

# The Influence of *Brand Ambassadors* and *Brand Awareness* on Interest in Buying Azarine Sunscreen Products in Surabaya

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## ABSTRACT

*The competition in the local beauty industry continues to grow, driven by skincare trends—especially sunscreen—and the influence of Korean culture in Indonesia. As a local brand, Azarine uses marketing strategies by appointing Korean celebrity Lee Min Ho as a brand ambassador and enhancing brand awareness to strengthen consumer recognition and increase purchase intention. This study aims to analyze the influence of brand ambassador and brand awareness on the purchase intention of Azarine sunscreen in Surabaya. Using a quantitative approach with purposive sampling, data were collected from 108 respondents through an online questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS. The results show that brand ambassador and brand awareness have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, indicating that the use of public figures and strong brand awareness are key to attracting consumer interest.*

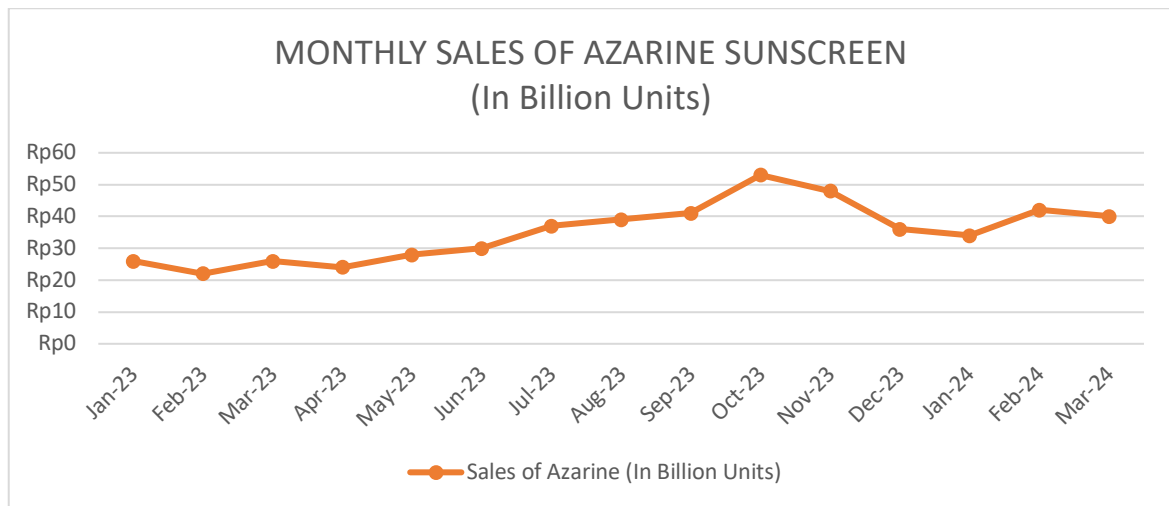
## INTRODUCTION

The growth of the cosmetics industry in Indonesia has increased by 21.9% from 913 companies in 2022 to 1010 companies by mid-2023. Of the various products produced by beauty companies in Indonesia, the largest market share is dominated by personal care products with a market capacity of USD 3.18 billion in 2022 (Limanseto 2024).

Beauty products experienced growth in purchases and demand from Q1 of 2023 to Q1 of 2024. One of the beauty products that can be seen from the figure is sunscreen products with an increase of 99% and reaching a sales value of more than Rp. 400 billion. This is supported by the increasing need in society for the importance of protecting the skin from exposure to sunlight (Nabila Suci Andini 2024).

Surabaya is one of the main centers of the Gerbang kertosusila region, which functions as the center of economy, government, and education. Based on 2023 data, the population of Surabaya City reached 3,009,266 people, consisting of 1,490,338 men (49.53%) and 1,518,928 women (50.47%). (Dr. Eddy Christijanto 2023). With a high population density and dominant outdoor activities, the need for sunscreen is important in Surabaya.

Sunscreen is a product that protects the skin from UV rays that can damage skin cells and trigger serious diseases such as cancer. These products are available in various forms such as lotion, cream, gel, and spray, and are often enriched with vitamins and antioxidants for added benefits (Mi'rajunnisa et al. 2024). One of the brands that produce sunscreen products is Azarine. Azarine, a local cosmetic brand founded by PT Wahana Kosmetika Indonesia since 2002, focuses on natural skincare and has been BPOM and HALAL certified by MUI. The brand is committed to answering the skincare needs of the Indonesian people (Azarine cosmetic 2024).



