the purchase intention of Indonesian consumers who increasingly enjoy Korean culture.

In previous research by Effendi (2023), it was stated that Brand Image is unable to mediate the relationship between brand ambassadors and the Korean wave on purchase decisions. Meanwhile, research by Rahmawati & Lestari (2023) found that brand image is able to mediate the relationship between the Korean wave and purchase decisions. In the study conducted by Fatwa et al. (2024), it was shown that brand image does not mediate the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase intention. Meanwhile, the study conducted by Idris et al. (2024) showed that brand image mediates the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase interest.

Based on the above description, there are inconsistent research findings. Where some state it has an effect and others state the opposite. This has led the researcher to be interested in re-examining the influence of the Korean Wave and Brand Ambassador on Purchase Intention through the intervening variable of Brand Image on Y.O.U products in the city of Makassar.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is an explanatory type using a conclusive research design with a descriptive and single cross-sectional approach. A conclusive research design is a study structured to facilitate researchers in establishing, evaluating, and selecting steps with the aim of providing an explanation of a market characteristic. (Malhotra, 2019).

The cross-sectional design is a study that consists of the collection of information obtained through a sample of a specific population (Malhotra, 2019). Meanwhile, the single cross-sectional design is a design that only uses one sample of respondents obtained from the population of a study, and the information obtained is only from the sample once. (Malhotra, 2019).

In this research, there are two types of data used by the researcher as follows:

### **Primary data**

Primary data is data obtained directly by the researcher through interviews or the results of questionnaire responses (Syafnidawaty, 2020).

### **Secondary data**

Secondary data is data obtained or collected by the researcher through existing sources. Secondary data can be obtained from library materials, literature, previous research, books, journals, and so on. (Syafnidawaty, 2020).

## **Population and Sample**

### **Population**

According to Sugiyono (2017), a population is a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied and then concluded. In this study, the population consists of cosmetic and skincare users in the city of Makassar.

### **Sample**

A sample is a subgroup derived from the population selected to participate in the research. (Malhotra, 2019). In this study, the sample selection used the Purposive Sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a sample selection technique with certain considerations. The sampling was based on considerations or criteria that had been previously formulated by the researcher.

Data collection is carried out to obtain the information needed in order to achieve the objectives of a research study. The methods of data collection used are as follows:

#### **Survey**

A survey is a method of data collection directly from the research field sources. Usually, data or information and field facts are collected directly through questionnaires and interviews. (Ruslan, 2004).

#### **Literature study**

A literature study is a data collection technique that involves examining theories, opinions, and key ideas found in printed media, particularly books, that support and relate to the research problem being discussed. (Sarwono, 2010).

A hypothesis is a temporary statement that can be tested, and the results of that test can predict what the researcher expects to find in empirical data. It is expected that by testing the hypothesis and confirming the suspected relationship, a solution to the encountered problem can be found. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The bootstrapping results using the SmartPLS application are used to obtain t-statistics. The purpose of testing with bootstrapping is to reduce the problem of researcher bias.

The results of the hypothesis test can be seen in the t-statistic value and the probability value. T-statistics is a value used to determine the significance level in hypothesis testing by finding the T-statistics value through the bootstrapping procedure. In hypothesis testing, it can be considered significant when the T-statistics value is greater than 1.64, whereas if the T-statistics value is less than 1.64, it is considered not significant. (Ghozali, 2021). To reject or accept the hypothesis using probability,  $H_a$  is accepted if the  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ .

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on data analysis and various tests that have been conducted, the next step is to discuss the data processing results in this research. This aims to provide a clearer understanding of the influence or relationship that occurs between the variables. Where in this study there are 4 variables, namely, Korean Wave ( $X_1$ ) and Brand Ambassador ( $X_2$ ) as independent variables, Purchase Intention ( $Y$ ) as the dependent variable, and Brand Image ( $Z$ ) as the mediating variable.

### **1) The Influence of the Korean Wave on Purchase Intention**

In the hypothesis testing, the Korean wave ( $X_1$ ) has a direct influence on purchase intention ( $Y$ ), with a  $p\text{-value}$  of 0.009 for both relationships. The t-statistic value for both relationships is 2.596, which is above the t-table value of  $> 1.96$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that hypothesis 1 in this study is accepted. It can be said



that the Korean wave variable influences purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in the city of Makassar.

This means that with the increasing spread of the Korean Wave, it can directly influence the purchase intention of potential consumers towards the Y.O.U brand. This is in line with the results of the questionnaire on the Korean Wave variable that has been explained previously, where the indicator of the use degree of Korean Wave content received the highest score. This proves that the spread of Korean culture through dramas, films, and music can increase consumers' purchase intention towards products related to Korea.

Although there were some respondents who disagreed with the items asked, the results of this study indicate that the Korean Wave has a direct influence on purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in Makassar City. These results are consistent with the research conducted by Ginda Aprilia and Fitriatsany (2024), which stated that the Korean Wave variable has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

## **2) The Influence of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Intention**

In testing the hypothesis, the brand ambassador ( $X_2$ ) has a direct influence on purchase intention ( $Y$ ), with a p-value of 0.166 obtained for both relationships. Meanwhile, the t-statistic value for both relationships is 1.384, which is below the t-table value of  $< 1.64$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that hypothesis 2 in this study is rejected. Therefore, it can be said that the brand ambassador variable does not influence purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in the city of Makassar.