**Figure 1. Azarine Sunscreen Sales Data per Month**

Source : Compass.co.id (2024)

Based on Figure 1 Azarine Sunscreen Sales Data per Month, the monthly sales value of Azarine products in the Sunscreen category shows fluctuating sales throughout the period January 2023 to March 2024 (Nabila Suci Andini )2024. When facing fluctuating sales, many companies try to make innovations to attract consumers' attention and influence their buying interest (Putri Balqis Rizkita 2023).

One of the topics that attracts the most attention is Korean Drama and K-pop, which has a large fan base in Indonesia, especially the younger generation from millennials to gen Z. *K-pop fans* are loyal fans who support their idols and are even willing to spend large amounts of money to purchase official and unofficial *merchandise*, albums, and products advertised by their idols. This is done with the aim that their idols are increasingly recognized by the wider community (Ayu Larasati Tas'yana, Amalia Naini, and Mawardani Mita 2022).

Choosing a *brand ambassador* is based on the positive image they carry. *Brand ambassadors* are generally individuals who are widely recognized by the public, such as actors, actresses, and singers who have a significant impact on society (Lumeno and Yusrin, 2024). Azarine also utilizes *brand ambassadors* to represent the product so as to create an emotional appeal to consumers. One of the *brand ambassador* choices for Azarine sunscreen products is Lee Min Ho. According to an article from (hops.id 2025) a comment from the X account @askrlfess states that "And it looks like a lie to me, I really don't believe that they (South Korean artists) use this product". This shows that not all consumers believe in the use of Korean artists as *brand ambassadors* for a product.

According to Pratama Cindy (2022) *brand awareness* refers to the ability of potential customers to understand and remember your brand as part of a product related to that brand. Based on data from Instagram (Compas 2023) In June 2023 Sunscreen Azarine had the highest market share of 15.4% and can be considered the top of mind of customers. However, in March 2024 there was a decrease in market share to 12.84% (Markethac.id 2024). In addition, measuring *Brand Awareness* is seen from potential customers' knowledge of the products they buy and are familiar with. Based on comments on TikTok, there are still many potential buyers who are not fully familiar with Azarine sunscreen, as seen from questions about benefits, target users, brand origin, and product authenticity. (Azarinecosmetic). This indicates that Azarine's *brand awareness* still needs to be strengthened, as well as to regain market share and attract customers.

According to Kotler P and Keller K. L, (2020) purchase interest is a form of behavioral reaction shown by consumers in response to a particular object, product, or service, which reflects the expectation or desire of consumers to make purchases.

In previous research conducted by Andini et al., (2021) and Ninin et al., (2021) stated that *brand ambassadors* have a significant positive effect on purchase intention. Meanwhile, Rahmawaty, (2024) 's research states that *brand ambassadors* do not have a positive and significant influence on buying interest. Further research conducted by Prasetyo Faiz, (2022) and Muliawan and Waluyo, (2021) states that *brand awareness* has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. Meanwhile, research by Hayati and Kunci, (2022) states that *brand awareness* has a negative and insignificant effect on buying interest.

Based on existing phenomena and research gaps, it is known that although Azarine as a local brand has successfully utilized the popularity of its South Korean *brand ambassador*, Lee Min Ho, in various promotional platforms such as social media and digital campaigns, the influence of the presence of *brand ambassadors* and the level of consumer *brand awareness* on purchase intention is still not fully understood in depth. Some consumers may recognize the public figure, but not necessarily associate him strongly with Azarine sunscreen products. On the other hand, *brand awareness* is an important factor because high brand recognition can shape consumer trust and preference in attracting product purchase intention. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of *brand ambassadors* and *brand awareness* on consumer buying interest in Azarine sunscreen products in Surabaya City.

## Literature Review

### *Marketing Theory*

According to Kotler P and Keller K. L, (2020) marketing is a process of designing integrated communication with the aim of conveying information about products or services to meet human needs and desires. Furthermore, according to Rambe and Aslami, (2022) marketing is the entire company operational system centered on planning, pricing, promotion, and distribution of products or services designed to meet customer needs, both existing and prospective.

### *Promotion*

According to Lystia et al., (2022) Promotion is a strategy that needs to be carefully planned by companies in order to win the competition and attract consumer interest to buy the products offered. According to Erika et al., (2021) "*promotion means activities that communicate the merits of the product and persuade target customers to buy it*", it can be interpreted that promotion is an activity carried out to inform the benefits or advantages of the product with the aim of convincing target consumers to buy the product offered.

### *Brand Ambassador*

According to Lee-Greenwood in Herawati and Sanita Angga, (2023) *Brand ambassadors* are a means used by companies to communicate and establish relationships with the public, as well as show how their role in increasing sales. Meanwhile, according to Shimp and Andrews in Ayu Larasati Tas'yana et al., (2022) explains that *brand ambassadors* act as cultural icons or identities that are used as marketing tools to represent a product.

According to Pratama Cindy and Rakhman Abdullah, (2022), one approach that can be used to assess celebrities as *brand ambassadors* is through the VisCAP model. This model includes four main indicators, namely *Visibility, Credibility, Attraction, and Power*.

### *Brand Awareness*

According to Khairunnisa in Hariyana et al., (2025) *Brand awareness* is an important first step to building a product. *Brand awareness* shows the level of consumer recognition and memory of a brand, as well as reflecting how strong the brand's presence is in customer perception. According to Rahma Hayyina and Zumrotul Fitriyah, (2025) *Brand awareness* can also mean how easily potential consumers recognize or remember names, logos, images, or other symbols used for product promotion.

According to Sari et al., (2021), there are four indicators that can be used to measure the extent to which consumers are aware of a brand, namely *recall* (the ability of consumers to remember brands), *recognition* (the ability to recognize and classify brands), *purchase* (brand consideration when buying), and *consumption* (brand recognition when using competing products).

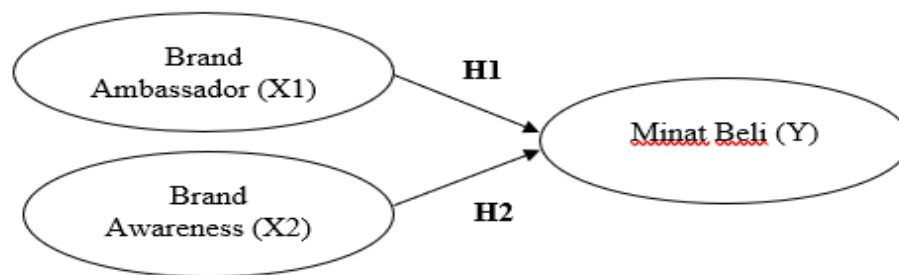
#### *Purchase Intention*

Ninin et al., (2021) Purchase interest is a desire that arises in consumers towards a product as a result of the process of consumer observation and learning about the product. According to Khoirunnisa Risma et al., (2022) Interest in buying a product arises when someone pays attention to the product, accompanied by feelings of liking or interest.

According to Rofiudin et al. (2022), purchase interest is influenced by four indicators, namely (1) transactional interest (tendency to buy products), (2) referential interest (tendency to recommend products), (3) preferential interest (special preferences for products that are difficult to change), and (4) exploratory interest (desire to seek and collect information to support product quality).

### **Hypothesis Development**

This study will analyze the effect of *Brand Ambassador* variables, *Brand Awareness* and *Purchase Intention*. Figure 2. shows the framework in this study.:



**Figure 2. Conceptual Framework**

*Source: Data Processed, 2025*

#### *Relationship between Brand Ambassador and Purchase Intention*

Brand ambassadors also have an important role in influencing consumer buying interest. Research conducted by Andini et al., (2021) and Ninin et al., (2021) shows that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. The presence of brand ambassadors is able to increase the attractiveness of the product in the eyes of consumers through the positive image and closeness built with the audience. Thus, the strategy of using brand ambassadors is one of the key factors in encouraging consumer buying interest.

H<sub>1</sub>: It is suspected that brand ambassador has a positive effect on purchase intention at Azarine sunscreen produk in Surabaya.

#### *Relationship between Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention*

According to Arianty Nel and Andira Ari, (2021) a high level of brand awareness is expected to be able to make consumers automatically remember the brand every time a need arises for that product category, so that the brand will be one of the considerations in attracting buying interest from its customers. Research conducted by Prasetyo Faiz and Reformasi Era (2022) and Muliawan and Waluyo (2021) shows that brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. The level of consumer awareness of a brand can strengthen their trust and interest in making purchases. Therefore,

efforts to increase brand awareness are an effective strategy in encouraging consumer buying interest. Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>2</sub>: It is suspected that brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention at Azarine sunscreen produk in Surabaya.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies a quantitative research design with a purposive sampling method. The population in this study includes individuals who are familiar with the Azarine sunscreen brand and live in Surabaya. The selection of respondents is based on specific criteria, including 1) being 17 years old or above. 2) residing in Surabaya. 3) being familiar with and following the Azarine brand. 4) having been exposed to Azarine promotions or advertisements at least three times per week. Based on the number of indicators used in this study, totaling twelve, and by following the sample size determination guidelines (multiplying the number of indicators by 9, a total of 108 respondents were selected to represent the sample.