This happened due to several reasons, one of which is, from the research questionnaire on the credibility indicator, the statement "I feel that the information given by Kim Soo Hyun about Y.O.U is considered honest" received the lowest average score among the indicators. There were 3 respondents who answered strongly disagree and 4 respondents who answered disagree. This indicates that consumers still lack trust in the credibility of the Y.O.U brand ambassador. Although Kim Soo Hyun is a famous actor, consumers feel that the information conveyed is not entirely based on experience or product quality. The results are in line with the research conducted by Utami & Nurlinda (2023), which states that brand ambassadors do not influence purchase intentions.

## **3) The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Intention**

In testing the hypothesis, brand image ( $Z$ ) has a direct influence on purchase intention ( $Y$ ), with a p-value of 0.001 for both relationships. The t-statistic value for both relationships is 3.205, which is above the t-table value of  $> 1.96$ . Thus, it can be concluded that hypothesis 3 in this study is accepted. It can be said that the brand image variable influences purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in the city of Makassar.

This means that the positive brand image created in the minds of consumers can directly influence the purchase intention of potential consumers towards the Y.O.U brand. This is in line with the results of the questionnaire on the brand image variable

that has been explained earlier, where the product image indicator received the highest score. This proves that the affordable price of Y.O.U products, along with their attractive packaging design, can enhance the visual appeal for potential consumers.

Although there were some respondents who disagreed with the items in question, the results of this study indicate that brand image has a direct influence on purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in Makassar City. The results are in line with the research conducted by Anwar et al. (2022), which stated that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant impact on purchase intention.

#### **4) The Influence of the Korean Wave on Purchase Intention Through Brand Image**

In testing the hypothesis, brand image (Z) mediates the relationship between the Korean wave (X1) and purchase intention (Y), with a p-value of 0.009 for all three relationships. The t-statistic value for this relationship is 2.596, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.96. Thus, it can be concluded that hypothesis 4 in this study is accepted. It can be said that the brand image variable can mediate the relationship between the Korean wave and purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in the city of Makassar.

This means that the spread of the Korean wave through dramas, films, and music can attract consumer interest, thereby influencing their purchase intention, with brand image acting as a mediator in this relationship. With the presence of the Korean wave, it can create a positive perception among consumers towards the Y.O.U brand. This strong image will encourage consumers to have purchase intentions because they feel that Y.O.U products meet their expectations. The appeal of the Korean wave can strengthen Y.O.U's image, thereby increasing purchase intentions. This is in line with the test results of the direct influence of the Korean wave variable on purchase intention in this study.

Although there were some respondents who disagreed with the items asked, the results of this study indicate that the Korean wave has an influence on purchase intention through brand image for the Y.O.U brand in Makassar City. These results are consistent with the research conducted by Son & Kijboonchoo (2018), which found that a positive image of Korea can enhance consumer purchase intention.

#### **5) The Influence of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Intention Through Brand Image**

In testing the hypothesis, brand image (Z) mediates the relationship between brand ambassador (X2) and purchase intention (Y), with a p-value of 0.166 obtained for both relationships. Meanwhile, the t-statistic value for both relationships is 1.384, which is below the t-table value of < 1.64. Therefore, it can be concluded that hypothesis 5 in this study is rejected. Therefore, it can be said that the brand image variable cannot mediate the relationship between the brand ambassador and purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in the city of Makassar.

In this study, the brand ambassador does not have a direct influence on purchase intention and cannot be mediated through brand image, which may occur for several reasons. First, the lack of marketing activities featuring Kim Soo Hyun on

Y.O.U's social media as a brand ambassador. Posts or activities on Y.O.U's social media are considered insufficient to attract consumer attention. This can reduce the relationship or bond that can be formed between consumers and Y.O.U, which is what is expected from having a brand ambassador.

Second, based on the opinions of respondents from the questionnaire results of this study, Korean celebrities are considered less suitable to be brand ambassadors for Y.O.U products. Additionally, respondents also believe that Y.O.U would be better off using more famous Korean boy group or girl group celebrities, thereby increasing consumer purchase interest in Y.O.U products.

These results are also in line with the research conducted by Fatwa et al. (2024), which shows that brand image is unable to mediate the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase intention.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the structural model testing in this study, referring to the problem formulation and the objectives of conducting this research as well as the benefits to be obtained, the researcher draws several conclusions in this final section as follows:

1. The Korean wave has a direct influence on purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in Makassar city.
2. The Brand Ambassador does not have a direct influence on purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in Makassar city.
3. The Brand Image has a direct influence on purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in Makassar city.
4. The Brand Image mediates the relationship between the Korean wave and purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in Makassar city.
5. The Brand Image cannot mediate the relationship between the Brand Ambassador and purchase intention for the Y.O.U brand in Makassar city.

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