The data used in this research consist of both primary and secondary data. a) Primary data were obtained directly through the distribution of online questionnaires to individuals who have purchased, known, or consumed Azarine sunscreen products. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and distributed via social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. b) Secondary data were collected from various relevant references, including books, scientific journals, articles, websites, and other sources that support the research objectives.

The questionnaire serves as the main research instrument, consisting of several statements related to the research variables. Respondents were asked to express their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5), which allows the researchers to measure attitudes, perceptions, and intentions related to the constructs being studied.

The data analysis technique employed is Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), using the SmartPLS version 4.1.1.2 software. This method is suitable for predictive and exploratory research, especially when involving complex relationships between latent variables and when the data do not meet the assumption of normality. The PLS-SEM procedure in this study involves testing both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). Evaluation of the outer model includes tests of outer loading, convergent validity, discriminant validity, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). The inner model is evaluated through analysis of the coefficient of determination (R-square), path coefficients, and hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping method.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Outer Model Test*

Outer model is often called outer relation or measurement model will describe how each indicator is related to latent variables. This evaluation aims to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model that has been created. Outer Model testing includes convergent validity analysis, discriminant validity, and reliability testing.

**Table 1. Outer Loading**

	<i>Brand Ambassador (X1)</i>	<i>Brand Awareness (X2)</i>	<i>Purchase Intention (Y)</i>
Visibility (X1.1)	0.828		
Credibility (X1.2)	0.875		
Attraction (X1.3)	0.839		
Power (X1.4)	0.857		
Recall (X2.1)		0.821	
Recognition (X2.2)		0.791	
Purchase (X2.3)		0.810	
Consumption (X2.4)		0.807	
Transactional Interest (Y1)			0.866
Referential Interest (Y2)			0.875
Preferential Interest (Y3)			0.907
Explorative Interest (Y4)			0.895

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

According to the results of table 1 *outer loading*, measuring the validity of indicators can be done by looking at the Outer loading value of the variable on the indicator, an indicator is declared valid if it has a value above 0.7 (Ghozali Imam 2021). Thus, all indicators in this study have met the validity criteria.

**Table 2. Cross Loading**

	<i>Brand Ambassador (X1)</i>	<i>Brand Awareness (X2)</i>	<i>Purchase Intention (Y)</i>
Visibility (X1.1)	<b>0.828</b>	0.609	0.636
Credibility (X1.2)	<b>0.875</b>	0.668	0.628
Attraction (X1.3)	<b>0.839</b>	0.614	0.640
Power (X1.4)	<b>0.857</b>	0.661	0.628
Recall (X2.1)	0.601	<b>0.821</b>	0.569
Recognition (X2.2)	0.520	<b>0.791</b>	0.580
Purchase (X2.3)	0.632	<b>0.810</b>	0.580
Consumption (X2.4)	0.665	<b>0.807</b>	0.632
Transactional Interest (Y1)	0.606	0.560	<b>0.866</b>
Referential Interest (Y2)	0.644	0.635	<b>0.875</b>
Preferential Interest (Y3)	0.680	0.686	<b>0.907</b>
Explorative Interest (Y4)	0.702	0.701	<b>0.895</b>

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

Based on the results of data analysis in table 2 *cross loading*, it can be seen that all factor loading values for each indicator of the *Brand Ambassador* variable (X1), *Brand Awareness* (X2), and Purchase Intention (Y) where it shows that it has a higher loading value on its own variable compared to other variables. According to Ghozali Imam (2021) this shows that each indicator has met the validity criteria well. Next, look at the AVE and Composite Reliability.

**Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

Variable	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Ambassador (X1)	0.726
Brand Awareness (X2)	0.659
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.789

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

Based on table 3 above, the AVE values for the *brand ambassador* variable (0.723), *brand awareness* (0.652), and purchase intention (0.785) are all above 0.50. So according to Ghozali Imam (2021) these results indicate that the data contained in this study have met the requirements for good convergent validity. Next, test the composite reliability. According to Ghozali Imam (2021), the value that is considered to meet the reliability requirements is above 0.7.

**Table 4. Composite Realibility Value**

Variable	Composite reliability
Brand Ambassador (X1)	0.914
Brand Awareness (X2)	0.885
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.937

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

Based on table 4, each variable has a value, *Brand Ambassador* of 0.912 (has good reliability), *Brand Awareness* has a value of 0.882 (good reliability), and Purchase Intention has a value of 0.936 (has good reliability). So it can be concluded that each variable in this study shows that each construct has an adequate level of reliability.

#### *Inner Model Test*

The structural model (inner model) is used to evaluate the relationship between latent constructs in a study. The main focus of the inner model according to Ghozali Imam, (2021) is to describe how much proportion of the variance of the endogenous variables can be explained by the exogenous variables in the structural model (inner model). Evaluation of the inner model can be done through the R-square ( $R^2$ ) value, which describes the proportion of the contribution of exogenous (independent) variables in explaining the endogenous variables in the model. The following are the results of the  $R^2$  value:

**Table 5. R-Square**

Variable	R-square
Purchase Intention	0.624

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

The  $R^2$  value is 0.613, so it can be explained that the model is able to explain how the phenomenon of buying interest is influenced by the dependent (independent) variable, in the form of *Brand Ambassador* and *Brand Awareness*, with a variance value of 62.4%. While the remaining 37.6% is influenced by other factors / other variables outside of this study.

#### *Hypothesis Test*

In this study, path analysis was used to test the hypothesis by paying attention to the T-statistics

and P-Values. A hypothesis is declared accepted if the P-Values value is less than 0.05. The results of hypothesis testing on this research model are presented as follows:

**Table 6. Hypothesis Test Result**

	<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample Mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P Values</b>
<i>Brand Ambassador (X1) - &gt; Purchase Intention (Y)</i>	0.447	0.452	0.117	3.828	0.000
<i>Brand Awareness (X2) -&gt; Purchase Intention (Y)</i>	0.397	0.390	0.127	3.116	0.002

Source: *SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)*

The results of the path coefficients hypothesis test show that, *Brand Ambassador (X1)* and *Brand Awareness (X2)* are proven to have a positive influence on buying interest (Y). *Brand Ambassador* with a Path Coefficients value of 0.447 and a T-Statistic value of 3.828, greater than the T Table value  $\alpha = 0.05$  (5%) = 1.96 and a P-value of 0.000 (smaller than 0.05) and *Brand Awareness* Path Coefficients value of 0.397 and a T-Statistic value of 3.116, greater than the T Table value  $\alpha = 0.05$  (5%) = 1.96 and a P-value of 0.002 (smaller than 0.05).

*H<sub>1</sub>: It is suspected that brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention at at Azarine sunscreen products in Surabaya.*

The results of the analysis show that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on consumers' purchase intention of Azarine sunscreen products in Surabaya. This means that the more relevant and appealing the brand ambassador is to the target audience—especially younger consumers influenced by Korean culture—the greater the likelihood that consumers will develop interest in the product. The use of Korean actor Lee Min Ho as Azarine's brand ambassador successfully attracts attention through his strong credibility, high popularity, and visual appeal. Consumers perceive him as a trustworthy and authentic figure, which builds confidence toward the brand. This finding aligns with previous studies (Pratama dan Rakhman, 2022) and (Ninin et al., 2021) that brand ambassadors who possess visibility, attraction, and influence are effective in increasing consumer purchase intention.

*H<sub>2</sub>: It is suspected that digital marketing has a positive effect on purchasing decisions at Janji Jiwa coffee in Surabaya City.*

The results of the analysis show that brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on consumers' purchase intention of Azarine sunscreen products in Surabaya. This means that the higher the level of consumer awareness of the Azarine brand—such as their ability to recall, recognize, and consider the brand in their purchasing decisions the more likely they are to have an interest in buying the product. The most dominant indicator in this variable is brand recall, which indicates that consumers easily remember Azarine when thinking about sunscreen. This is influenced by Azarine's consistent marketing efforts, including strong visual identity, frequent social media exposure, and engaging promotional content.

In addition, recognition also plays an important role, as consumers can identify the brand through its logo, packaging, or even influencer endorsements that appear frequently on digital platforms. The purchase and consumption indicators further support the idea that Azarine is included in the consideration set of consumers and remains top-of-mind even when they use or are exposed to competing products. These findings support the notion that a strong and consistent brand presence is essential to attract and maintain consumer interest. This result is in line with previous studies (Sari et al., 2021) and (Jannah and

Yulianto, 2024) which show that brand awareness significantly influences purchase intention by shaping consumer memory and emotional connection toward the brand.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion that has been carried out, this study concludes that brand ambassadors and brand awareness are proven to have a positive and significant effect on buying interest in Azarine sunscreen products in Surabaya City. The use of brand ambassadors such as Lee Min Ho can attract consumer attention, build a positive brand image, and increase emotional appeal to the product. Meanwhile, strong brand awareness makes it easier for consumers to recognize, remember, and consider Azarine as the top choice in the sunscreen category.

Azarine is advised to continue optimizing promotional strategies that involve public figures relevant to the target market, as well as strengthening brand awareness campaigns through social media, educational content, and customer testimonials. In the long run, increasing interaction and closeness with consumers through active and responsive digital communication will be key in building loyalty and encouraging buying interest.

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